

# The Original Kabbalah of the Bible

by Ariel Bar Tzadok

www.KosherTorah.com Copyright © 2010 by Ariel Bar Tzadok. All rights reserved. www.KosherTorah.com

I have a very important lesson that I wish to share. Although I could present this topic in an academic format with various proof-texts, I believe that by presenting it so I would contradict the very message itself. To proceed in that format, in my opinion, would be misleading to my readers, something of course I do not desire to do.

For a number of decades now I have taught a special segment of Biblical teachings dealing with mystical matters, which we all popularly call the Kabbalah. For many years now I have realized that most of what is popularly today called Kabbalah, even that which is taught in the most established and traditional Orthodox Jewish circles, is something comparatively modern and does not have a historical source in ancient Bible-time, authentic Jewish literature. Although almost all of what is today publicly presented under the various titles of “Jewish” mysticism have, of course their historical foundations in various Jewish philosophies that have developed over the centuries, nevertheless, what the vast majority of modern Kabbalah lacks is any connection whatsoever to the original teachings of the Bible itself.



Just because a school of mysticism adapts a Biblical text to serve as the source of its theology does not mean that the Biblical texts themselves have any actual connection to the mysticism being applied to it. Such correlations hold tremendous subjective value, but they bare no objective credibility. Not being able to distinguish between these two has led many to disingenuous conclusions and given rise to fundamentalism and dangerous divisions.

Like I just said, I could easily provide numerous proof-texts to validate these realities, but I believe such an approach to mostly be a waste of time. The Bible itself is not a collection of books that expresses any interest in proof-texts, or for that matter, any other form of academia, philosophy or theology. Bible teachings come from a very different point of view than does modern thinking and original and authentic Kabbalah, coming out of the Bible as it does, is also radically different from almost everything called Kabbalah today. However, I am not interested drawing attention to that which is not Biblical. I would much rather place my emphasis on that which is Biblical.

The most ancient usage of the term Kabbalah is found used by the Talmudic Sages who lived during the time of the Second Temple. In their lexicon, the term Kabbalah, which literally means “to

receive” specifically referred to the body of teachings received originally from the Biblical prophets. In other words, the Biblical Kabbalah was the teachings of the prophets and had nothing to do with the later mysticism that adopted the name. Granted there was and still exists an authentic form of Biblical “mysticism.” Yet, this form is as different from the later forms of mysticism presently called Kabbalah as day is different from night.

If we ever want to truly understand the Bible, authentic Biblical mysticism, and the original Oral Traditions of the prophets called Kabbalah we have to go back to the Biblical sources. We need to peel away centuries and layers of religious additions that have so overwhelmingly clouded the original Biblical truths. We have to get back to basics. We have to turn “full circle.” What I wish to present here in the next few paragraphs I pray may help my readers to get in touch with the pure and simple, the Ways, Words and Laws of G-d, as they were originally given, as they were originally meant and as they were originally understood. Everything that came after the original Biblical teachings are like “icing on the cake.” But before we partake of desert, we must first eat a healthy meal. This metaphor applies equally to both physical and spiritual nourishment.

The Bible as we know is a collection of books. They were all written a long time ago in a land and culture very far away and different from our own. The messages that they relate have to be understood within the context of their origins in order for such messages to be understood correctly. Anything and everything viewed outside its original context is subject to misunderstanding and misconception. The teachings of the Bible especially fall under this category.

For centuries, various parties with vested interests have turned to the Bible and have sought to interpret its specific verses and its overall general message in accordance to each groups agenda and needs. Some of these views are rather “stretched,” in that they take the original text and seem to “turn it on its side” in order to extract from it what its proclaimers insist is its “correct” meaning. Again, such endeavors only contribute to the problem of misunderstanding the Bible, and not to the cure of understanding it honestly.

The Bible is not a collection of books beyond interpretation. The Bible is not a collection of books subject to every interpretation. Both extremes, one which includes every interpretation and the other which includes none are equally dishonest and thus wrong. The Bible needs to be viewed without these skewed agendas, without preconceived notions and without prejudice.

The Bible needs to be looked at for what it is, a series of ancient documents that proclaim a universal human message, one that transcends its historical origins and yet still is very much wrapped up in them. The Bible is not a series of philosophical, theological or doctrinal works. For the most part, the Bible is merely a collection of stories, of history, parables, moral messages and the message of the consequences that result when proper righteous behavior and morals are not followed.

The Bible is not about holier-than-thou super-beings. On the contrary, the Bible is about down-to-earth, fragile mortals, just like ourselves. It is specifically because of this that we can relate to the individuals whose lives have been recorded. Like us they were human and suffered from the problems of their humanity. Yet, like them, we learn from their examples, and their mistakes. We learn to become better human beings and to live more moral and righteous lives.

The Hebrew word Kabbalah literally means to receive. In its most ancient application the term Kabbalah specifically referred to the teachings of the Biblical prophets. These teachings, this usage of the term Kabbalah was not a reference to the secret teachings of prophetic techniques

that the prophets taught and used amongst themselves. Rather, the term Kabbalah referred to their prophetic message to improve morals, integrity and character. The original Kabbalah was a Biblical call of repentance, demanding reform of human behavior as it applies to interacting with other human beings.

The books of the Bible did not exist in a vacuum. There were numerous other books that circulated in and around the same time that were not later added to the Biblical canon. There is no set list of these other books but many of them still exist to this day in numerous translations. Although we do not ascribe to them the sacred authority of scripture, this does not mean that these books have no moral merit or historical value. On the contrary, many of these "outside books" are the source of legends and teachings that are the foundation of many later religious teachings. The outside books were studied in Biblical days and still offer much keen insight to those who invest their time to study them today.

With the exception of books like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, Psalms and Lamentations all Biblical books are written in the forms of narratives. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are collections of wise sayings promoting thought, insight and an awareness of the Presence of Heaven. Psalms and Lamentations are essentially poetry whose purpose is to speak to the hearts of its readers. The rest of the Biblical texts are what they are, narratives which tell a story. Yet, all these books have one thing in common, there is more to them than meets the eye. Most of the prophecies are poetic narratives that may not make any historical sense. They are not meant to. For the common denominator of all Biblical literature is not the style in which it is written, but rather its spirit.

The authors of the Bible wrote from their hearts and endeavored to speak to the hearts of their readers. The spirit of the Biblical authors we have come to call the holy spirit (ruah hakodesh). This spirit is never an academic acquisition. It cannot be touched through philosophy, theology or debate. The spirit of Divine inspiration flows into the heart and flows out of the heart, bypassing the head and human intellect almost entirely. Those "in the know" know this. Those who do not know this never will. Spirit is a matter above intellect and is as different from intellect as are emotions. Spirit is above intellect and unless one can transcend the limitations of intellectual thought with all its philosophies, debates and arguments, one will never come to experience spirit or understand it at all.

The Biblical authors were not theologians or philosophers. They were wise and profound and at the same time simple and straightforward. They were not of the mindset to be overly rational or academic. Indeed, such a pursuit towards knowledge did not even exist in ancient Israel at that time. The intellectual/philosophical outlook on life was a byproduct of the Grecian civilization. This influence only came into Israel years after the Babylonian exile when most, if not all, of the Biblical books were already written. In Biblical times, people lived by their hearts and their spirit, even as G-d has commanded in the Bible itself.

The Biblical authors were the ones who passed down the prophetic traditions. They then were the original masters of the Kabbalah, the way Kabbalah was originally meant to be. The original message, the authentic Kabbalah therefore had absolutely nothing to do with mystical philosophies and exotic speculations regarding the nature of supernatural worlds. There is never any mention of any of this type of thinking to be found anywhere throughout the Bible.

If one wishes to point to the supernatural visions expressed in the Bible in Exodus, Isaiah, Ezekiel and more, one must be honest and come to this material straightforward and not backwards. In other words, understand the Bible as the authors meant for it to be understood and do not try to reinterpret the Biblical texts in light of concepts and philosophies that came into play centuries

later and then proclaim that the later interpretations are actually the original and authentic ones. Such historical inaccuracies offend many and turn off even many more from the true value that religious teachings have to offer. In order for religious teachings to be respected and appreciated, they have to be built on a foundation of honesty and not reinvented and reinterpreted to meet the criteria and agendas of political parties or changing times.

Authentic Biblical Kabbalah is not a set of interpretations of the Biblical texts, however mystical, as later Kabbalah has come to be known. Authentic Biblical Kabbalah is indeed a universal message, the message of the prophets, about how to serve G-d, how to be honorable, righteous and moral. The message of the prophets, the true Kabbalah was to teach all, men and women, of all nations how we can all come close to G-d, serve Heaven in truth and thus mold human civilization into a proper, stable form which naturally safeguards and upholds the rights, freedom and prosperity of all. Authentic Biblical Kabbalah, the only real kind, can be found summed up in numerous words of the prophets, especially those visions for a blessed future when righteousness shall reign and war shall be no more.

Much of modern Biblical and Judaic teachings, and by modern, I mean mostly everything that has come forth over the last 1500 to 2000 years has been focused on philosophy and ritual. These of course have their very vital place in the lives of those who walk the Jewish path. Yet, everything that came forth from Talmudic times and later is not the foundation upon which the Jewish path is founded. No, the Bible is that foundation. Indeed, without the Bible as its source the Talmud could not exist. The Talmud collects together nearly 1000 years of Jewish history, teachings and legends. Yet, the authority of the Talmudic Sages has no other place than in the Bible itself. Therefore, without the Bible, we have nothing, no Judaism, no Talmud and certainly no later so-called Jewish mysticism.

The Bible is the source of all and essentially the Bible is the collected words of the prophets. The words of the prophets are themselves the authentic Kabbalah, therefore, the Bible itself is the authentic Kabbalah. No further texts are needed, nor any mystical philosophies, no lexicon of profound and mysterious symbols, no involved set of intricate metaphors, no series of concepts, ideas and beliefs that take us beyond the realms of our lives here on Earth.

The Biblical Kabbalah was and still is all about serving G-d in simplicity, honesty and integrity, just as did the personages of the Biblical prophets themselves. They are our role models for walking the proper path. Yes, Moses, Elijah and Elisha, and Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, these are our role models and our teachers of the authentic path of G-d, the true reception (Kabbalah) passed on from generation to generation, from mouth to mouth and from hand to hand.

When we walk in the footsteps of the prophets, then we are receiving from them. We become "the receivers." A receiver in Hebrew is called a Mekubal, which today is translated as Kabbalist. Therefore, a true Kabbalist is only one who walks the path of the Biblical prophets. Only the students and disciples of the prophets can rightly be called Kabbalists by the authentic Biblical standard of definition.

As for all the other modern mystical philosophers, let them call themselves whatever they wish. They can reapply terms and words to fit themselves and redefine any reality they so choose. Let the modern mystical philosophers call themselves Kabbalists. Without the original prophetic, spiritual (above intellect) reception, they have indeed received nothing. As such they are "Kabbalists" in name only. Those who embrace this modern application of the name aggrandize themselves, yet accomplish no true spiritual accomplishment with all their academic endeavors.

All these mystical philosophers do is fool themselves and those willing to listen to them and follow them. Woe to the blind who follow the blind and woe to the blind who lead the blind. The philosophical mystical paths of modern days (including those over the last 1000 years) are not the pure and simple path of the Biblical prophets. These modern systems do provide intellectual stimulation and satisfaction for those who embrace them. However, those who choose the universal, original path of the prophets instead of the subjective schools of the philosophers and theologians might not have popularity and fanfare, yet they do have a very personal relationship with the Creator, even as did those in the Bible in whose paths they follow.

Those who wish to serve G-d in truth can easily discover how to do so. All they have to do is directly read G-d's Words through His prophets, as recorded in the Bible. One does not need to confuse oneself by filtering the prophets or other Biblical teachings through later texts, traditions, philosophies or beliefs. The simple is always better. This is always the Way of Heaven.

Today, religion has become so convoluted, inundated as it is with so many variant forms, interpretations and contradictions. We need to put these differences down and place them aside. We need to return to the source, the words of the Bible, themselves. We need to read them the way their authors meant for them to be read and to be understood. We need to embrace the Bible heart to heart and to leave our minds and thinking out of this. G-d commanded us to love Him with all our hearts and to place His words upon our hearts. No mention is made of the "head" anywhere. G-d cares little about what is in our heads, but He cares a whole lot about what is in our hearts. This is the prophetic message. Receive this and you too automatically become a Kabbalist (receiver) in Biblical fashion (the best and only real way).

Silence your tongue from speech. Clear your mind of questions. Open your heart to G-d and His promise is that He will fill it. You will never know what this means as long as all you do is think about it. You've got to be in it, to win it. With G-d in you and you in Him, the reception (Kabbalah) is made complete and with it comes a great many things, things that are known to the heart, but unknowable to the mind.

Go full circle and return to the Bible. No commentaries necessary. All one needs is an open mind and a broken and contrite heart. Open up to G-d and He will fill you. This is His promise. No need to ask any more questions. No further explanations needed. This is the Kabbalah (reception) of the Bible, its one and original true form.