Nurture Your Spiritual Roots

And God said, “Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit-tree bearing fruit after its kind.”

—Genesis 1:11

The symbol most associated with the wisdom of Kabbalah is the Tree of Life. Kabbalah and all the ancient writings are replete with examples from the plant-kingdom. According to Kabbalistic Rabbi Baruch Shalom HaLevi Ashlag, the holiday of Tu B’Shevat (15th of Shvat—the fifth month on the Hebrew calendar) is rooted high in the spiritual world. Ancient Hebrew scriptures used the spiritual roots of vegetation to explain human spiritual processes. They used it as a learning tool, and we can benefit by using it to “touch base” with our souls.

The words below are based on a letter written by Kabbalistic Rabbi Baruch Ashlag, the firstborn son and successor of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, a.k.a. Baal HaSulam, author of the Sulam (ladder) commentary on The Book of Zohar. In this letter, Rabbi Ashlag explains to his students that the works of the field reflect spiritual processes, and how we can experience them.

ADAM AND THE TREE OF LIFE

In Kabbalah, the terms nature and Creator are considered synonyms. The term life is defined as being in contact with nature and its Creator, and the word meat can either symbolize life, meaning contact with the Creator, or knowledge, which is knowing why the Creator works the way He does. Actually, the degree called The Tree of Knowledge is the highest spiritual degree one can achieve.

The first person to discover the tree of life was Adam. He was an ordinary person who felt inclined to research and discover what lies beyond our world. When Moses described what happened to Adam, he used a tree as an analogy of Adam’s relationship with the Creator. The Creator told him he could eat from every tree in the garden, excluding the tree of knowledge—reflecting the last and only degree Adam couldn’t reach.

The Creator knew that if Adam discovered the knowledge contained in that tree, he would want to leave the Garden, since he would know as much as the Creator. That, in turn, would detach him from the Creator-life—and this is why the Creator forbade him to eat off that tree. We all know the end: Adam ate, and we are denied Adam’s promised eternal life.

But all is not lost. The Creator also gave us ancient writings that teach us how to return to the Garden of Eden, and examples, which Kabbalah calls “branches.” These branches can indicate how things really work. If we study the writings along with the right explanations we will understand the spiritual processes that manifest in every plant, and we will learn to emulate them in our souls.

ABOUT BNEI BARUCH

Bnei Baruch is a non-profit organization that is spreading the wisdom of Kabbalah to accelerate the spirituality of humankind. Its founder and president is Kabbalalist Rav Michael Laitman, PhD, who was the disciple and personal assistant to Rabbi Baruch Ashlag, the son of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (author of the Sulam (ladder) commentary on The Book of Zohar).

Laitman’s scientific method provides individuals of all faiths, religions, and cultures with the precise tools necessary for embarking on a captivating path of self-discovery and spiritual ascent. With this focus being primarily on inner processes that individuals undergo at their own pace, Bnei Baruch welcomes people of all ages and lifestyles to engage in this rewarding process.

In recent years, a massive worldwide search for the answers to life’s questions has been underway. Society has lost its ability to see reality for what it is and in its place superficial and often misleading concepts have appeared. Bnei Baruch reaches out to all those who are seeking awareness beyond the standard, people who are seeking to understand our true purpose for being here.

Bnei Baruch offers practical guidance and a reliable method for understanding the world’s phenomena. The authentic teaching method, devised by Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, not only helps overcome the fears and tribulations of everyday life, but initiates a process in which individuals extend themselves beyond their present boundaries and limitations.

Executive Editor: Chaim Ratz
Production: Uri Laitman
Research: Markos Zographos
Design: Baruch Khovov
Consulting Editor: Josia Nakash
Creative Staff:

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AUTHENTIC WISDOM FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Tu B’Shvat

Nurture Your Spiritual Roots

“THERE IS NOT A BLADE OF GRASS THAT DOES NOT HAVE A LOT ABOVE THAT STRIKES IT AND TELLS IT, ‘GROW’” (MISHNA RISA 10:6). IN BNEI BARUCH IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO TOUCH UPON OUR SPIRITUAL ROOTS BY SHEER REFLECTION USING THE ANCIENT WISDOM OF KABBALAH.

The spiritual roots of gardening—Tu B’Shevat—provide a remarkable opportunity to experience spiritual processes, and how we can reflect on them. By the sweat of your face you will eat bread. —Genesis 3:19

In the days of Moses, spirituality was a tangible reality. Everyone experienced the spiritual world just as we feel the physical world today. For them, there wasn’t the rift that exists today between us and spirituality. They didn’t have to learn it; they lived it. When Moses wrote his Torah, he used the words everybody used, so people would understand him. The difference between Moses’ contemporaries and us is that they knew he was using mundane words to write about spirituality, and we think he was actually referring to our physical world. Indeed, how can we think otherwise? We no longer feel spirituality the way they did.

This is why Kabbalists refer to the language of the Bible as “the language of roots and branches.” Our world is only the outermost layer of the spiritual worlds, the shell, if you will, the farthest branch.

To fully understand life you need to explore where things happen— at the roots. This is what Moses explained. “By the sweat of your face you will eat bread,” for instance, tells us that if we want to eat (become spiritually nourished) we need to work on it. Since Adam’s sin, contact with the Creator is not a given, we have to cultivate it using all the means at our disposal. And the promised reward—the tree of knowledge.
Leaves are very important. They bring joy. If we nourish our souls, we will enhance and fill our lives with spiritual fruit. This is the essence of spiritual gardening. According to Kabbalah, you will discover where you are not in contact with the Creator. Don’t talk about it, remain with it, it is a tool that you will use. In time, these discoveries about yourself will give you great powers.

There needn’t be too many leaves so they will not exhaust the tree’s water and energy, but we need to have enough of them to help the fruits grow lushly and plentifully. Similarly, when you are learning how to become spiritual, don’t worry if you haven’t made contact with the Creator quickly, your attempts are your leaves. Even if you’re unaware of it, they are protecting the fruits already growing within you, hidden in the foliage.

Water
And God said: “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.”

-Genesis 1:8

We saved the best for last. Water exists above—in heaven—and below—on Earth. It is the ultimate solvent and the prime ingredient of everything that is alive. Not surprisingly, water also represents the Creator, or actually, His quality of mercy. As the Creator is omniscient, water, too, retains information about everything it touches. Plants can use this quality in water, and this tells them when to bud and when to blossom.

To grow, a plant needs only water and a few minerals, which it often takes from the water itself. No other substance can be the sole cause of evolution and growth like water. The hydrological cycle allows water to connect the “higher” worlds with the “lower” worlds, just as the Creator does it in spirituality. Knowing when and how much to “water” your soul with the quality of the Creator is therefore the single most important piece of information a seeker of spirituality needs.

Becoming a “Spiritual Gardener”

The wisdom of Kabbalah was hidden for many centuries—since the days of Abraham the Patriarch, to the end of the 20th century. Today, however, we can all enjoy what it has to offer. To a spiritual person, Kabbalah is the hoes, the pruning-shears, and the plow. The Creator gives the water of life, and we need only turn our “waste” into fertilizer and discover the Creator so our souls can blossom. In the words of King Solomon, Kabbalah “is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that holdeth her fast” (Proverbs 3:18).