

B”H

Introductory Kabbalah

Lessons from the Patriarchs

from Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

The Torah begins with the Book of Genesis. Genesis is different from the other 4 books of the Pentateuch as it contains only a handful of commandments and is mostly composed of stories about the Patriarchs. Nonetheless, it makes up the first fifth of the Torah. What this is telling us is that before moving on to the four other Books of the Pentateuch, before receiving the Torah and all its commandments, we must first incorporate the lessons of Genesis. Without Genesis, we cannot set upon an upright path of serving God. What are the main lessons that we learn from the Patriarchs?

In this article, we are going to survey three different Kabbalistic models based on which we can understand the relationship between the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. From each of these models, we will gain an insight, understanding, and new consciousness that we can incorporate into living spiritually.

The Patriarchs as Archetypes

In the Bible,¹ the Book of Genesis is referred to as *Sefer Hayashar*—literally meaning “The Book of the Straight”—after the Patriarchs who walked in a straight or upright path with God. By walking in a straight path with God’s will, the Patriarchs also walked directly to God’s essence. When the Torah describes Abraham’s travels through the Land of Israel it says, “Abraham traveled to and fro to the south.”² Chassidut explains that the south symbolizes God’s infinite light.

From the actions of each of the three Patriarchs, we learn a different aspect of serving the Almighty, because each of the Patriarchs illuminates an archetypal way that we should strive to incorporate into our own lives. The sages state this idea with the oft-quoted words, “Only three are called forefathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”³ To understand the archetype that each Patriarch represents, we need to first understand his inner essence. The study of the essence of the Patriarchs is one of the cornerstones of Kabbalistic thinking. As the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we continue their legacy, and we too can strive to emulate their actions, as the sages say, “A person



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must demand of himself, 'When will my actions approach those of my forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.'"

Balance

The first principle that we learn in Kabbalah is that the three Patriarchs are archetypal souls. As such, among the *sefirot*—the emanations through which God creates reality (at every moment) and reveals Himself in it—the Patriarchs correspond to loving-kindness, might, and beauty. Abraham represents the right dimension of reality, the dimension that is manifest in the *sefirah* of loving-kindness. Isaac represents the left dimension and the *sefirah* of might. Jacob represents the middle dimension, represented by the *sefirah* of beauty.

The right, left, and middle dimensions are described in the introduction to the *Tikunei Zohar* as "one long, one short, and one intermediate," respectively. This is one of the most foundational statements in Kabbalah, revealed by Elijah the prophet, and providing the framework for ordering the *sefirot* along three axes: right, left, and middle.⁴ The ordering of the *sefirot* along three axes suggests a balanced structure, representative of a rectified and stable state in which the powers represented by each of the *sefirot* are balanced. In fact, in the *Zohar*, "balance"⁵ is considered the symbol of a rectified reality. In fact, whenever we seek balance, we must have three elements. Rabbi Abraham Abulafia, one of the early medieval Kabbalists demonstrated this by pointing to the fact that the numerical value of the first word of the Torah, "In the beginning" (בְּרֵאשִׁית) equals the value of the phrase, "three things together" (שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים יַחַד). In addition, the backbone, as it were, of the first verse of the Torah spells the word "three" (שְׁלֹשָׁה).⁶ This indicates that the triad—especially its characteristic ability of being balanced—is a cornerstone in the Torah.

Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis

The relationship between the three Patriarchs can be understood in terms of another well-known triad:

- thesis
- antithesis
- synthesis⁷

Abraham provides us with a thesis—loving-kindness. Isaac suggests the antithesis to Abraham's thesis—might. Jacob, who is described as the select forefather⁸ represents their synthesis, the synthesis of love and might, which in Kabbalah is called mercy, or compassion. Let us fill-out this basic structure.

The thesis represents the first statement⁹ about some topic, the first approximation to the final conclusion that will be arrived at. The thesis has to be simple and easy to understand and has to cover as much ground as possible. When it comes to the spiritual path of the Patriarchs, the thesis should also resemble the manner in which God created the world in the beginning. Everything begins on the right side, including the creation of the world. God created the world out of love and because of His love. As is stated in the Kabbalistic tradition, God created the world because, “the nature of the Good [God] is to do good.” The Torah too was given from God’s right side.¹⁰ Considering all this, it is very appropriate that Abraham’s thesis is loving-kindness and its inner motivation, love, the first *sefirah* that one should recognize as belonging to the right.

The notion that Abraham represents the thesis, the starting point, is further illustrated in the second account of creation, which begins with the words, “This is the story of the heavens and the earth when they were created....” The letters of the word meaning, “when they were created” (בְּהִקְרָאִים) permute into a word meaning “with Abraham” (בְּאַבְרָהָם), suggesting that the heavens and the earth were created with the loving-kindness of Abraham.

But, the thesis is not enough. The world cannot be sustained with love alone. For balance, a measure of might, or strength, or judgment is necessary. Judgment is not contradictory to love. We do not need to imagine that love and judgment are battling it out. Judgment is not opposed to the inner essence and light inherent in love; it is the constructive criticism regarding the outward manifestations of love. Motivated by the fear lest the positive energies inherent in love fall into the wrong hands, judgment supports love by limiting it. In general, the best way to define an antithesis is that it is a critical review of the thesis—it does not undermine the thesis, but rather seeks to refine it. And so, judgment, might, and strength, the antithesis introduced by Isaac, serve to limit the effects of love, so that love might not careen completely out of control. Love is a very strong force that has a tendency to nullify reality. This may sound strange at first, but we will shortly explain it in more depth. Judgment and might serve to balance love and prevent it from becoming a tumultuous force, eventually transforming it into compassion, Jacob’s inner essence.

Love has a tendency to spread where it should not. The *sefirah* of loving-kindness, whose inner motivation of love, is best described as an attractive and extensive force. It easily attracts the wrong crowd, as it were, and its scope tends to extend without boundary even into improper applications.

One of the best examples of this is self-love, or egocentric love, which invariably translates into self-worship. Proverbs says, “Love conceals all blemishes.” Though this is

true when it comes to love for others, it is doubly so for self-love. Because self-love is so natural, most people are unable to see their own faults or iniquities. The *Zohar* states that, “There is no worship like the worship motivated by love.” But, of course, worship and service should be of God, not of one’s self. By adding the antithetical criticism of judgment and might, the essence of Isaac’s Divine path, love can be kept on track and directed towards the Almighty.

Again, there is no conflict here, just as there was no conflict between Abraham and his beloved son Isaac. Abraham and Isaac loved one another and complemented one another perfectly. The apex of their union was attained at the Binding of Isaac, which the *Zohar* explains is called a “binding” and not the “sacrifice” because it bound Abraham and Isaac together at an existential level, resulting in a complete inter-inclusion of their essences. Isaac’s rectified love for God alone motivated him to stretch his neck out on the altar, allowing Abraham to sacrifice him. In doing so, Isaac set an example for the instruction later given by Moses to the Jewish people, “You shall love God with all of your heart and with all of your life...,”¹¹ which the sages explain¹² means that you shall love God, even if He is about to take your life. Abraham’s new dimension of might and fear of God, were summarily pronounced by God’s angel who said: “For now I know that you fear God.”

The synthesis between love and judgment is found in compassion, or mercy, Jacob’s essence, and the inner motivating power of the *sefirah* of beauty.¹³ Because compassion is the truly balanced way of life, Jacob is known as, “the select among the forefathers.”¹⁴ Analyzed Kabbalistically, Jacob’s status is a result of the synthesis of the qualities of his father and grandfather that he represents. Abraham represents the desire to give and bestow, but relatively blindly and without limits. Eventually, blind desire to give becomes motivated by self-love and self-interest. It no longer matters where he is giving. The giver blocks out all judgments about the worthiness of the goal he is giving for or to. Finally, the goal becomes unimportant, the only thing that matters is that he has given and that his name is aggrandized (publicly—as the benefactor of such and such a cause—or privately, in the right circles).¹⁵ For this reason, a person needs to have fear—fear of being wrong, of directing one’s energy to the wrong place. When a person fears God, God guides him in giving to the proper and pure place where his giving will indeed be a benefit to the receiver and to himself. God will help him give in a way that will not cause destruction. Fear, the antithesis of love, the true foundation of the world, ensures that the love is not misdirected and does not fall into the fallacies of the mundane, both in respect to one’s goals and one’s motivations for loving and giving. By

helping us remain critical, fear safeguards us from acting out of self-interest and ego. Put another way, fear adds sensitivity to our acts of loving-kindness.¹⁶

You might think that now everything is balanced, because now I both know that I should give and I am wary of giving for the wrong reasons and to an improper place. But, there is a third and final stage, without which, love and fear are still incomplete and this stage we learn from Jacob, the archetypal soul of beauty and compassion.

The truth is that no matter how much self-criticism I have, I can never be a hundred percent sure that my acts of loving-kindness, my acts of charity are properly motivated and done without any self-interest. Likewise, I cannot expect that the person or cause I am giving to is also one-hundred percent perfect because no human being is perfect, just as I know that I myself am not perfect. Still, I should not refrain from giving. My giving can thus be carried out only if I feel compassion, compassion that comes from a solid and truthful foundation of caring for others. Though I may be tempted to think that because the world and people are imperfect, it is better not to give, we are told that God gave the truth to Jacob. Enduring truth in the end, truth that will stand the test of time, can only be found in Jacob's essential quality of compassion—the synthesis of Abraham's love and Isaac's fear.

From Jacob we learn how to leap over the failures of ourselves and of others and that it may very well be that in the end I am giving for the wrong reasons and the one receiving from me is also imperfect. Still, compassion allows us to overcome these fears. The sages tell us that one of the characteristic traits by which a Jew is known is compassion. Jews are the compassionate children of our compassionate forefathers, specifically, we all the children of Jacob.

Jacob himself learned how to overcome fear from his father Isaac's might. God told Abraham, "For in Isaac will be your offspring." The sages explain that the words "in Isaac" imply that only some of Isaac's offspring will—i.e., Jacob, but not Esau—will be considered Abraham's offspring. In other words, Jacob's compassion more strongly reflects Abraham's loving-kindness than it does Isaac's might. For this reason, though the *sefirah* of beauty lies along the middle axis, it is considered to lean to the right.

So our thesis-antithesis-synthesis model began with a predisposition to give, tempered by a critical view of the giver and the beneficiary, finally ending with a renewed commitment to giving. Though God created the world with loving-kindness, he did not create a perfect world, requiring us to exercise both fear and compassion to reach a balanced state. When we exercise this foundational lesson learnt from the Patriarchs, reality treats us comparably, because it means that we have come to terms with the fact that no one is perfect and that we have to put a compassionate cap on

judging reality. In the end, compassion, as the synthesis of love and criticism, best exemplifies God's purpose in creating the world for the benefit of His creations. It is compassion that will guide us in ushering in the Messianic times and the fulfillment of God's intent that, "The world shall be founded upon loving-kindness."¹⁷

The Patriarchs and the Process of Creation

Now that we have had some experience with the Patriarchs and the relationship between them, let us use these ideas to look at a somewhat wider subject: the process of creation.

The most important Kabbalistic text after the *Zohar* is Rabbi Isaac Luria's (the Arizal) tome, *Eitz Chayim* (lit., Tree of Life). The Arizal lived and taught in Safed following the death of the greatest Kabbalist in the generation before him, Rabbi Moses Cordovero (the Ramak). Together, the Ramak and the Arizal are the two pillars of Kabbalah as it was revealed in Safed.¹⁸

In the *Eitz Chayim*, the Arizal describes that the process of creation comprises three main stages:

Stage 1: God's Infinite light permeates all leaving no room for creation.

Stage 2: To make room for consciousness that is separate from His own,¹⁹ God contracts His Infinite light and creates a void.

Stage 3: The emanation of a ray of the Infinite light that enters the void and around which reality is created.

A few words of explanation about this description are due. It may seem that these stages follow a logical and therefore necessary order. Given that God's expression (light) fills everything, in order to create an autonomous being it seems necessary that God contract (i.e., limit and remove) His light. In other words, the contraction seems to be a logically necessary stage. But, the truth is that God is absolutely free, and this includes choosing any number of infinite options to fulfill His will—but arguably these other options, though possible, would leave us baffled. The fact that He chose a logical process, one that we can understand, tells us that God is interested in us understanding the creative process so that when we come to create ourselves, we emulate His actions.

Another important point is that the Arizal is not describing creation in the same way that a scientist would describe a chemical reaction in his laboratory journal. The Arizal is using a (geometric) metaphor. In reality, God's expression and Presence²⁰ is not lacking in any way from the void. From God's Infinite point of view, nothing has changed in His Presence, nor has anything been altered, except for the fact that He made possible the existence of a point of view that negates His exclusive reality and Presence.

Finally, though the ray (known as the *kav*) which entered the void is of God's Infinite light, it is limited and does not extend to fill the entire void. If it were to do so, the entire point of the creative process, the creation of autonomous consciousness, would be negated.

In Kabbalistic terminology, these three stages²¹ are described, in short, as:

- the Infinite light
- contraction
- the ray

And, they correspond directly with the essence of the three Patriarchs, as follows:

Abraham	the Infinite light
Isaac	Contraction
Jacob	the ray

The Infinite light is not God Himself, but His expression. Before the creative process begins, God's Infinite light permeates all that there is. This is the essential source of Abraham's soul, and governs his most basic experience of God. As a child, Abraham searched for God because he felt Him permeating all of reality (yet, He remains concealed). As an adult, Abraham described the Almighty as God-world,²² equating the reality of the world, of all of creation, with God. Just as loving-kindness has no borders, so the Infinite light of the Almighty is initially without any borders and extends universally. Furthermore, in Abraham's worldview both Isaac and Ishma'el were his beloved sons, without any innate distinction. Only God's words that "In Isaac shall you have offspring that is named after you,"²³ focused Abraham's spiritual legacy on Isaac and removed it from Ishma'el. Even today, a convert to Judaism is called "the son of Abraham" (or, "the daughter of Sarah"), because of Abraham's universal message.²⁴

In Kabbalah, God's Infinite light already expresses the Creator's will to create the world out of a feeling of loving-kindness for its creatures. As such, God's Infinite light is described as including a complete meta-plan for creation. The meta-plan is the essence of the 231 Gates Front and Back,²⁵ which are first described in *Sefer Yetzirah*, attributed to Abraham.

Nonetheless, creation cannot begin until a void is created in which autonomous consciousness can exist. As noted above, the contraction creating the void is metaphoric. Chassidic teachings explain that literally speaking, the contraction of God's Infinite light, represents its concealment and that this was achieved by God revealing His essential

being above and beyond His expression.²⁶ A modern physical metaphor that captures this idea is a black hole. The idea behind a black hole is that there is so much mass present in such a small space that the space-time continuum is curved to the point that not even light (which has no mass) can navigate its way around the black hole's gravitational sink. As a result, even though a black hole may have an infinite amount of energy, none of it can radiate outwards. If you would suddenly place a black hole at the center of our sun, for example, the sun would suddenly seem to go dark, as all of its great mass and radiation would be engulfed and essentially dwarfed by the black hole.²⁷ This stage suggests Isaac's incredible might.

Following the contraction, a focused ray of God's infinite light, called the *kav*, is reintroduced into the void, from which revealed reality is emanated. The *kav* is the subject of the prophetic verse, "Then, like the dawn, your light shall pierce [the world]." ²⁸ The verb "pierce" (יִבְקַע) in Hebrew is spelled with the same letters as Jacob (יַעֲקֹב), whom we recall was blessed by God with the words, "You shall spread out..." ²⁹ like the light of the *kav* that spreads out to create revealed reality.

Using the essential nature of each of the Patriarchs, we can now translate the three-stage process of creation into the language of relationships and use it to build a new model. A giving relationship, like the relationship between the Creator and creation or the relationship of a spiritual leader and his disciples, begins with feelings of infinite love on the part of the giver. But, like God's infinite light, infinite love and loving-kindness leave no room for anyone else. Practically speaking, if I as an individual express my infinite love for my children, for instance, then essentially I will not leave them any room to grow as individuals, because my love will stifle their autonomy. Similarly, every spiritual leader has to restrain his involvement and guidance in his students' lives and actions. Otherwise, they will lose their identities as individuals. Infinite love, caring, and involvement ultimately destroy the borders between giver and receiver, making a real relationship impossible.³⁰

The sages tell us that when God gave the Torah at Mt. Sinai, He coerced it on the Jewish people. Though the Torah was given because of God's love for us, it was an expression of God's infinite light and infinite love, and therefore could only be experienced as nullifying our existence and forcing us to receive it. The expression of infinite love cancels free will.

When it comes to raising children and nurturing a mature relationship between parent and child the same ideas hold true. Though as a parent I may feel like just giving infinitely, without any regard for my child's actions, be they good or bad, I know that this is not for his or her benefit.³¹ Instead, a child has to feel that actions have

consequences; good behavior is rewarded and bad behavior is punished. This helps a child develop a sense of responsibility for himself and hence a sense of individuality and independence. The previous Rebbe, in his treatise on education, states that one of the most important principles in raising children is knowing how to balance reward and punishment correctly.

Still, even after acquiring independence and a sense of responsibility for his actions, realizing their consequences, a child must feel that his parents are with him at all times, supporting him, no matter what. Even in moments of darkness, the parent's loving and compassionate radiance must permeate his sense of living in a metaphoric void. A young person's mature and rectified (i.e., balanced) character can develop only around this ray of parental compassion descending from above. This is secret of the *kav* that follows the initial contraction of God's infinite light and love.

The Three Patriarchs and Jewish Faith

Now let us apply the model of the three Patriarchs to one of the most basic spiritual principles in life: faith. As we know, Abraham was the first monotheist and the founder of all monotheistic faith. Faith is a very complex topic, and warrants a great deal of study. So, in keeping with our introductory tone in this article, let us discuss it in simple terms.

Three Stages of Faith: Omnipresence, Free Will, and Divine Providence

Abraham taught us that God is truly omnipresent, not just that he is present everywhere but that indeed God is everything. This is the meaning of the Jewish declaration of faith, the *Shema*, "Hear O' Israel, *Havayah* is our God, *Havayah* is one!" The Torah commands us to recite the *Shema* twice every day, once in the evening and once in the morning. To begin to say the *Shema* we have to cover our eyes,³² because visibly reality does not seem to be all Divine. Reciting the *Shema*, we try to annul our very being in God's infinite light; we try to experience that indeed there is nothing but God, in which case we, and everyone around us, do not have independent consciousness, but are solely the expressions of God. This is the Abraham's understanding of God's omnipresence.

The Bible describes Abraham language similar to the *Shema*: "Abraham was one!" Abraham's greatness was his experience that indeed God is everything and everything is God. To cultivate our Jewish faith we have to return to this pristine experience (at least) twice daily.

Since the *Shema* is meant to help us experience the nullification of our being, one may wonder how it can be that the very next verse states, "You shall love *Havayah*, your

God....” How can I love God, if I don’t have an I in the first place? Who is it exactly that is meant to feel this unlimited love for the Almighty? This is a central question addressed by Chassidut.³³ Since the *gematria* of “love” (אהבה) and “one” (אחד) are the same, we can add that grasping God’s oneness, His omnipresence during the *Shema*, is like experiencing His infinite love—both leave us without a sense of separate being. The answer is beyond our present scope. Suffice it to say that this is the first stage of Jewish faith: God is everything and everything is God.

The second stage in cultivating Jewish faith involves recognizing that we have free will. Though this may sound like a simple tenet of faith, many religions and philosophies deny the existence of free will. For Maimonides, free will is one of the foundations of faith.³⁴ Indeed, the *gematria* of one of the idioms in Hebrew for “free will” (חפש בחירה) is 613, the same as the number of commandments in the Torah, providing a beautiful numerical illustration of free will as the necessary prerequisite to God commanding us to perform His *mitzvot*. Though most people do experience a sense of freedom in their actions, accepting God’s omnipresence on faith would seem to negate free will. Clearly, free will is antithetical to the notion that God is everything, because God’s omnipresence (as defined earlier) should make the existence of another autonomous will impossible. Still, this paradoxical state, in which God is both omnipresent and all encompassing, but there exists free will, is indeed made possible by the contraction. The contraction limits God’s infinite light giving free will to every soul. By creating a void within His expression, God allows autonomous will to exist and grants this freedom to every soul.³⁵

Following the thesis (God’s is everything) and its antithesis (the soul has autonomous free will) comes their synthesis, the third element of Jewish faith: Divine Providence. Divine Providence in Judaism specifically refers to personal Divine Providence. Even though I have free will and am autonomous, God directs everything that happens in my life—helping me and guiding me with every step I take. When an individual decides to embark on a positive path, purifying himself and his life, the Almighty facilitates it.³⁶ Conversely, when an individual chooses the opposite direction, he is not helped, but an opening is made available, for the measure by which God encourages the good is always greater than the measure by which He allows the opposite.

The ray of God’s infinite light, the *kav*, symbolizes Divine Providence, the synthesis, which states that the key is in my hands: I make the decision on how to conduct my life, and God helps. Or, stated colloquially, God helps those who help themselves. In Psalms, God’s omnipresence is described as tied into human action, “God is your shadow over

your right hand.” The right hand symbolizes action and God as the hand’s shadow (but over it and not under it, as would be expected), signifies in beautiful poetic language the paradox of Divine Providence. But, there is a further idea implicit in this image. The right hand corresponds to the *sefirah* of loving-kindness, to Abraham’s essence, suggesting that by increasing our awareness of Divine Providence and relating to the Almighty differently, we can come asymptotically close to experiencing God’s infinite light directly. The Torah describes Abraham’s experience of Divine Providence as “Abraham’s shield”—as if God’s infinite light is a shield guarding Abraham, ensuring his success in all that he does.³⁷ As such, Jacob, whose essence corresponds to this synthesis, is described in the verse, “Jacob who redeemed Abraham,” i.e., when Jacob’s consciousness falls to the background (a state described in Kabbalah as Jacob’s minor essence) it leads to an awareness of Abraham’s consciousness in the foreground.

In concluding this final model, it is important to stress that normally, when teaching the foundations of Jewish faith we state the two principles of absolute free will and absolute Divine Providence. As we saw, these tenets of Jewish faith correspond to Isaac and Jacob. Abraham’s experience of God’s omnipresence lies in the background and serves as the backdrop upon which these two principles should mature in our lives. As such, Divine Providence and free will should always be accompanied with the sense that God is all and all is God.³⁸

Conclusion

Recapping, we have constructed three basic models that stem from a Kabbalistic analysis of the Patriarchs. The first model is about achieving a state of balanced consciousness that allows us to use our wealth, both physical and spiritual, to give in the right way and in the right place, in a realistic fashion.

The second model builds upon the first and applies it to a rudimentary, but complete description of the three basic dynamics in the process of creation.

The third model applies the essence of the Patriarchs to our most fundamental day-to-day beliefs and experiences of life. The final model encourages us to take responsibility for our actions and for our life, again in a way that balances our free will with God’s Divine Providence.

Based on a lecture given Saturday, 18th of Cheshvan, 5769 at Ascent, Safed

Notes

1. Joshua 10:13; 2 Samuel 1:18. See *Avodah Zarah* 25a.
2. Genesis 12:9.
3. *Berachot* 16b and *Rashi* there.
4. See more in *What You Need to Know About Kabbalah*.
5. *Matkala*, in Aramaic. This is the noun used to describe the state of rectified reality that appears in the beginning of *Sifra Detzni'uta* (lit., the Concealed Book), one of the most esoteric parts of the *Zohar* (II, 176b ff.). The *Matkala* is the subject of a multipart discourse by the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe appearing in *Sefer Hama'amarim* 5671, pp. 88-144.
6. We can see this by writing out the first verse in 4 lines, each with 7 letters:

ב	ר	א	ש	י	ת	ב
ר	א	א	ל	ה	י	ם
א	ת	ה	ש	מ	י	ם
ו	א	ת	ה	א	ר	ץ

The middle column spells the word "three" (שלשה).

7. *Toldot Ya'akov Yosef*, beginning of *parshat Toldot*.
8. בחיר שבאבות.
9. The sages stress the importance of the thesis in their idiom, "Everything follows the beginning" (see *Pirkei Derabbi Eliezer*, ch. 41 and *Eiruvim* 41a).
10. Deuteronomy 33:2. This verse suggests that even fire, which corresponds to the left side and the *sefirah* of might, originates from the right.
11. Deuteronomy 6:5.
12. *Berachot* 54a.
13. Beauty as the middle path is expressed in the sages' saying, "What is the path that a man should choose? That which is beautiful both to him and beautiful to others" (*Avot* 2:1), i.e., it balances his perception of beautiful with the perception of those around him.
14. *Bereishit Rabbah* 76:1.
15. Though sometimes it is proper to publicly name those who contribute, the publicity can still divert the person from giving to the right places.
16. In Kabbalah, fear is the energy of sensitivity.
17. Psalms 89:3.
18. The name Safed (צפת, in Hebrew) stems from the verb meaning to anticipate or wait for, referring to the question asked of every Jew in the Heavenly tribunal: Did you anticipate, did you wait for the redemption? As the *Zohar* tells us, thanks to the study of Kabbalah, the redemption will indeed come in a kind and compassionate manner.
19. Clearly by this we mean human consciousness, which enjoys the autonomy and freedom to deny its own Creator. That human beings are the ultimate purpose of creation is suggested in the first verse of Genesis: "In the beginning, God created the...." The word for article "the" in Hebrew is את and its *gematria* is equal to that of the word for "people" (אנשים)!
20. The Divine Presence is called the *Shechinah*. The first human consciousness to autonomously discover God was Abraham. The sages relate that when Abraham was 3 years old, he realized

that just as a castle must have a master, so the world must have a Creator. In response to Abraham's search, the Almighty revealed Himself. The sages describe this with the words, "The master of the castle revealed himself and said, 'I am the master of the castle.'" The numerical value of these words in Hebrew (אני בעל הבירה) is equal to the *gematria* of *Shechinah* (שכינה).

21. The 3 stages can be described as light, darkness, and light. The *gematria* of "light, darkness, light" (אור חשך אור) in Hebrew is 742, or 7 times the value of "ray" (קו), the name of the third stage, which as we shall see corresponds to Jacob, the select of the Patriarchs, indicating that it is through Jacob, as above, that God's will is completed in reality. Moreover, the value of "ray," 106 is equal to the *mispar keedmee* (primordial number) of *Havayah* (אבגדהוואבגדה), God's essential Name.
22. "And he [Abraham] called out in the Name of *Havayah*, God-world" (Genesis 21:33).
23. Ibid. 21:12.
24. Indeed, based on a passage in the Talmud, we learn that spiritually Abraham is too open, willing to receive even converts that are not wholehearted, but his wife, Sarah, makes sure that these individuals are not accepted to Judaism.
25. See entry for "*Kadmon*" on Innerpedia or <http://www.inner.org/worlds/kadmon.htm>.
26. This can be understood by the well-known Chassidic analogy that sunlight has no illumination value when one is looking at the sun itself. Sunlight only illuminates the darkness of space. Likewise, God's infinite light (the expression of His infinite nature) cannot be experienced when God Himself is revealed. Additionally, just as one cannot look at the sun itself, so one cannot grasp God Himself, but still, His infinite light cannot be perceived when He Himself is revealed.
27. As explained in length in *Transforming Darkness into Light*, the complete three-stage process of transformation taught by the Ba'al Shem Tov of submission-separation-sweetening is learned from the word חשמל (pronounced *chashmal*). The two letter initials of the modern Hebrew translation of "black hole" (חור שחור) are חש, which are the first two letters of this word, suggesting that the physical effects of a black hole, which we have used as a metaphor for the contraction, resemble submission. If so, then the final two stages—separation and sweetening—correspond to the effects of the ray of God's infinite light—the *kav*—that enters the void. The external aspect of the *kav* is responsible for the myriad worlds created in the void and thus acts as a distinguishing or separating force. The internal aspect of the *kav*, described metaphorically as a string (חיט) acts to thread these myriad worlds together, maintaining a measure of unity and communication between them and thus representing a sweetening force.
28. Isaiah 58:8.
29. Genesis 28:14.
30. As explained in length in Chassidut (Mittler Rebbe's *Bei'urei Hazohar* 6a-c) this is the reason that the Kabbalists did not describe relationships in terms of giver and receiver (משפיע ומקבל) but rather used the model of the procreative act (זיווג) between male and female. The model of the giver and receiver is that of a rich man giving charity to a poor man—a situation in which the receiver contributes nothing but the vessel needed by the receiver. This is a relatively immature relationship, in which the receiver is all but nullified by the giver.

But, the Torah (Leviticus 12:2; see *Rashi* there) stresses that a man and a woman contribute equally to the creation of their offspring—with the woman's contribution actually preceding her husband's. Thus, both sides are giving and receiving and there is complete unification (יחוד) between them, the hallmark of a mature relationship.

Likewise, God created us in order to enter into a mature relationship. From God's transcendental point of view, all of reality is simply He Himself. But, from God's immanent point of view, He and we can engage in a mature relationship, as it were, that leads to real unification.

31. King David treated his son Adoniyah this way and he ended up claiming to be the royal heir to his father's throne, against his father's will before his death.
32. With our right hand, the hand of loving-kindness, Abraham's essence.
33. The Alter Rebbe, the founder of Chabad, once said that all that he teaches comes to answer this question.
34. See *Hilchot Teshuvah*, chs. 5 and 6.
35. It follows from this discussion that the essential identity of the soul—the "I"—can be defined as its freedom to make choices.
36. *Shabbat* 104a, and elsewhere.
37. In particular, there are three possible perspectives on the role that Divine Providence plays, as taught by Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev on the liturgical description of the Almighty as, "A helping, delivering, and shielding King" (*Kedushat Levi, Likutim*). If we grasp the Almighty as helping us, then we still feel that our actions are primary and God's help is secondary, pushing us along. If we grasp the Almighty as delivering us, then we already sense that without Divine Providence nothing would happen; our actions and the Almighty's actions are equally important. But, it is possible—and this was the sentiment encouraged by the Ba'al Shem Tov—that a person experience himself as merely a placeholder for God's actions. At this level, God is experienced as the God of Abraham, Abraham's shield, who alone acts in reality, and the human being is merely a pointer pointing to God's actions.
38. The two sides of the Chassidic adage "God is all, all is God" are known as the continual "run and return" of the essence of the Divine soul of Israel. First comes the realization that there is nothing else but God – "God is all [there is]." But this "run" to God alone would seem to negate the existence of independent reality all together. So immediately this realization must be balanced by its complement "return" – "all [that exists] is God." The world does indeed exist, it is not an illusion, but it itself is ultimately no other than God Himself (a totally paradoxical "surprise" that will become manifest to all with the final redemption and the coming of the Mashiach). The first half – "God is all" – is our heritage from Abraham, the second half – "all is God" – is our heritage from Isaac ("all [is]") and Jacob ("[all] is God"). The second half of the adage must follow the first half (as explained in the text, Isaac and Jacob must appear on the backdrop of Abraham), for otherwise it would likely degenerate into pantheism.