

# Learning Kabbalah Through Humor

by Simcha (Sam) Krause

Upon waking in the morning, a woman told her husband, "I just dreamed that you gave me a pearl necklace for our anniversary. What do you think it means?"

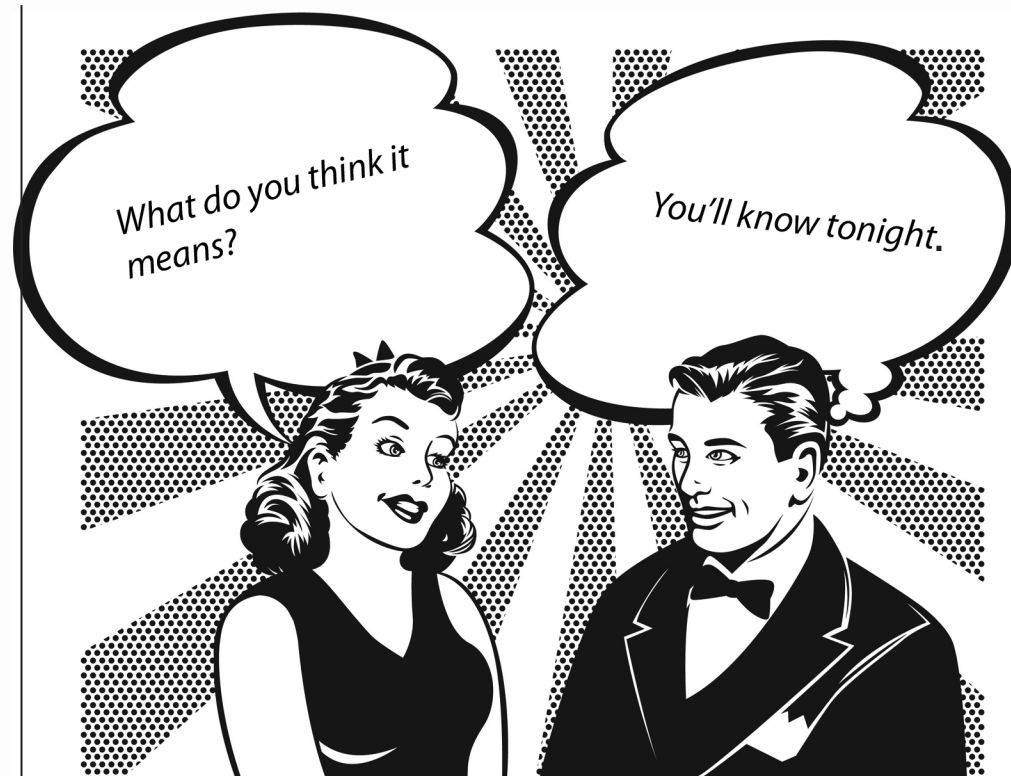
"You'll know tonight," he said mysteriously.

That evening, the man came home with a small wrapped package and gave it to his wife.

Delighted, she ripped open the wrapping paper and opened the box. Inside lay a book entitled, "The Meaning of Dreams."

Kabbalah teaches us that there is a direct parallel between our relationship with God and our relationships with the people in our lives. Whether we are talking about our spouse, our children, our parents, our co-workers or our friends, we can uncover some far-reaching truths about our relationships by looking at the way in which we relate to God.

Take prayer, for example: the way we communicate with God. Just as we praise God for His blessings and ask Him to bestow upon us health and wealth, we must heap praise upon the people in our lives, and we must not hesitate to acknowledge our interdependence on them. And just as God "listens" without adding His own judgment, attitude or point of view, we must practice listening "with nothing added." Sometimes we can best serve our neighbors' needs by simply hearing their communication and not saying a word in response. I guarantee that if you practice this diligently, you won't make the mistake of buying your loved one a book instead of the "pearl necklace" she is dreaming of.



Mollie dials her mother's number and immediately begins to complain, "Mama! Oh, Mama! This is the worst day of my life!"

"What is it, Darling?"

"We're snowed in here. The car wouldn't start this morning. I think both kids have the measles. The doctor can't come until five o'clock. I'm coming down with a cold. The freezer is broken and all the food is spoiled. The house is a mess. And on top of that, Mama, twenty ladies from my Hadassah Chapter are coming to play mah-jongg today!"

"Don't worry, Darling! Mama's here! I'll take the bus to the subway, and I'll walk the twelve blocks to your house. I'll make sure the kids are nice and comfortable, I'll call the freezer repairman, I'll tell the deli to fix up some platters for delivery, I'll clean the house, and then I'll make a delicious dinner for Melvin from the leftovers."

"Melvin? Who's Melvin?" asks Mollie. "My husband's name is Richard." Reluctantly, Mollie asks, "Did I dial 516-555-3435?"

"No...you dialed 516-555-3445," moans the voice on the other end.

A long pause ensues, after which Mollie heaves a long, tortured sigh. "Does that mean you're not coming?"

Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760), the father of the Chassidic movement taught that we must have total self-sacrifice and dedication for the love of our fellow human being, even towards one whom we have never seen! So, in case you're wondering, "Mama" DID go to Mollie's house, even though they'd never met! Why? Because the way we are connected to each other is precisely the way in which we are bound to God – in a partnership that goes beyond human logic and reasonableness. When one is connected on that level – the soul level – there is only connectedness. There are no external factors that get in the way.

A young woman brings her fiancé home to meet her parents. After dinner, the father invites the fiancé to his study to get to know him better.

"So what are your plans?" the father asks the young man.

"I am a Torah scholar, so I will continue full-time in my studies," he replies.

"Admirable," the father says, "But what will you do to provide for my daughter?"

"I will study," the young man replies, "and God will provide for us."

"And children?" asks the father. "How will you support children?"

"I will concentrate on my studies," the young man replies, "And God will provide for us."

The conversation proceeds like this, and each time the father inquires, the young idealist insists that God will provide.

Later, the girl's mother asks her husband, "How did it go, Honey?"

The father answers, "Well, he has no job and no plans, but the good news is, he thinks I'm God."

It's true that we must trust in God, but did you know that God trusts in us also?

There is a short prayer, Modeh Ani, which we say to God the moment we wake up in the morning. It is translated this way: "I offer thanks to You, living and eternal King, for You have restored my soul within me; Your faithfulness is great." The last phrase, "Your faithfulness is great," seems unusual. Shouldn't we say, "Our faithfulness towards You is great?" Well, no, because expressed this way, it underscores God's trust in us. It is saying, in effect, that even though we didn't quite live up to His expectation yesterday, or any of the days before that, He trusts us to succeed at it TODAY, and thus continues to return our soul to us to give us another chance. As we've mentioned, according to Kabbalah, God is not subject to time. There is no "yesterday" or "today" in God's eyes. He always trusts that we'll do the right thing, and when we fall short, He doesn't keep score as to who did what to whom and when.

Our trust in God, and God's trust in us, teach us how to be in relationship with everyone around us.

A businessman known for not paying his bills is haggling endlessly with a supplier.

"Why are you haggling with him?" asks his partner. "You're not going to pay him anyway."

"I know, I know," answers the businessman. "But I like this guy, and I want to keep his losses to a minimum."

And, of course, our relationship with each other would not be complete without discussing the element of love.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (1740-1810), who was famous for his unconditional love for his fellow man, once told one of his students that he learned about love from a conversation between two drunks lying in the gutter:

"One drunk said to the other, 'You don't love me.' 'Of course I love you,' said his friend. 'No you don't. Because if you really loved me, you would know what hurts me.'"

Most people think that loving someone means doing something for them, speaking loving words to them, giving them a gift, etc. These are expressions of love, but true love can be learned from our relationship with God. The Kabbalists tell us that God created the universe in order to experience love. The great sage Rabbi Akiva, who lived around the second century, said that "loving your fellow as yourself is a great and fundamental principle in the Torah." In another famous story, Rabbi Hillel, who lived several generations before Rabbi Akiva, tells an impatient proselyte who asked to be taught the entire Torah while he stood on one foot, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. The rest is commentary; go and learn."

All these are ways of teaching us to be sensitive to what hurts our fellow human beings. Once we are able to feel their suffering, we are on the way to truly loving them. So what is our relationship with each other? It is one in which each person works to improve in the areas of communication, partnership, trust and love, and, by developing a sensitivity to others around us, we are able to express that relationship on the soul level, which is always, ALWAYS loving.

Simcha (Sam) Krause has taught Kabbalah/Chassidut as an adult education introductory course and is currently working on two other manuscripts. This is an excerpt from his book, Hey Waiter... There's G-d in My Soup! For more information visit: [www.hey-waiter.com](http://www.hey-waiter.com).



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