

Torah Study in A *Wholly* New Light

By Rabbi Larry Tabick, author of
The Aura of Torah:

A Kabbalistic-Hasidic Commentary to the Weekly Readings



Many are the roads that lead to Torah, each as unique as those who walk them. Mine led from studying the Bible in its original historical, linguistic and archaeological context to rabbinic studies in Talmud, midrash, and the medieval commentators. Interesting though each of these was, I felt that there was something missing. Something that I had been searching for from the start, but had not found – a universal, yet deeply personal, spirituality. But adjacent to, and derived from, the road I was pursuing, I had noticed the intriguing path of Jewish mysticism, of Kabbalah and Hasidism, and felt drawn to it. Having explored it just a little, I felt that this was something that I had to make part of my life and of my work as a rabbi, something I had to share with my community, and perhaps, beyond. One result of this is *The Aura of Torah*, a personal selection of comments on Torah by many of the great teachers of Kabbalah and Hasidism.

In this work, I have tried to let these teachers speak for themselves about the spiritual effort of striving to live fully in the presence of the divine, even in a secular and materialistic age. This vision of theirs means that each individual, each object, is a manifestation of God, and therefore, deserves our fullest respect, because we too, at our best, may represent the divine at work in the world.

Until recently, this material was largely unknown beyond the world of academia (and sometimes even within it), but over the years I have striven to provide access each week for my own community to those texts that inspire me. And now, in *The Aura of Torah*, I feel privileged to be able to make these texts available and accessible to a wider public for individual weekly study, or through use in the pulpit or the adult classroom. I hope that the texts I have chosen will now inspire others.

One of the texts included in the book that I found most inspiring to me is the comment by R. Yishaya Horowitz (c.1570-1626), in his classic work, *Shnei Luchot HaBrit* on Deuteronomy 4:39: “You should know this day, and take it to heart, that the Eternal is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.” The last two words in Hebrew read *ayn od*, and are usually translated as “there is no other” – meaning, no other gods. But Horowitz understands them to mean that in reality, there is nothing *but* God. All things emanate from within God and are divine. To take this truly to heart is to see the world in a new light.

I have found these texts transformative in my understanding of the way in which Torah can act as a key to the world of spirit. The Kabbalistic and Hasidic interpretations of Torah, that Larry has translated and presented in such an accessible way, provide a way of taking the text from the page into the soul. I will be using this book to help interweave the year's journey through Torah with my own spiritual journey and to help others do the same. -- Naomi Goldman, student rabbi, Leo Baeck College, London.)

The Aura of Torah is a fascinating read and an excellent resource. Not only does it open up the world of Kabbalah it provides beautiful insights into the texts' resonance for our world today. It is a pleasure to use and a useful teaching aid. -- Robyn Ashworth-Steen, student rabbi, Leo Baeck College, London.

Rabbi Larry Tabick (Rabbinical Ordination, Leo Baeck College, 1976) is a Rabbi of Shir Hayim, the Hampstead Reform Jewish Community in London and a lecturer in Kabbalah and Hasidism at the Leo Baeck College in London.