



Volume 6, No. 1

January, 2006

## **SAMUEL AVITAL**

**IJHC interview with, an extraordinary, gifted teacher who helps people develop spiritual and personal insights through mime, movement and the Kabbalah.**

### **Beginnings**

*DB: I'm delighted to be able to interview you, Samuel. I truly admire what I've read and heard about your work in helping people open to inner awareness through movement and mime.*

*I think it would be helpful to start with a thumbnail sketch of where you were born and raised and how you got to where you are now.*

SA: An outline? That could fill books! I'll try.

I was born in Morocco, in a simple religious Jewish family with traditional, old-ways. Part of my mother's and father's families are descended from Castile, from refugees to Morocco after the expulsion from Spain in 1492. We grew up in Morocco in a very humble way, in the Sephardi Jewish tradition.

The way I remember my childhood, it was beautiful, but there was one dark cloud around it. At that time all the boys in Jewish schools had a black and red uniform as a sign of mourning. We grew up during the Holocaust. Our Rabbi hinted at things, such as, "A lot of our people are being burned right now in Europe." That's why before we began class we had to pray a special prayer. I remember that very well.

*DB: In what grade was that?*

SA: I was born in 1933 and by that time it was 1940-41, so I was about 8 or 9. The uniforms were still required when I reached my Bar Mizvah at 13. In 1948, I just ran away in a clandestine way to Israel. I smuggled myself out of Morocco disguised as an Arab prince, past the check point that was there to prevent the Jewish people from traveling from city to city. As a teenager that was a very big, big risk. But anyway, it was a little miracle because if they caught any Jewish teenagers, they simply disappeared or were sold into slavery. As they said in those days, they would end up as shish-kebab in the Casbah market.

From there, I made my way to Marseilles, France, and stayed in Camp David, a collecting point for people who wanted to go to Israel. I arrived in Israel in March of '49. I went first to a youth camp, in preparation for living for a year in a beautiful, beautiful Kibbutz called Ayelet Hashahar in the high Galilee. I tell you about this only briefly because if I dwell on every station along my way, I could tell you a lot of stories....

I served my mandatory two years in the Israeli army, and then moved to Jerusalem. I got a job in a University of Jerusalem laboratory, preparing medical instruments, blowing glass, and the like. This was in 1956.

I was active in a theater group and was chosen to represent the theater youth of Israel in the Festival d'Avignon in Southern France, in 1958. I went again as a representative to that beautiful theater festival the following year, and from there I went to Paris to study with Etienne Decroux and Marcel Marceau, shifting and focusing my life work to the theater.

I spent a few years touring Europe with the Company de Mime of Maximilien Decroux. Like many aspiring actors, I was not permitted to work in France but found a part-time job in the Israeli Embassy to put bread on the table. I had my first Mime performance in Club des Quatre vents, a stage with international recognition, right in the heart of the Latin Quarter. After that performance I was inspired to tour the streets of Europe with my little suitcase. I performed in front of the café-terrasses to earn enough to eat and survive.

I then returned to Israel in '64, intending to contribute to the Israeli acting community. I was rejected by most of the Israeli theaters; I was shown the door, quietly and politely but ever so firmly and consistently.

A friend of mine, Moni Yakim who had studied with me in Paris, invited me to work in the theater in New York. I came to the USA without knowing English. It was the same when I left Morocco – I didn't know anything about where I was going. I knew from the maps about the sea and the ocean and all that, but I had never seen the shores, which were my destination.

I stayed in New York seven plus years. In '65, I did my first performance there in the avant-garde theater called Café LaMama on Second Avenue in New York. Later I was invited for a year as artist-in-residence at the Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, of all places! You know, people who knew me then in New York couldn't imagine or even believe that I would go to a Methodist University. So they said, "Oh no! You in Dallas? No!" I replied, "Hey, I'm not a President, so don't worry."

You might ask, "How did I know about Kennedy's assassination in Dallas - me, an immigrant from Morocco, France and Israel?" It's interesting how the pieces of my life have fit together. Before I left Paris I slept one night in the studio of a painter-friend of mine. He had a tiny TV and that's how I saw the assassination of Kennedy. So I still remember it. I didn't know anything much about America, I only knew that it was a big country, like ancient Rome, that I know of as a piece of history, with stories about the Romans who were powerful and killed their Caesar. So, though I did not know much about America, people thought that I was very versed in American history when I said, "I'm not a president, don't worry!"

Anyway, from there I was invited to do some workshops in Growth Centers in Denver. I visited Boulder and liked it immediately because it looks exactly like my birthplace, Sefrou near Fez, surrounded by beautiful mountains. And so, I have come to my third mountain peak: First, the Atlas Mountains, then, the Galilee Mountains, and now, the Rocky Mountains.

## **BodySpeak™**

DB: And what about your acting career?

SA: I began to perform at the university. I toured the country from coast to coast. I went to Europe, Canada, Guatemala, and other countries. Then I established the school here, which I call the Le Centre du Silence Mime School, and developed my method of bodywork, called *BodySpeak*. This year we celebrate our 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The other day they called me from the Chamber of Commerce to ask if I'm still alive, to update my page on their website. I said, "Yes, I'm still alive." And they asked how did I sustain myself there for 35 years in this artistic business? I answered that it's because students come every year from all over the world, and because I never asked for any grants from any institution on this planet, and I still refuse to get grants from anyone. I'm not a nonprofit. There are very few mime schools like ours, which have survived this way. Most of them get grants from curious sources. You know, all these years, in a modest way, I have proved more and more, that you don't need to be big, with a huge budget and fancy trappings. Through word of mouth our school has grown organically, sustaining itself from within and keeping the integrity of individual freedom of expression.

I have not promoted my work in the usual way, other than through my books (listed at the end of this interview) and offering workshops, both locally and internationally. Word of mouth is a great way to promote this work, In a world that has abused the word to such a high degree, I keep saying, "I'm not a potato seller." There are lots of 'potato sellers' in the business of doing workshops and they can market themselves in any way they wish, but what I 'sell' is intangible, timeless and lasting. You can't touch it, you can feel it, it's literally intangible. It's simply invisible, but visible to those who study it carefully and practice the principles to make it their own.

Recently, I finally declared in an interview with the Intermountain Jewish News, "I'm not a scholar, and I'm happy I'm not a scholar." In the '80s, some people came to interview me and they were startled when I said to them, "I'm not a human being." There was a long silence. There and a sense of wonder, I continued, "I'm not a human being, I'm a human becoming!" Well, they titled their article with that quote.

So, here we are, my dear Daniel, two people with the name Ben-Or, and I'm glad that we met through my good friend Ken Cohen.

*DB: How did you come to the name Ben-Or?*

SA: Aha, well that's my inner name that I didn't use for many years.

I came to the name because *or*, in Hebrew is *light*, and speaks of the essence, according to Kabbalah. Kabbalah is the science and the art of exploring the inner light. The Kabbalah has much to say about light, and in Hebrew it is not just light, it's more than that. So Ben-Or means offspring of light, and I use the name to honor my tradition. I have had that name for many years but I couldn't use it until certain realizations were experienced and achieved. You earn a name like that, and you must be aware of the power of the inner meaning and living it with pure consciousness. We both have a name with *Or*. The *Essenes* spoke about the offsprings of darkness and offsprings of light, right?

DB: Where does that light come from?

SA: That light is the light of the *Neshama* (Soul), the light of being, but it's not the light that we humans understand and think. It's not light of the sun. It's not light of electricity. It's a light beyond our ordinary perceptions.

In my teachings, this is an approach, an exploration to understand yourself and the universe in a kinesthetic way first. We have ten principles that I developed in *BodySpeak*. In the first session the students learn how to literally make that which is invisible become visible right there in the classroom. In other words, to experience the process I call "The Journey from thought to action.." This is Kabbalah in action but without using the classic Kabbalistic terms.

So, these ten principles of *BodySpeak* actually produce the sense of a light beyond the light that we know. And that's according to what I think the true artist understands. I'm speaking here of the genuine and authentic artist, not the commercial artists. Most of the Hollywood or Broadway 'artists' are contaminated with impurities because they do what they do for money and not for the love of art. They go to study some branch of creative arts or engineering, or whatever, to make money. In their reality you have a job; you have to make a living.

It's hard for me to 'make a living..' You don't *make* a living through art, *the living makes you*. That is an insult to the exactness of speech and the right way to use the language. So, it's like 'making love..' You don't make love; *love makes you*.

The nature of the conscious human as an evolved and enlightened artist is light. So, we need to express that light through the life that is lived; in this case, as I teach it, to express it beyond words. This is the filtering of Kabbalistic ideas into *BodySpeak*, and I teach this in very specific ways. In my recent book, *the BodySpeak Manual*, there are specific exercises that bring people into awareness and the experience of these lessons.

*DB: Why did you choose mime?*

SA: Again, I did not chose Mime, Mime chose me. I think it was from the lessons of my childhood. I didn't talk that much. My grandfather used to tell me that when we are born we are given a certain number of words to use in our life, like a bank account that we can draw from. I call it the

*word bank*. So, the more words you use, the more you draw the words, the fewer words remain in your bank. And so, I became aware how many words I use because if I finish my amount of words that I was given, I may become mute, hence the carefulness of speech and the necessary use of language. My grandfather's words influenced me profoundly when I was a young boy. I learned from him to be careful of what I say; in other words, to conserve and use my quota of words wisely. And what is beautiful about this is a beautiful fact from my childhood: my grandfather and father and mother *only spoke a word when it was absolutely necessary*.

And so, I think my childhood lessons have greatly influenced me as I continue to explore and experience certain things. I find that most people actually just blah blah blah blah, abusing the word. Most people do that. So, to somewhere in me I say, "HmMMM, I'm not going to abuse words like that because, you know, in Hebrew, when you study the sacred tongue, and the Letters, you don't just utter things. You don't have a conversation just like that, "Hello, how are you?" "See you!" and all that small talk. Now, people have said, "Oh, come on, Samuel, small talk can be a means to connect with people." I do that without words, through my work.

There's a difference in Hebrew words, to *say*, to *utter* and to *talk*. This subtle difference in Hebrew doesn't exist in the other languages.

*DB: Your grandfather was a very strong influence in your life.*

*SA: My grandfather was a very, very strong influence. I used to run after school to be with him. Whatever he told me to do I would do. Not far from where he lived, he had a work place where he produced perfumed soaps and also made house wine. I used to dance with him in a barrel on the grapes, singing and stomping the grapes. After we get tired, we sat on a little rock and he'd read to me from the Zohar, the classical Kabbalistic text, and he would tell me stories and sayings.*

One time, there was a big flood and the first floor of his house was all flooded, and he was still sitting in his place, reading the Zohar. The water was rising up to his neck. People come and said, "Come, come, come...." He answered, "I didn't finish this chapter in the sacred Zohar, I didn't finish this yet." I think our grandfathers have some kind of magnificent connection to deep wisdom, and knew how to transmit it *by simply being it*.

Let me tell you another story about my grandfather. One day we learned in my school that Solomon had a dream, in which he was asked by God, "Which do you choose: fame, wealth, or wisdom?" He immediately chose wisdom. Because he chose wisdom, God gave him all of them.

I asked my grandfather: "Why did Solomon choose only wisdom? And why can only Solomon have that privilege? Why not me? I want to choose wisdom too."

My grandfather taught that according to the Kabbalah, our ancestors – King Solomon, Moses, and Abraham and Jacob and Joseph – all of them, are stages of divine and human spiritual evolution that we aspire to. Moses was the epitome of the highest evolution of *humility*. My father's name is Moses and he was also known for being very humble. I learned from all of them, from my father, and my grandfather, my grandmother, my mother. All of them almost didn't talk. They talked only when it was necessary.

What a contrast that is with America today! Everybody abuses words to a very high degree. Many sons and daughters speak to their parents with disrespect, or to their elders without any honor or appreciation. So, it was quite a cultural shock to me when I came to America, to witness this distorted 'reality.'

So, my grandfather said to me, "It's not a dream, it is not just for Solomon; you too go; go, and when, in your dream, you are asked what you want, now, you know what to choose."

*DB: That's lovely.*

*SA: That's lovely. And he then had a grandson, yours truly, who, every time he went to sleep, wanted to dream that the creator is asking him what he wants. The world was created for you, what do you want? And so, I was ready. I want wisdom, nothing else. I don't want anything else, just wisdom. And to learn and to know who I am and what I am doing in this world. I mean, as a boy. Ah! speaking of good and benevolent experience and authentic education and influence.*

Little anecdotes like that helped me to overcome the absurdities of life.

So, at one time, for instance, when I was ten I read somewhere in the Aggadah (collection of oral traditions) that "This world was given to the stupid idiots to govern."

So, later on when I 'discovered Paris' and I encountered the western way of thinking, and the insult of using only one side of the brain, I began to understand that the world really was given to the stupid and the idiots to govern! So, I try not to be an idiot and to govern myself first. So I became a Mime, a clown, to overcome the sadness and stupidity with laughter and without uttering a word. In silence.

These kinds of ideas are important parts of my teachings, illustrated and made real through specific techniques and experiences. In other words, I can demonstrate kinesthetically, through students' awareness of their body, which is one of my strongest ways of teaching, not just with words. I developed my ability to demonstrate the teaching and have the students experience directly from within themselves a new 'reality' and new ways of thinking and being. Some of the articles on my website include students' descriptions of this process.

*DB: So, how would you describe your work, if you have to tell a student who is coming to you what it is that you offer?*

SA: Well, I'll give you an example. Someone called me two days ago and the first question he asked me was, "How much is it?" Okay, so, he got a lesson. I said, "Sir, if you call me to ask me the price, I don't sell potatoes. First I want to know if you are 'teachable material.' First I want you to know, I'm not looking for the money. I want to know to what degree you want to learn." He said, "Well, I read about this on the Internet. I met some people who said you are a good teacher." I said, "Well, if you want to, you can come. I can explain you this, I can give you information about what I do. Yah, but you cannot get the knowledge of it until you experience it."

Scientifically, experiments can be done and have repeatable results and you develop from there. But, it depends also on your intention. If your intention is to develop your creativity, you might be a musician, or a computer programmer, or a janitor, or a Nobel Prize laureate, it depends what inspires you. Many people come to work with me and they discover the direction they want in their life, what they need in life

I developed my methods on ten principles. Well, it's actually thirteen, but ten principles that we go through every day in every training, to introduce the appropriate approach to experiencing it.

*DB: You know, Samuel, you have a lovely command of language.*

SA: Who, me?

*DB: Yes.*

SA: In English?

*DB: Yes.*

SA: No, I have a very poor knowledge in English. I speak six languages, Daniel.

*DB: Which is your favorite?*

SA: My favorite? Hebrew.

*DB: Do you want to talk a little bit in Hebrew and let me hear?*

SA: If you want to, but let me first tell you why. I don't just say that like that. Most of the languages of the world are there to communicate between you and me only. And according to those who know, it's a very poor way to communicate. Most humans want to communicate. They die to communicate, and they spend their time just talking. So, I differentiate between talking and doing. That's the first point.

Most languages are alternative languages, to communicate between humans. You can't communicate with the Creator in English, or French, or whatever other languages you speak. Sure you can 'pray' in any language. The sacred tongue of Hebrew was created, or was developed, to communicate between humans also, and a great tool for us, the created, to

communicate with the Creator.

That's why, for instance, even the time of the first and second temples, they didn't speak the sacred tongue. The sacred tongue was used **only** to write sacred text – to speak, and to communicate with the creator. I think with Hebrew, you can say more. Sure, I know, at some unique time, this sacred communication is actually *beyond* words, beyond human words.

So, I differentiate, by the way, between the Hebrew that is spoken today in Israel, and the sacred tongue. You may speak modern Hebrew well, but you can open the Bible and you won't understand what they're talking about. Or you can open a Kabbalistic manuscript and it's written in Hebrew, it's written in sacred tongue, but not in the Hebrew that is spoken today. The Hebrew that is spoken today has been turned out into a parallel with English, or French or any other western language that communicates *only matter to matter*. The Hebrew language communicates *between matter and its Maker*, between the visible and invisible. Most other languages, communicate mainly with the visible, human to human.

So, Kabbalistically speaking, the five senses that we have are a very limited way of perception. I shouted this all during my career, in Paris, and New York and everywhere, that we have these five senses, but where are the other ninety-five? So, how do we truly understand what's going on?

When you study the sacred tongue, Hebrew, and especially the coded language of the Kabbalah, they have developed a certain code for sharing and communicating the findings and explorations of the 'mysteries' of Creation and the purpose of life here on earth. They may sound like communication and words like *light* and Hebrew words from the *Tree of Life* like *Keter* and *Malchut*, and words from the Bible like *Bereresheet Barah* (in the beginning created...). It sounds like they are talking about matters from the world of the five senses.

But the true meanings go much deeper than stories about the world of the five senses. And, until you really study the Kabbalah, you won't realize the many deeper meanings. So, understanding the meaning of: *Bereresheet Barah*, as "in the beginning created" is only literal. To penetrate the profound meaning of these two words, for instance, you must pierce the veils of the story, to acquire the key to go beyond the story to understand the mysteries behind the words. And, my dear curious friend, when you do that it is not anymore 'in the beginning,' or 'created.' So if you are a true and honest explorer, you learn the language and its code and you will discover how beautiful is the truth.

People think that it's a story. If you decide that the Hebrew Bible and the texts developed from it later are just stories, you miss the point. In the Kabbalah they developed a way, a specific way, to go beyond the story. But how can you go beyond the story with five limited senses we perceive this 'reality?'

It's actually an insult to intelligence, relying on five senses only. I call this '*playing the violin with one hand.*' In other words, using only one side of the brain. I didn't need to wait until the '80s when they discovered the differences between the right and left hemisphere to understand this. I know it from the Tree of Life, from the whole balanced, logical and fully integrated system of the wisdom of the Kabbalah.

Another issue is that all that most of the people on this earth want to know is to know themselves. I think that is limited and even stupid and silly and egotistic and selfish, to know just oneself.

Let me tell you something interesting here. You know, there are many approaches, everybody wanting to know themselves, right? They are seeking a conscious something to reflect about. The Greek Oracle of Delphi taught, 'Know thyself' right?

So everybody is dying to know himself or herself. Well, not the Hebrews who live in the tradition of Biblical Hebrew and the Kabbalah. They are not dying to know themselves. There is definitely a very big difference between Hebrew and Greek ways of thinking. This is because the Greeks refused at the time to use punctuating vowels above and below the letters, like the Hebrews. The Hebrew vowels are dots and little lines that give precise movement to the letters and words. The Hebrew vowels condense communication to a high, high degree. Instead, the Greeks used letters as vowels, as it is done today.

That's why there was this clash between Greek philosophers at the times of the the Hebrew prophets. The Hebrew prophets and the tradition of the Hebrew Kabbalistic way is to not focus on knowing yourself but first to KNOW your Creator. If you know the Creator, you will know everything. You may ask, "But, how do I know the Creator, with these five limited senses?" That's what the deep study is about, a way to develop a new vessel, a new tool, a new sense beyond the five limited senses we have, that could allow what we call 'the light' (*or*), to emanate from the 'source of BEING', to enhance and develop our little vessels and do the work, which the Kabbalist suggests is the *Tikkun*, a restoration of one's connection with the Creator.

And when we develop that new ability to use the spiritual sense, we will be able to 'crack the code,' as it is said, so, you can eat, and think, and breathe, and walk and do all that stuff in 'this world' while you are simultaneously living in 'that world,' right here and now.

Once we do that, it is possible to live in both worlds. It's possible to shatter the myth called 'common wisdom' we have in America, assumptions that are not examined but are accepted by the masses as 'truth..' For instance, it is said that 'You can't have your cake and eat it too.' and, 'You know, we're not perfect.' So when you begin really to know how to 'crack the code' and realize for certain for yourself that that state of light and perfection is possible, then you begin to 'know.'

*Through reading, studying and learning the Kabbalah – not as information, but as knowledge as the mother of all sciences – we connect to the tradition of thousands and thousands of years ago.*

So, as I said, if we develop this new sense, then that new ability can help build the new vessel in which we have, in my language, a '*bulb of light*.' If my light bulb is 100 watts and I can build up this vessel and develop, I can transform and expand my bulb of light into a thousand watts. So, when a student comes to me and she has 100 watts, and wants to develop it to a 1000 watts, she must learn first by experience that the light inside the 100 watts bulb is the same light that is in the light bulb of 1000 watts, and also to learn how to expand it to a 1000 watts without exploding the 'vessel.'

So the light will shine brighter, gradually and with respect to the Being and the Becoming of oneself.

Now, a lot of people ask, "What's being enlightened?" Come on! It has nothing to do with enlightenment. The students are enlightened already because this Kabbalistic teaching is the Science and the study of light itself, and how to use it for the benefit of all beings, not just for oneself.

So, Enlightenment is the first realization before one studies the Kabbalah, and the other is, when you finish and come to the end of philosophy, you may be almost ready to explore the 'mysteries of Life and Light' that the Kabbalah teaches. So, you can't just study the words of the Kabbalah or other spiritual traditions unless this purity of 'being ready' is realized with full humility, integrated honesty and with a directed intention and efforts. You would have to graduate from all the spiritual streams of this world if you want to go to the ocean. We are like drops of water, made of water, and yet asking, "What is water?" How absurd this situation is! Can a drop of water express itself once it becomes ONE with the ocean?

And so, I call that the bulb of light, and enlightenment is tuning up that vessel to allow that experience of the 'ocean' or 'Light' to manifest in our small vessels of expression in 'this world.'

But, now jump back with me to 'this world' and see what will happen in a world we live in now, where we reward mediocrity with money and give Nobel Prizes to criminals? What a great Theater of the Absurd!

*BodySpeak* is this ability to develop various techniques based on many Kabbalistic principles, but I'm not using Kabbalistic meanings with the same terms. I use different terms because that's how I can transmit the 'light of understanding' in a particular way, and students can and have the ability understand it, and not blow or explode their 'light bulbs.'

Well, that's the essence of *BodySpeak*. I like the people who come to study with me to be informed, to know why they want to study and what it is that they want to learn.

## Life's lessons

*DB: What is the place, Samuel, of illness, and pain, and suffering, on the path of coming into light?*

SA: Pain and suffering are an enlargement; expansion if you want; I call it an 'elastization' of feeling. We feel more as human beings, beyond what we feel through the density of matter. We are, in fact, the most perfect original matter in the universe. And since we don't know how to function in this universe (maybe because we forgot?) we short-circuit our understanding and we create pain for ourselves because we create problems where they do not exist. That is one way to see it. And what do we do here on earth now when we live among so many humans who pretend they know? And confuse *information* with *knowledge*?

History has proven, for instance, and Moses and other Kabbalists have pointed out, that there are two ways to understand. One is the way of suffering, and the other is the study and learning the laws of the universe. You can choose either. Somehow, , 'mysteriously,' most people will (unconsciously) choose to suffer without knowing it.

People may say, "I am conscious" and other statements like that, but they don't actually know what consciousness is. And even when they know what consciousness is, they know information *a b o u t* consciousness, they don't live *IT*, or embody it.

And when they begin to live *IT*, it is too much and the whole character of not-understanding *IT* (not just failing to understand *IT*) creates problems. We humans, as I said before, create problems where they don't exist. And when we create problems that don't exist, we cause suffering to ourselves and to our environment and run to '*pray to God*' for help, or to other external authorities, instead of searching for the 'cause' within ourselves.

That's why, for instance, when you're talking about healing, when people come and study this way, they have various problems. I'm no psychiatrist; I'm not schooled in western ways of thinking. All I know is that when you are busy and focused on learning, what you really want to know is that you're not sick. If you are thinking about *IT*, it means you are not doing *IT*, you're doing *IT* half way. Most of us, as earth people, do many things half way rather than 100 percent. When we begin to live 100 percent and make everything possible, for ourselves and our environment, we make our 'discoveries' and actually, can use the true meaning of to '*know*.'

They tell you, "It's impossible to push yourself to do it 100%. You'll die." I say, "No, perfection is possible, right here and now." Only the false education to not examine the assumptions of life that creates our problems. And this idea that 'perfection is possible' has been proven. Some readers may think that I am just talking, but we can prove these things with beautiful simplicity for those who need proof. Besides, when we know we do not need any proof from anyone at all then authentic healing happens as the outcome of this new way of being and thinking.

The other day on the Internet somebody wrote to me who had taken a workshop in Phoenix around 1980. I had given her some exercise for her eyes; she practiced enough and then threw away her glasses after a few weeks. She said, "I'll never forget that. Now I found you on the Internet and want to thank you.'

I think that out there today in the world people focus on something, what someone wants to heal. What does that do? The problem is the person who wants to heal. It fixates her will on healing, right?

*DB: Right!*

SA: Right? Well, It's wrong. Because the more you focus on that which you want, the more it goes away from you. This is the crux, the essence of it, because that's how a lot of people think or were taught to think, and that's the Greek (linear) way of thinking which is now the western way. That's why a lot of people can't understand *IT*, can't conceive of a different way of doing and thinking, like the Kabbalistic, circular way of thinking. They can't understand it because they are still at the level of information. And since we are living in the age of information, I always distinguish between information and knowledge. If you are informed about something, it doesn't mean you are knowledgeable about it. See the root of pretense?

Since I'm an actor, I'm a theater person too. I'm a clown and I can understand the theater.



Hopefully, when you perform a mime piece, people laugh and cry at the same time, and they learn something. So, though I'm not just an entertainer, I like to teach through mime and humor. All the teaching is an experience, be it Kabbalistic learning about the Hebrew letters, or the body, which is another form of letter, or the body movement of the Tree of Life. And, it's up to you to experience it to the degree that you want to and are open to.

The degree to which the baby wants to drink the milk, is the same degree to which the mother wants to give the milk. Right? It's a transformation from a limited and twisted way of thinking and being to a vast new and restored and healthy way. But if one has a characteristic of being lazy, or postponing or procrastination, they've got to finish all their journeys into all the spiritual things, and then when they graduate from that, I can talk with them. It sounds a little pretentious, it sounds haughty but it's not. It's very sincere. I don't want to waste my time. I want to spend time with ten, or five, or fifteen people who are totally dedicated to fully explore these possibilities.

From the point of view of my work of *BodySpeak*, there are people who talk about it, and there are people who are it. And that's a big statement, a big, big leap. I call it '*a leap from the valley of mediocrity to the peak of excellence.*' And it is both a physical, mental and spiritual experience because I don't differentiate between them. The Greek philosophers made endless differentiations; they divided all that was united in the world. And here in the West we are used to linear thinking, which leads to empirical but extremely limited sciences. So, I suggest to integrate both sides of our thinking; as I tell people, "*Don't play the violin with one hand.*" The West has developed the left hemisphere of the brain. If we don't develop and allow the right brain to function as well as the left, we will continue to suffer the imbalance we witness today in many fields of human existence, with diseases of the mind and the body, and may destroy ourselves in the process. So, yes, consider this a call to activate our natural intelligence and be courageous to use our sanity in the midst of madness.

*DB: This is very interesting, Samuel. The people who come to you, I would expect, most of them don't know Hebrew and yet you find the ways to teach them the essence of the Kabbalah.*

SA: True! I do this through *BodySpeak*. Very few people know what I just revealed to you now. Only a few of the people who study closely with me learn the wisdom of the Kabbalah. For instance, I had two students, a professor and his wife, studying applied mathematics here at CU at Boulder. He responded particularly well to one session which includes a lesson I developed over the years containing some of the foundations of Kabbalistic teachings.

This is the kind of session where people go berserk. By that I mean that they are gently and consistently guided into a state of experience where they don't know what to do. It's easy; it's fun, too. This experience guides you to use the body as an architectural function and to use the principles of the Tree of Life in a new, creative way to activate the body and its natural intelligence. (I do not want to describe this too much because it diminishes its power when you do the exercise if you think too much about it.) Suffice it to say that most people use the body in their habitual ways and they have to break through that in order to enter this beautiful, original and natural way to use their body, developing new movements that they never experienced before in their life. After the workshop I worked with him privately, and he said, "Samuel, I could teach applied mathematics just by this session." I said, "Sure, why not. Go and do it. It's not copyrighted." And he went out to teach applied mathematics kinesthetically as he had learned to do in our Summer workshop. .

Does that answer the question, or do you want me to elaborate?

*DB: Please elaborate some more. I can understand what you're saying in a deeper way because I have had a little touch, a taste of the Kabbalah. I speak Hebrew. I felt in my inner being some of the mystery that comes with it and it is hard to imagine how you can teach this through BodySpeak with people who don't know Hebrew.*

SA: It's easy. We speak the language with great simplicity. It's possible. You spoke about mystery. Daniel, Daniel, Daniel. Three times Daniel. Most people today are exploring the 'mystery', remember? The Kabbalists, for thousands of years, have been exploring and teaching us to *become* the mystery, not only to explore the mystery. And that's a big leap in consciousness that

the western world has not yet begun to explore, *To be the 'mystery.'*

As I said before, the sciences today have arrived at an impasse. They explored the universe in various ways, and they forgot about 'spiritual consciousness.' Science today explores the world with a definite division between the experimenter and the experiment. So the outcome is exactly as their unaware mental awareness dictates to them. When the scientist includes the experimenter with the experiment and explores the experimenter's own way of thinking and being, we can emerge with a great breakthrough that will enable our snail evolution speed to make a great leap.

This is the way the Kabbalists have been working for thousands of years. They left us the 'writings' they developed and those who know the specific language they used to report to us their findings can read and understand exactly what they wrote and how to practice to achieve that state of perfection, which today is obstructed and denied by the limitations of the rampant linear thinking. This is exactly like the musicians who wrote their music with various signs and dots and we can today 'read' it and play that music exactly as they composed hundreds of years ago.

These are principles that children can understand because children are open and used to learning in ways that are not employed in our schools. It took me years to translate certain Kabbalistic principles into the kinesthetic intelligence of *BodySpeak* of 'this world,' but I couldn't translate them if I didn't become IT. And so I had to wait until I achieved a certain degree of understanding a certain spiritual maturity, so I can speak the language of the country I live in today, in the US.

I use English differently from the ways most people use it in this country. I never studied English language or grammar in any school setting whatsoever. I learned it just by using it and by hearing and reading it. I use it in my own way of thinking, integrating both with all aspects of my being. I learned that when people abuse a certain word in English, I invent a new one. And I have a technique to invent a new one. This is actually a re-newing because there is nothing new, you know. For the human vessel it is a renewing. So if I want to know what an apple is, I must taste it so it will become one with 'me.'

You told me before that I have a good command of English. What I do is to try to grasp the edge of the *you* that is there, and that *me* that is here, who is not you, not me, but is ONE, right? And that's what helps me, personally, to express that which is beyond the words. Because I know that you, personally, Daniel Benor, you have the capacity and the talent to understand even beyond the words and ideas that we are sharing. And that's why it's easy for you to 'understand' me.

I embodied complex things over the years, and I'm still learning, I'm still perfecting it because there is such a thing we call 'the possibility to be perfect.' This is one of the messages of the genuine way of studying the Kabbalah. There is the possibility of being perfect. Anybody who tells you otherwise is ruining your life, be it your teacher, be it your mind, be it your lover, be it your friend or your religion. True Kabbalah is there to shatter the myth of all illusions. Not by knowing myself, but by getting to know how this universe works, what kind of systems are there beyond me and beyond my being here. I'm just a speck. I'm just a little dot in the universe. In other words, this is a very condensed way to present these principles about everything.

I wrote an article in 1975 from a live session, "In the Beginning there was the Dot." Let me read it in full for you.

In the beginning there was **the dot**, and another dot and another one. They played and multiplied in space and time and became a **LINE**.

And the line moved and became a **circle**, and **the dot** within the circle begun to move, touching the walls of the circle, and bouncing strongly back and forth, from one wall of the circle to another and thus energy was created.

And with this mighty movement were created new forms, volumes and another form, that shaped into a triangle, cells, organs, hearts, kidneys and a whole life become visible and manifested.

And finally human organism emerged and uttered the words, and worlds, and wrote

them in symbols, lines, circles, diagonal shapes, **letters**, and the symbols became reality, and concealed within each letter the '**secret**' codes of Creation.

From the *Original Dot*, we call *The Source of all Life* and being, coming and emerging '**out of nothing**' (**Yesh Me'Ayin**), and the whole universe becomes, and contains all beings and becoming, and they begin to 'Breathe.'

And the **CREATOR, DESIGNER** saw the '**Great Design**', and it called it '**good.**' = **Tov**.

So, our task now, as the created and creative human beings, as the image (the *Tzelem*) of the Creator, is to explore, decipher, recognize and use the power of the Creator, the Designer and sublime Animator of all the manifestations of movement of this entire beautiful place in time that we call life (*hayyim*) and light, '*Or Elion*' and we also call it 'Good.' and use that 'Power' (*Koah*) for the good and benefit of all living beings.

So, our task now as created and creative human beings, as the image of the creator, is to explore, decipher, recognize, and use the power of the creator – the designer of the sublime, and the sublime material emanator of all manifestations of movements in this entire beautiful place and time we call '*life.*' And realize and become and we also call it good.

And so we learn that the purpose of the creation of the world is to cause the good to be, and use the power for the good to benefit of all living beings, and ourselves included without expecting anything in return, so that what we call the 'other' becomes sacred.

What did you think of these essential ideas? Do they sound logical? Meaningful? Easy to understand?

*DB: I am moved by this on several levels.*

SA: Does it resonate?

*DB: Yes. And it resonates also with the visual art of India.*

SA: The visual art of India?

*DB: Where the dot in the circle represents all of creation; and the circle, triangle and square represent evolution from the nothing, the perfect, into the manifest, material world.*

SA: Yes, that's very basic in Kabbalah, the basis of the letters. In the Kabbalah there are more elaborations, revealing in much greater depth and detail how our universe works and how we can, in return, adopt this sacred attitude and use our intelligence fully and completely for the benefit of all beings right here in on earth, in what we call, 'this world.'

One of the specifics the Kabbalah teaches is how to control our thoughts, to know what a thought is, and how to direct that thought with *Kavvana* (intention) and live fully conscious and linked to what we call the 'Creator' - that force in the universe that makes us be and breathe and fulfill the purpose of creation.

Have you ever asked the question "What is sleep?" I think it is the greatest mystery of all because, according to Zohar, sleep is a rehearsal of how to die. How to die means how to change your clothes, in the language of the Zohar, from these limited body wrinkles to a new one. It's the same thing in body relationship. You wear new clothes in the morning, right? And you should take care of the body and prepare clean clothes. But we forgot the other thing; we forgot the essence. The essence is, what am I going to do? I'm going to lay that head on that pillow and then what's going to happen? Where do I go? Who activates 'life' after we wake up in the morning? Asking and becoming aware of these 'questions' enhances my awareness and consideration of the 'other' in my every day relations and encounters.

*DB: And there are people who go in their sleep and they help other spirits who are confused.*

SA: If they do it consciously, yes. I emphasize that in Kabbalah we're not here to pray only for ourselves. Ninety percent of the prayers of Jewish tradition are prayers for the world, for peace, for harmony in creation, and not for our selves only.

And what are prayers for your self? Give me wisdom to understand this; give me healing to understand; and a strong body, too, so I can survive, and that's it for prayers for myself. I

repeat. Ninety percent (90%) of prayers the Jewish tradition offer are for the world peace, harmony in Creation, and praise to the Creator of the worlds. Ten percent are prayers for oneself.

Another Kabbalistic mystery is *to heal the other before your self*. The way of genuine charity in the world, is to feed your poor of your own community first before you rush to feed the poor of another community, unlike the ways of America. Here, you let the poor of America starve and you run far and wide to feed other people. Do that good deed here first and you will begin to witness 'miracles.' I think the most just and logical way is that we should feed the poor right here in our own village before we feed the others in far away communities.

The same thing applies toward oneself, according to the Kabbalah, *"Before you correct others, you must correct and restore yourself first."* But you pray for the others before yourself. In other words, you love your neighbor like yourself. So, you see, my dear Daniel, the Camel does not see its own hump.

DB: Yes

SA: According to profound Kabbalistic understanding, *loving the other more than your self is a great and honest challenge that most people can't even begin to fathom*. You always ask, "What's in it for me, here? I want to learn this so I can make money." The intention is so important, and if that intention is to benefit ONLY you, you will get what you deserve, and if the intention is to benefit others first, you will get more than what you can imagine.

Kabbalah also teaches that the love of the Creator of the universe does not depend on anything. I call it 'love, too, but not with *because*', I love you but I don't have a '*because*.' Since you realize that you are one with the whole creation, there is no other. Right? Kabbalah doesn't kill the self like some spiritual disciplines out there, Kabbalah faces the situation right here and now, and works on transforming the bad, the evil, into the good, sounds simple, but when practiced without 'because' it is 'miraculous'

DB: *I'm really enjoying your teaching.*

SA: I'm enjoying it also, because I know that in the soul of Daniel and all, there is a receptacle spark that is truly sacred for me to just speak without thinking. And the reader, or the listener, will get the essence of what we are talking about.

DB: *I'm also aware that, for me in New Jersey, it is getting late. Is there anything further you would like to share?*

SA: I would like to appeal to the reader of this interview to please, listen to the one in you that knows. Just reflect on this exchange between the two Ben-ors. Explore it and examine it and see if there is anything true in this for you, does it resonate within the depths of your being? I know it will.

I always tell my students after they study with me for some time that "I am the greatest liar of the world", and please, don't believe a word I said to you until you go fully examine it. Examine what is said, and see if you find it's true for you, if you learned anything from 'reading' these words. You use the same system for elimination. You go to the bathroom, you eliminate what is not needed by your body. Don't just take these words for granted or for the sake of just reading about this subject. I suggest you go beyond reading *about*, and go beyond listening *about*, and go into the crux, the core, the essence, of what is said. Sometimes, read between the lines. People have this deep sense, and they hunger to read between the lines.

If we only know who we are, I think we will stop killing each other.

DB: *I very much resonate with that, Samuel.*

Some of my work is documented in my writings and videos.

***Mime and Beyond: The Silent Outcry.*** Aleph Beith Publications, Boulder, CO 1985.

*I wrote and self published this mime work book in 1974 when I came back from the first American Mime Festival in La Cross, Wisconsin. I did it mainly for my students. That first book I set up all by myself. There were no computers then.*

***The Conception Mandala: Creative Techniques for Inviting a Child into Your Life.***

Inner Traditions, Rochester, Vermont 1992

Knowing that most humans just conceive children without any consciousness. This little book explains simply and with specific exercises, the whole process of creativity and how to create things in your life – not just a child, but also your person, your creativity, your child within, and your artistic genius.

***The BodySpeak Manual,*** Internet Company AuthorHouse. 1992

A workbook for my students and myself

***The Invisible Stairway: Kabbalistic Meditations on The Hebrew Letters***

A new book, privately published, now in its second printing.

***Video: The Silent Outcry: The Life and Times of Samuel Avital,*** a documentary about my life, and includes classical mime performances, *The Insect, Black and White and Pierrot visits New York.*

#### **Future publications:**

I was invited by the Boulder Jewish Community Center to give a special seminar for seven weeks. We're in the process of making seven DVDs for the students who participated in the Seminar, and for other students who will be interested.

Please consider this as an invitation to come celebrate with us our **35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** in Boulder, Colorado on **July 10-14, 2006**, for **ONE WEEK ONLY**

For registration and application please write or email

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