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Kabbalah as explained by quantum physics

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From Infinity to Man by Eduard Shyfrin, White Raven Publishing, © 2019, ISBN 978-1-911195-84-9, p. 122 plus notes and index, \$24.99.

By Fred Reiss, Ed.D.



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WINCHESTER, California – Kabbalah is esoteric Judaism, the mystical traditions handed down orally through the generations. Yet, Kabbalah is not a monolith, its concepts and structures evolve. In the introduction to *From Infinity to Man*, author Eduard Shyfrin offers a concise, but meaningful history of modern Kabbalah, noting its beginnings in southern France in the twelfth century, its spread

to Spain, and then to Israel after the Spanish Inquisition in the fifteenth century. Later, the Hasidic movements, particularly Chabad, in Eastern Europe, especially Poland and Ukraine, adopted Lurianic Kabbalah as its core, beginning in the eighteenth century.

Lurianic Kabbalah is named after the sixteenth century rabbi and mystic Isaac Luria who introduced new beliefs into the ancient doctrines. These innovations, including a transcendent God – the *Ein Sof*; ten insubstantial emanations – *Sephirot*; the contraction that allowed for creation – *Tzimtzum*; and the Four Worlds, form the kabbalistic principles on which *From Infinity to Man* draws its inspiration.

The subtitle of Shyfrin's book is *The Fundamental Ideas of Kabbalah Within the Framework of Information Theory and Quantum Physics*. The second half of his introduction briefly covers the relevant concepts of these fields. Quantum physics, a product first proposed in the early twentieth century, is the study of the forces and interactions between and among subatomic particles, the most fundamental entities in nature and whose laws result in probabilities. Information theory, invented by Claude Shannon in the mid twentieth century, describes the measurements needed to store and transmit data and information. To the lay person, the context and conclusions of these branches of science, whose concepts include entropy, entanglement and qbits, might be just as esoteric as the perceptions and conclusions of Jewish mysticism.

At first blush, one might scoff at any consideration given to connections between science and Jewish mysticism, but consider that the basis of Kabbalah is communication, as evidenced by the opening words of the Book of Genesis, "And God said..." Indeed,

communication includes all kinds of symbols—letters, numerals, even musical notes and DNA. It is in this vein that Shyfrin writes *From Infinity to Man*.

Shyfrin covers ten topics, concentrating on six, including creation, divine providence, and the soul. He argues that if the universe were created from something, then we are forced to ask “Of what is that substance made?”, resulting in an infinite regression. Using information theory and a number of kabbalistic ideas, such as the *Sephirot* and *Tzimtzum*, he shows the only reasonable conclusion is creation emanated from nothing. Shyfrin even links “the arrow of time,” our understanding that time can only flow in one direction from past to present to future, and not the other way around, to Kabbalah by demonstrating that terrestrial information mimics divine information, which continually flows in one direction, from the unknowable God, *Ein Sof*, to the world.

If the divine realm and the world are connected through information theory and quantum physics, then the connection is guided by laws. Shyfrin relies on Jewish scholars and leaders, in addition to science and ancient Jewish texts, to bolster his arguments. Such is the case, for instance, in his search for links between information theory, the Torah, and divine providence, especially miracles. He cites what appears to be two competing points of view: Maimonides’ position that “Divine Providence applies to each person on the level to which the intellect of that individual has developed,” and the belief of the Baal Shem Tov that “Divine Providence controls the actions of all of God’s creation.” According to Shyfrin, God takes both positions with respect to miracles. “Miracles occur in our world as a result of God’s intervention and His switching the law from the first mode to the second.”

In other chapters, he asserts that a person is a complex system of information, the body composed of DNA, whose chemistry on one hand contains information on how to build and maintain itself and at the other obeying the laws of quantum physics. The soul, holding information about God, is measured by the “range of *sefirot* attached to it,” where *sefirot* in this context refer to the properties of the soul. Death is the decomposition of the person’s information system, entropy following its natural flow from order to disorder. But the soul is immortal, it is not a participant in the body’s information system.

He concludes with an examination of the afterlife by tying together kabbalistic beliefs with the words of the prophets, Maimonides, Saadia Gaon and quantum physics, concluding that the World to Come will not be material, as classically understood, but “like the spiritual worlds, it will be a world of partial recoherence, where our bodies and souls will be joined as one.” The body and soul are perceived as entangled in life, one inseparable entity. They are disconnected, or deconstructed at death, and then recreated in some undetermined form, varying from person to person, in the afterlife.

Kabbalah has been studied philosophically, theologically, and even mathematically. In *From Infinity to Man*, Shyfrin examines Kabbalah from a new position, the combined effect of quantum physics and the Theory of Information, and in doing so brings to light a heretofore unstudied perspective.

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