



Janet Berenson and Rabbi Lenny Levin Introducing KABBALAH

Janet Berenson -

Janet Berenson began her journey in Philadelphia, where she was raised and educated at Penn and Gratz College, studying literature, folklore and anthropology at Penn and qualifying as a Jewish educator in parallel at Gratz. Although the first 18 years of her life were firmly planted within the Conservative Jewish movement, discovering philosophy at Penn sent her on a path of personal questing, away from Judaism and eventually into Zen Buddhism.

Marriage to a young Englishman led her to London, and after some years of studying and practising Zen, within a framework of agnostic philosophical humanism, Janet's personal circumstances led her on a search to reconnect with Judaism. She discovered Finchley Reform Synagogue and resumed her Jewish studies.

In the 1980s Janet came to the blinding realisation that there had to be within Judaism meaningful and satisfying truths similar or equal to those she had become aware of within Buddhism and Sufism. Thus began the journey of discovery of Jewish mysticism and meditation.

Janet worked within the Reform Jewish community of North London initially in children's supplementary Jewish education. From there she moved to become a Community Development worker for the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain (now

the Movement for Reform Judaism) and a Consultant in Family and Teenage Education for the Leo Baeck College. She is also a Senior Examiner in Religious Studies for one of the national Examination Boards.

After 15 years in the Department of Jewish Education of the Leo Baeck College, Janet is now an independent consultant, trainer, inspirational speaker and teacher enjoying semi-retirement. She nurtures her soul with her continuing study and teaching of literature, creative writing, Jewish meditation and mysticism (Kabbalah).

In 2001 she wrote **Kabbalah Decoder** under her then name of Janet Berenson-Perkins, which has been translated into several languages and is considered to be an excellent and accessible introduction to the principles of Kabbalah. As well as being a published poet, Janet is also featured as a speaker in a dvd about relationships, **Love Talk**, released in January 2009.

Currently Janet is working on a collection of short stories, entitled 23 Pairs, exploring the impact of genetic characteristics on all aspects of life.

Rabbi Lenny Levin, PHD

Lenny Levin was born near Penn's campus where his father was studying for his BA. Lenny grew up in the Philadelphia area, where his family belonged to Beth Sholom in Elkins Park and he attended Akiba Hebrew Academy and Gratz College at various times. Lenny started his Penn career majoring in biblical studies under Moshe Greenberg, but the turbulence of the 1960s threw him off track and he finished Penn as one of the first to design his own "independent major" in 19th century French and German civilizations.

While pursuing his Ph.D. in History of Ideas at Brandeis (1973), Lenny was a frequent "Litvak"-rationalist interloper in the neo-Hasidic Havurat Shalom in Somerville, MA, and knew Danny Matt before Danny published his *Essential Kabbalah* and translated the Zohar. When Lenny's neo-Maimonidean rational proof for God's existence based on mind-body interactionism got no academic recognition, he pursued a career in computer programming for 19 years,

combining theological and computer interests in his self-published book *Why God Is Subject to Murphy's Law*.

At mid-life, Lenny returned to his original passion, got rabbinic ordination and a second Ph.D. at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, and has been teaching Jewish philosophy in various venues since 2000. He has translated a number of works in Jewish philosophy, most notably assisting Gordon Tucker in translating Abraham Joshua Heschel's *Heavenly Torah As Refracted Through the Generations*. He appreciates Rabbi Moses Isserles's (16th cent.) formulation that "philosophy and kabbalah are the same wisdom in two languages."

Lenny is currently finishing up his translation of Eliezer Schweid's *History of Modern Jewish Religious Philosophy*, of which the first four volumes have been published. With his wife Margie, he migrates seasonally between New Jersey and South Florida, and gets *nachas* from his two children and two granddaughters.