



the Ray of Connection

A SOCIETY OF SOULS® NEWSLETTER OF INTEGRATED KABBALISTIC HEALING®

Spring 2007

The Gift of Partaking

Jason shared this teaching at the 2003 All School Meeting

How does one take refuge every minute? It might seem sort of crazy to do this, sort of like mumbling a mantra to oneself all day long, but on some level, given the condition of the human mind and its propensity to distort reality, it would be crazy not to try to take refuge whenever we can.

For almost the past year, I have been working with an approach to "every minute refuge" I call "*partaking*."

To *partake* means to taste what is going on, inside yourself and out in the world. It means to be aware and awake to what is going on.

It is very much the attitude of a good guest or traveler, one who has been invited someplace new and who expects nothing but what is in front of them.

"*What is this?*" the guest says to him or herself - and samples everything - with no exception.

If we look at this special attitude of *partaking*, we see that while there is someone there, someone who is *partaking*, there is also no one there: *partaking* is not about personal preference. It is not about witnessing either: there is too much involvement for that. Witnessing has a stand-offish feeling to it, while *partaking* cooperates, participates, takes part, is in communion with,

and so on. There is a little letting go and a little restraint, the watcher or ego relaxed in the state of open-curiosity.

This is the state in which the heart makes its appearance, and by "heart" I do not mean some personal-only feeling that we can warm to and feel good about. Rather, if we can do a thought experiment here for a moment, the sort of feeling you might get if you had a warm feeling about something, but you that is what you remembered yourself to be was not there.

When you *partake* of an experience, even hard experiences become bearable. It is an amazing thing.

Partaking is a form of covenant between you and the world, where the world says *I am here*, and you say *I am here too*. Bitter grass and honey make the meal and we sit down at the table. *We partake*. It reveals that the world is much bigger than we thought,

WELCOME

Welcome to the next generation and the return of the Ray of Connection. The essence that connects us in this community we call A Society of Souls are the spiritual practices created by Jason and the commitment we all have to awaken to Reality. We cannot do spiritual work alone; we need companions and kindred spirits to support us, The Ray of Connection is an opportunity for you to share about your growth, a place to ask questions, a forum to explore what you are discovering through practice and an arena to express your creativity, wisdom, uncertainty and inspirations. In addition, we want this to be a vehicle that elucidates how our healing work is moving into the world both professionally and as a part of our commitment to world service.

Please contact me at eileenmm@optonline.net with your ideas for writing articles for the future Rays.

-Eileen Marder-Mirman-

encompassing a vast array to which it is possible to say *ki tov*: it is good.

To *partake* does not mean to accept blindly or to open oneself up completely. It is not a fantasy word that implies some sort of superhuman capability; one we may idealize but never really have ourselves.

The Indo-European root through the Latin of *partake*, comes from a word that means to *make ready*. The English words *parry*, *parapet*, *pare*, *preparedness*, *parcel*, *parse*, *portion*, and *even umpire* come from the same Indo-European word.

What all of these words have in common is their sense of *restraint*. They move forward, but not blindly and not too far. They embrace, but decide to embrace. They love, but with the proper separation, the proper individuation that must exist to make love possible.

Even as these words open the gate, they stand ready behind a parapet a low, protective wall not too high to be defensive; not too low to be without a sense of demarcation: something exists *here* that is meeting what is *there*.

In other words, to *partake* is neither too personal nor too impersonal. *Partaking* is like taking a

little wine in your mouth, rolling it around and considering what you are tasting. So it is not personal in the sense that you are not interested in your *personal* reaction to what is going on, i.e. this wine makes me feel glad/happy/sad/frustrated/angry, and so on. Nor is it too clinical and removed: *you* are partaking. Who you are is with you. You share. You think. You feel. You are.

Partaking is also not the same as questing. There is no *question* involved. Nothing to find except what is there.

It is beyond accepting or not accepting; beyond judging or not judging. It is curious, alive, and open-hearted. In that it differs from form-anxiety in that the personal self, as an inquiring consciousness, is still present and respected. (Editor's Note: Form anxiety refers to a core meditation/ practice taught in the first year of the IKH training.)

You don't have to be a master to do this: you simply need to *partake*.

Partaking is not about finding out about anything new: everything *is already new*.

Partaking is not about bringing any thing into the Light: everything is already in the light and in the darkness. No separation is

made or thought about.



When we *partake*, we take everything that is happening in any one moment into account. For instance, I am watching a scene unfold. I *partake*. I am having feelings about what I am seeing, perhaps I am sad, or frightened: I *partake*. Perhaps having these feelings throws me into some confusion or even despair: I *partake* and I continue to *partake*. There is nothing that is left out.

This is the constant practice we can keep with us all day long, from morning until night. When we *partake* we find refuge in the fleeting moment. This refuge is not the refuge of escaping into some other state, but escaping into *what is*. It is not *what will be* or *was*, but what is *here and now*.

This is the milieu in which the Heart comes alive. You will experience this as a physiological fact: at some point, practicing *partaking*, the physical heart will open into the metaphysical Heart.

I wish you all well in this practice.

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ASOS Winter Retreat

*By Susan Jackson,
Year One IKH Student*

The 2007 Winter Retreat was a welcome opportunity to be in community, to be in silence, to practice, to be with our teacher. Jason and Arlene were joined by Jeff Ellias-Frankel and Carolyn Tilove to hold the sacred space for our silent practice. Raechel Bratnick assisted Jeff for the Sunday morning healing exchanges. The gathering was both intimate and deep with participants from all stages of the IKH journey including teachers, ten year graduates and one first year student. The "schedule" consisted of thoughtfully allotted time for teachings, practice, sharing, questions, answers, koans with the underlying container of silence weaving its way through the three days. The power of practice in such a devoted group unfolded in tenderness as the weekend progressed.

"I feel the spongy breathing spaciousness of the silence masquerading as a room at the Holiday Inn in Somerset, New Jersey and the great I AM pretending to divide itself into a few dozen men and women," said one participant.

According to Jason, "This kind of retreat is going to be a forum. People show a commitment that allows me to talk on a very high level."

Those present received the remarkable gift of time and place for integration of the then, now, next into the ever fluid, blossoming Now. So all of you who wanted to attend but had other commitments this year be coaxed to free your calendar for next year's winter retreat!



Ponderings of a Traveler

*By Dianne Polseno,
Year One IKH Student*

I was introduced to Integrated Kabbalistic Healing (IKH) when my friend of many years was in year one of IKH training. It sounded fascinating, profound and completely out of my reach. We belonged to a

book group that met monthly; my friend would talk about Creation, shattering vessels and Jason. I was intrigued by our discussions.

At that time, I had been seeing an energy healer for several years, and while I had made progress in my awareness and understanding, I also had a haunting knowledge that I was circling around in my lifelong suffering like a plane stuck in a holding pattern. My hard won conscious awareness hadn't manifested in significant behavioral change. I was aware and stuck - and, as a result, felt more shame and frustration.

As soon as my friend was able to practice what she learned in school I began to receive IKH healings. Immediately, I felt shifts within myself; there was no way to talk about it except to say that I felt somehow changed.

I was very curious about the healings and what she was doing. I wanted to know more, so I attended an IKH introductory workshop and before the weekend came to a close I had applied to the three-year IKH program.

Unable to attend the next class due to illness and surgery, I continued to receive weekly IKH healings. I, and others in my

life, observed my newfound ability to break lifelong relationship patterns of codependency, which for me, was amazing. I was developing a different sense of myself - actually, developing a Self. I loved the work and the healings. My IKH work had taught me the importance and value of being where I am, of sitting with everything that emerged and not judging or trying to change it.

While I waited for Jason to announce the date for the next IKH class, I went to a Work of Return (WOR) training weekend. The practice asked me to do more than sit with my feelings and thoughts. I found myself toning and moving with the presenting thought, feeling, image or physical sensation. At first I felt foolish and self-conscious, but I also knew I was honoring myself and everything I was in some special way. I was connecting with and celebrating what I had always tried to run from, or deny and change. I loved my daily WOR practices, I felt like I was in church - a safe place I could bring my suffering to and be with it.

When the WOR professional training dates were announced, I knew I had to attend. This was my introduction to a larger group of the ASOS community; I thoroughly enjoyed being a part of it. These were people,

Souls, who walked a path that I knew was my path. Jason said we were all workers in the same field, all souls in a lineage, and I knew that to be true in my deepest places.

The WOR Professional Training introduced me to more of my unhealed ego and myself. It offered me a new way to help others, which has been my calling. Even if people didn't want to learn the WOR practice, I had a more palpable understanding of their suffering and unhealed ego, and a language to use that affected them; I could see it. No longer needing to fix or solve, WOR helped me to know more of the significance of experiencing humanity in all its forms and allowing others to do so, too.

I saw that this allowing was a great gift that offered others and myself more than the solution to problems.

Now, I'm in year one of the IKH training. With the help of my WOR practice, doing the MAGI process, and receiving IKH healings, I'm facing myself in a new way. I'm learning, on many levels, the importance of owning my experience, not judging it, and not trying to run from it. It's amazing to me how being with what is allows something else, something totally unexpected, to arise. It truly is creation.

This work and this community have changed me. I see the effects of it every day in my life.

If I were asked to sum up what has helped me the most about this work, it would have to be the awareness and intermittent appreciation of this: Suffering is not a mistake; it co-arises with life. No matter how much I grow, learn and become as a human being, I cannot make suffering easier or painless. What life offers me, what God accompanies me in, is the innate ability to be in my humanity and hence, know glimpses of the Divine.

“STUDY THE HEART; HEAL THE HEART; FOLLOW THE HEART.”

-Jason Shulman

NEW SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

*By Raechel Bratnick, Director
Spiritual Leadership Program*

A Society of Souls introduced a spiritual leadership program last year, to give committed IKH graduates a new way of seeding kabbalistic healing and the non-dual experience in the world. In

this program students learned how to lead study groups, thus building the next circle of presence for this work in the world.

From the beginning these classes found a ready response. First there were people eager to study in Raechel Bratnick's pilot program, groups she led in New Jersey. Then Jason invited IKH graduates to attend this new spiritual leadership training, and 54 people made the commitment. Now many of these people are leading study groups and discovering that people in their communities are hungry for this work.

Clearly, it was time for this new modality to appear in our school and in the world. In 2004 Jason published *Kabbalistic Healing: A Path to an Awakened Soul*, which opened the way for his teachings to be made available outside of the IKH intensive study. This book is a transmission of enfolded inner Kabbalistic teachings and the nondual state of consciousness. While it is very rich, it is not a simple book to grasp without the guidance of someone who is willing to engage in the authenticity of seeing life as it is. To introduce this path to others, we need to be walking this path. This is what Jason has always stressed to us and it is how he is able to communicate these depths in simple, accessible ways.

Two things came together last summer and fall after Jason's invitation. First of all, the graduate community began to wrestle, personally and interpersonally, with the Call. Since we know that "everything is information" and material for our personal growth, this part of the training was as valuable as the homework assignment that followed. The graduates who answered the call to this spiritual leadership training spent hours deeply engaging with the content of the curriculum they would be teaching. At the same time Raechel was deeply engaged in creating a comprehensive study guide. Meanwhile she and Jason were working together to create a four-day intensive training program that would enable people to immediately begin their own study groups—which is what happened.

All of this came together in early November at Menla Mountain Center in Phoenicia, New York, as the first ASOS spiritual leadership training. Assisting Jason and Raechel in the teaching were Eileen Marder-Mirman and Brenda Blessings; both had taught these small study groups in their hometowns.

It was truly an intensive as we began every morning at 7:30 with spiritual practice and then engaged in large group teaching sessions and small group practice and discussion groups, ending at 9:30 pm. Our days were full and fruitful. Teaching this material is to become embodied in it, so our focus was not simply on learning the curriculum, but practicing being in presence and working with what keeps us from awakening. Throughout the intensive there were unexpected blessings as people wrestled with the material and with their own personal stuff. The results were awesome. People brought their deep spiritual questions to Jason; Jason taught us more about lineage and being lineage holders, then blessed each of us in preparation for our emergence as individual spiritual leaders.

These new leaders have returned to their communities to teach in a public manner. They are not teaching IKH; they are teaching a way of life based on ideas found in *Integrated Kabbalistic Healing*. Immediately following the training, Paule Gerard and Kathy Bernstein started groups in Montreal and Rhode Island. Soon after groups began in Rochester, Bethesda, Boulder, Springwater, NY, Princeton, Pittsburgh, and Chicago. They continue to happen in many other places. Support for these new leaders comes by monthly teleconferences with Jason and Raechel, monthly supervision groups led by Raechel, Eileen and Brenda, and an active email group conversation.

The Spiritual Leadership program is clearly another turning point for our Society of Souls. A new avenue has been added to the IKH program. In the past we have always had graduates living this path in their work and careers. But the primary place to practice IKH was to engage in a one-to-one healing practice. Now graduates who complete the fourth

year, including Impersonal Movement, who are deeply committed to their own healing and spiritual awakening, and who desire to bring this work into the world, can learn to lead study groups. Our next Spiritual Leadership training will be held the fall of 2008. If you would like a study class in your area, please email me at: rbratnick@att.net.

Please Join Us for an Evening of Music, Joy, Healing and Awakening

A Benefit Concert with Jason Shulman and His Band for the Association for Spirituality and Psychotherapy

Seats are limited, so register now for this extraordinary opportunity to hear the music of lyricist and composer Jason Shulman, founder of *A Society of Souls*. He is recognized as one of the world's leading teachers of personal healing and spiritual awakening, and is a rare combination of modern kabbalist and Buddhist dharma lineage holder. Jason will describe how his relationship with his music has guided his spiritual life, and will suggest that we all have a "wise one" within us who can lead us home. Author of the best-selling book, *The Instruction Manual for Receiving God*, Jason's captivating blend of words and music express a unique understanding of the unity between psychology and spirituality.

The tax deductible donation is \$35, payable at the door. Registration starts at 5:30 PM

Gary Malkin is Founder and CEO of Wisdom of the World. An Emmy and ASCAP award-winning composer/producer and performer, Gary's music CDs convey a compassionate spirit designed to connect listeners to a world of inner peace and wisdom. His work and mission, including the inspirational CD/Book set Graceful Passages, is dedicated to making a difference in the world by performing and participating in projects that inspire the heart and catalyze social change.

Kim Rosen is a poet and spoken word artist as well as a teacher of inner work who began learning poetry by heart as a spiritual practice. She performs "Poetry Concerts" in collaboration with musicians, has co-created 3 CDs of spoken poems and music, and is currently working on a fourth with cellist/composer Jami Sieber.

The Wise One Living in Your Heart



FRIDAY, MAY 11, 2007

6:00 PM

**Fordham University
60th Street & 9th Avenue
12th Floor Lounge
New York City**

Spiritual Leadership Training Sifting Our Souls

by Erin Minta, IKH Graduate 2004

Last November, the first Spiritual Leadership Training was held at the Menla Mountain Retreat Center in Phoenicia, New York. The fall weather was not too hot, not too wet, and the mountain air breathed beginning on us from the moment we arrived: sweet and scary, known and unknown, enthused and confused.

The seeds of community were planted as we were led through the manual that will form the basis of the curriculum for the study groups. Together we wrestled, grew curious, questioned, ran and returned. Slowly we opened ourselves to the new - new material, new understandings, new people - over and over, until finally, one by one, each in our own time, we agreed to hop on this new wave called Kabbalistic Study groups.

For me, the multiple-generations of IKH classmates gathered there, together with the loving support and guidance of the teaching staff, formed a new holy shape that I am calling the Angel of Encouragement, maybe the Angel of Courage, maybe both. There is a perceptible flap to its wings that calls me away from the tumbleweed in my stomach and back into my heart, reminding me to seek support when I am in trouble. I feel its presence like a prayer shawl

settling on my shoulders. It sings - in eighteen states and 2 foreign countries - through the rings, beeps and jingles of our home phones and cell phones - each time any of us makes a call to connect with one another. This is one busy angel.

Many people are engaged in God wrestling in the world, and the IKH perspective has taught me to see and honor that more deeply. Yet the work of conscious repair that ASOS is teaching - and that we can now share in yet another way through the study groups - is different. It asks us to stand as the healing gateway for both ourselves and our clients, but it doesn't leave us there. We have the healing support of individuals with a common and embodied kavanah, all of whom attempt to walk in the world in this way - steady in ourselves in the face of ever-present change and movement, steady as we sift, sift, sift, are sifted to be with ever-new awakening.

Over the course of the training, each member of the community mirrored for each other this walk we do. We saw its ups and downs, we lived (through!) its trials and errors, and we experienced running and returning again and again until we finally saw that not only is running and returning okay, it is holy indeed because it echoes the natural movement of creation. Emboldened by our common pas-

sage, sea legs strengthened from weathering the waves, and our vessels fortified by... what? tying them together, I think, we invited everything in. There we were then - a shape filled with Everything and the All of each of us - the deep beauty of humanity when it is allowed to be just what it is.

We continue the walking, sifting, mirroring, falling down-getting up dance in the follow-up conference calls and supervision that is provided. As I prepare myself to lead study groups, and my gate crashes for the twelfth time in as many weeks, my instinct is, simply, to begin again because that is the kavanah modeled in this community. The support is there, the blessings given, the community formed, and the love for life as we know and experience it - in all its beauty, glory, splendor, and messiness - is held in a container that lets me walk into, out of, and through as just myself, as best I can, so that I can be the blessing to the world and to my family that I want to be.

*“Be without
leaving
yourself.”*

-Ramana Maharshi

TAKING IKH INTO THE WORLD OF CHILDREN

By Betty Caldwell, summary of graduate presentation from 2006 All School Meeting, IKH graduate 2002

My personal passion for enlightening children is simple: I want them to spend less time suffering and more time awake. We know that life as a human being frequently means a deep early wounding, when children are most vulnerable and least equipped to handle it. Given that, I want to help speed up the process of their healing, supporting them in awakening earlier, rather than later, in life. *The revelation for me has been to teach and treat awakening as a skill: one that can be taught in a secular setting and that has clear value to the students in their everyday life.*

My kavannah has led me to the following guiding principles in developing a program for middle and high school students.

1. *To convey the teachings of IKH, as they relate to this group, without theological, or mystical language or sacrificing any of the profound nature of the work.*
2. *To help them connect to their own divine wholeness while becoming increasingly free of their history, erroneous assumptions, and their lack of connection to Self.*

3. *To create activities, experiences, and presentations to convey the IKH teachings in a public school setting while teaching them to stay engaged with Reality.*

The Stressless Tests Skills Program® is offered as a series of three classes: reducing test anxiety, middle school study skills, and high school study skills. Each course is 8 hours in length and is conducted in 4 sessions in a public school classroom. The core content includes self-awareness, study skills and test anxiety reduction skills.

One of the activities I developed is "Walking the Tree". I construct a Tree of Life on the classroom floor, labeling both the nega and oneg states. I begin guiding them by saying, "this is wholeness, it exists throughout the universe, and it exists in your brain." The students walk the tree to understand the various aspects. They quickly grasp an understanding of which sephirot, or states of consciousness, they identify their thinking style with and where on the Tree they experience stress.

Since July, the program has continued to grow through the interest of the ASOS community. An IKH graduate is investigating bringing this work into a New

England school system. Norman Sveilich, an IKH graduate and a Director of Orthopedic Residency Training sponsored pilot sessions with residents as they prepared for exams. Merrily Preston, an IKH graduate and long-time teacher and tutor, is adapting this approach with her students with



heartwarming results. Others from the ASOS community have expressed an interest in learning how to bring this work to their clients, children and for themselves.

I have completed three sessions with students from a federally funded "No Child Left Behind" program. It is humbling and exciting to realize that so many people are being touched in ways I never dreamt would be possible. I have been invited to train teachers in the Summer Student Enrichment, Achievement, and Leadership Program for minority students.

In January, the Baltimore Sun ran a wonderful article on the program. Subsequently, I have heard from educators and parents throughout the country. I am exploring what is needed to create a self-contained DVD-based program and link up with those who can help make it nationally available.

If you would like more information about this program you can contact Betty at either www.Stresslestests.org, or Bcaldwell@comcast.net.

QUESTIONS

Prior to the first class and during the IKH training, we explore the significance, importance and essential qualities of questions. Jason tells us that "questions- unlike answers- bring us into constant relationship." This column, Questions, is an invitation for you to find the questions that live silently in your heart, to give them a voice, to experience the healing that emerges from the asking and from the teaching that Jason will transmit in his response to your questions. Please send them to me at eileenmm@optonline.net. In gratitude,
Eileen

Question:

from Peggy Scott, Year One IKH Student

Isn't projection of spirit on to a God out there similar to transference, where we project unconscious aspects of ourselves on to other?

Answer:

This is an interesting question! And yes: many, if not most of our ideas, feelings and thoughts about God are projections from our personal history, especially our unconscious personal history. So in a sense, our image of God becomes a "bigger version" of our childhood experiences, both positive and negative. For example, if we had a severe and demanding parent, we might project God as a severe and demanding Deity. If we had an absent or anxious childhood situation, our relationship with God and how we see God might mirror that condition as well. It is also true that many people have positive images of God that are still projections in that they defend against unbearable suffering. So a God who is "eternal" might be used to hide our anxiety about being mortal; a God who is orderly and who gives us specific instructions on how to live might be an attempt to repair a chaotic or anxiety-ridden condition in our own lives.

Seeing this, the question then becomes: what does the Creative Spirit of this universe look like when we are not projecting our unconscious thoughts and ideas? Is there a there there? And further: being imperfect human beings, who might always continue to project and transfer our feelings on to

the world, is it even possible to get past all this and see God as God really is?

My answer is "yes." As the who we are develops, the who-we-see develops as well. Seeing that we transfer is seeing who-we-are more clearly. Knowing that we will always continue to some extent to transfer and project, is knowing even more about who-we-are. So the idea here is not getting to some idealized state of perfection in order to see God or know God or feel God, but to be here as we are, aware of who we are, more and more.

Then the journey changes from trying to gain a foothold in one pole or another; in one of two opposites (say, trying to choose the purity of having no transference versus giving up and seeing that you will always transfer), to accepting and living the dynamic exchange that is at the core of all opposites: life itself, which is the Mother of all-that-is. When we do that, we come to the realization that God is not opposite anything, but God is that condition that holds All: personal and transcendent; eternal and mortal; the still-point and the constant and continuous change that Reality is made up of. Life is God. All of life, including its so-called ending. When we partake of that, we are living in God's Hands.

-Jason Jinen Shulman

Upcoming Events

Introduction to IKH Workshops: 9am-5pm

April 28th: Interweave, Summit, New Jersey with Raechel Bratnick and Gary DePice

April 28th: Wellesley, MA, Wellesley Community Center, with Jeff Ellias-Frankel and Eileen Marder-Mirman

May 19th: Lincroft, NJ, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Monmouth County, with Jeff Ellias-Frankel and Jan Bresnick

June 2nd: Philadelphia, PA, Communitas, with Talia Malka and Eileen Marder-Mirman

June 29th - July 1st: Omega Institute, Rhinebeck, NY, with Jason Shulman and Brenda Blessings

Receiving God Talks with Jason:

May 24th: San Francisco, CA, The Learning Annex, 6:45 pm - 9:30 pm

May 28th: LA, CA, The Learning Annex: 6:45 pm - 9:30 pm

May 30th: San Diego, CA, The Learning Annex: 6:45 - 9:30 pm

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