

OUTLINE FOR THE EDITOR

EDIT NOTE 1: Our current concept is to use titles cards to introduce each chapter. This element adds a layer of structure to our story and helps guide our audience through the narrative and the informational threads of our movie. These title cards will also complement our overall style choices with artwork and graphic fonts to be added later.

EDIT NOTE 2: It is our plan to have 5 short graphics heavy lessons that explain specific concepts in Kaballah. These lessons will appear strategically throughout the narrative of the movie and teach actual Kaballah. These lessons will be presented as integral parts of our movie. They will help move the narrative forward and be understood as the very material that we see Steven learning throughout the narrative.

KABALLAH ME

(WORKING TITLE: ENTER THE ORCHARD --A STORY OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING)

ACT I

MOUNT MERON, NORTHERN ISRAEL, 2AM

100 thousand bearded Hassidic men dressed in black dance in unison. It looks like some kind of religious rave!

V.O starts: This is the annual Lag BaOmer festival celebrating the life of the greatest Kabbalists of all time, the author of the Holy Zohar, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai...

Surprisingly the music blasting from the loudspeakers in an endless loop is modern trance music but the lyrics are all religiously inspired.

The camera moves in and unexpectedly finds a single secular American guy dancing amongst the Chassidic Jews. He looks at once to be totally comfortable and ridiculously out of place.

The camera lingers a few more beats as the vibe is fully established with the viewer, as the voice-over continues. We hear Steven as he tells us a little about himself and offers that we are probably wondering how a well-off, happily married secular Jew from Park Avenue wound up here on this mountaintop, dancing hypnotically with 100 bearded and black-clad ultra-orthodox Israelis. This, Steven says is a very good question.

WHAT IS THIS LIFE?

Back in New York City and 10 months earlier. In a montage sequence and documentary style conversations with Steven, we learn about his life. By all accounts, he is a well-adjusted guy who has lived a privileged, upper-class existence. His beautiful wife Miriam is thoughtful and engaging, his daughters Zoey and Casey are full of exuberance and eagerly pursuing their studies and hobbies. Steven's got cool friends, a cool job and money is not a problem so there is plenty of fine dining, sporting events, and vacations.

Although Steven seems to be covering all the bases and has a life that most people would describe as pretty lucky he has somehow, at 49 years old, finds himself feeling cosmically unfulfilled. Is this all there is, he wonders? There has got to be more to life than what I am experiencing? He feels relatively happy and certainly grateful but this nagging existential angst is now bubbled up to a degree that cannot be ignored. There has got to be a more meaningful, graspable point to our lives, he decides?

DIVINE GUIDANCE

Steven recounts how he was at a hockey game with one of his buddies Michael who tells him, somewhat unexpectedly, that he has been studying Torah with a Rabbi at a place called Aish Ha Torah (Fire of the Torah). Aish is a modern orthodox community center on the Upper West Side of Manhattan that is involved in outreach to the secular Jewish community. Upon hearing the name of this organization Steven is reminded of a trip he took to Israel twenty years earlier. He was approached by a Rabbi at the Western Wall in Jerusalem who asked him if he wanted to come back to the Yeshiva and learn Torah. After a bit of coaxing Steven agreed and ended up staying at the Yeshiva for three months learning. The name of the Yeshiva was Aish HaTorah, the same organization that his buddy Michael was now learning at in Manhattan! Steven takes this small coincidence as a sign and decided he too would start learning Torah. Perhaps, reconnecting with his Jewish identity would take the edge off of some of the restlessness he has been feeling lately.

KABBALAH

Steven begins to study at Aish. He finds the time with Rabbi Schiff very pleasant; a refreshing change from the inescapable focus on materialism that seems to pervade the rest of his life. Steven is most intrigued when his Rabbi alludes to the esoteric knowledge of the Torah called the Kabbalah. When Steven presses, Rabbi Schiff explains that it is his theological tradition to first master the foundational levels of the Torah before engaging in the direct study of the Kabbalah.

Note: We see Steven learning and talking with Rabbi Schiff. Rabbi Schiff and many of the other Rabbis we meet will make numerous appearances throughout the narrative as Steven navigates his journey.

Sometime later Steven hears that there is another Rabbi at Aish who has a more progressive approach regarding teaching Kabbalah to new students. Steven immediately makes inquiries and begins to learn Kabbalah with Rabbi Jacobs. He soon finds himself drawn into the mystical teachings he never knew existed within Judaism!

LET'S MAKE A MOVIE!

In spite of the uncomfortable responses Steven often gets from some friends and coworkers he finds himself studying more and more frequently as the weeks and then months go by. He shares some of his insights; if he was exposed to the Kabbalah at his Reform Temple he would have had a stronger connection to Judaism. They always stood up for the Torah at the Temple but it never dawned on him to open it up and see what it said inside, he quips. It's seemed almost incomprehensible that so many Jewish people in his secular circles seem largely unaware of the secret spiritual wisdom hidden within the Torah. Steven confesses that he is just a beginner student and that the more he learns the more he realizes that Kabbalah is a very deep and hidden wisdom and he, like a lot of people, doesn't really know what Kabbalah is. In spite of this admission, he has a strong conviction that spreading this

knowledge is a worthy endeavor. When Rabbi Jacobs asks Steven if he wants to get involved in producing educational clips for the Aish Website Steven gets the idea that making a movie about kabbalah would be an even better endeavor.

SKYPE LESSONS FROM ISRAEL

Rabbi Jacob introduces Steven to two Rabbis who live in Israel and suggests that they might be good teachers for Steven as he becomes a more serious student. The first is Rabbi Cable who like Rabbi Schiff has a traditional methodology and the second is Rabbi Schwartz who has a more progressive approach and is willing to learn directly from Kabbalistic sources with Steven. Steven begins learning regularly with both Rabbis, discussing all aspects of Steven's journey.

PARDES/THE ORCHARD

During one of Steven's lessons, Rabbi Jacobs shares a well-known story from the Talmud about four master sages who enter an Orchard. Rabbi Jacobs (and other Rabbis) explains that the Orchard in this story is a metaphor for the higher spiritual worlds talked about in the Kabbalah. Each of these four sages has their own archetypal spiritual experience. One becomes a heretic, one goes insane, one dies and the greatest sage and master Kabbalist Rabbi Akiva enters the Orchard in peace and leaves in peace. It is explained that because Rabbi Akiva entered these higher spiritual with correct and pure intentions his journey was successful, each of the other sages, although great, were somehow lacking and therefore, suffered the consequences.

Steven was enthralled by the Orchard story and thought that it would be the perfect construct around which to build the movie. As the story indicates, there are many different circumstances and impulses that draw a person to spirituality, some of them healthy and balanced and others extreme and potentially destructive. All four of the above arch-types exist in each of us and as our story unfolds Steven will be compelled to evaluate his own desires and motives.

Once the decision is made to make a movie, Steven interviews and hires a filmmaking team and sets out to explore the world of Kabbalah. What he soon learns is that not only is there a lot of confusion and controversy surrounding the world of Kabbalah but there is a wide spectrum of beliefs concerning who should be studying Kabbalah and when. There are those who believe that Kabbalah is far too powerful to be studied by beginners. The authorities in this camp, which includes the majority within orthodox Judaism believe that first a student must master what is called the revealed Torah before engaging the esoteric inner aspect of Torah with a qualified master. Furthermore, a student must be fully observant of all the Halachic (legal) ritualistic practices such as Shabbat (The Jewish Sabbath) and Kashrut (dietary laws, i.e. keeping Kosher). At the other end of the spectrum are those who believe that humanity has entered into a new phase of development (This new phase has itself been prophesied in Kabbalah), because humanity is now in need of deep spiritual knowledge it is now incumbent on everyone, regardless of their stature or circumstance to engage in Kabbalah study. Not to study could, in fact, lead to increased suffering for humanity, which is unaware of how to free itself from an ever-growing egoistic self-interest. Between these two opinions there lies varying degrees of opinions and methods. Steven knows all of this because he is spending more and more time learning kabbalah and talking to people who teach and study.

(EDIT NOTE: In our edit, this information will be conveyed through montage sequences with different

teachers and experts and woven into Steven's thoughts, questions and choices.) What is clear to Steven is that making a movie about Kabbalah is not as easy as it first might have seemed. The orchard story is proving to be a perfect metaphor for the landscape of opinions coming into focus. The plan remains the same; reach out to people studying Kabbalah, meet them and try to learn about them, their methods and the meaning of Kabbalah.

WHAT IS KABBALAH ANYWAY?

One of the first things the filmmakers decide to do is take out an ad asking anyone who is interested in spirituality to come in for an interview/audition for a movie. We ask people if they know what Kabbalah is and the answers we get are varied and often confusing if not plain wrong.

Note: We hear from experts who explain the historical context of the confusion surrounding Kabbalah. Kabbalah was purposely hidden from the masses throughout history for various reasons: 1) It's potentially dangerous - there were Kabbalistically inspired, Messianic movements in Europe like the Sabbateans (Shabsi Tzvi) and Frankist (Joseph Frank) where people were led into misguided heretical and destructive practices. 2) Humanity had not advanced enough to need or understand the wisdom discussed in Kabbalah.

WHAT'S UP WITH STEVEN?

As Steven continues to study he becomes more interested in taking on some Jewish observances, although - as we will find out later in our movie - not everyone who studies Kabbalah is an observant Jew. Steven seems to appreciate that there is a connection between the revealed Torah and the Kabbalah and begins to incorporate religious observances into his life. He stops eating shellfish and stops using his cell phone on Saturday. He also seems to gravitate towards Rabbis who emphasize the connection between observing the rituals in Judaism (the revealed Torah) and advancing in the spiritual world (kabbalah or inner aspect of Torah).

We begin to hear reactions from Steven's friends and family about his new found interest in Religious Judaism, Torah study and Kabbalah. These are just the first bits of what people are saying, some of it good and some of it bad. Some friends think Steven went off the deep end after too many years of good living, others think he is just having a standard mid-life crisis and others are beginning to sense profound changes in Steven's disposition and focus. (*EDIT NOTE: footage from 50th birthday party here?*)

Too early for any reactions from friends and certainly there should be no footage from the 50th birthday here, in my opinion - this wasn't edited this way for now

Steven's wife Miriam and his daughters Zoey and Casey seem supportive but somewhat apprehensive about Steven's newfound interest. The girls seem somewhat confused by these new interests and Miriam wonders how Steven's study and interest in Jewish rituals might impact their well-established lifestyle.

TO BROOKLYN WE GO

The film crew takes its first trip to Chabad Lubavitch headquarters in Crown Heights Brooklyn. Steven gets a tour of the library and learns about the Lubavitcher Chassidim's approach. As we have heard earlier there are pitfalls to Kabbalah study and different groups have different strategies. In the Chabad

Lubavitch stream, the spiritual leader is known as the Rebbe. There were a total of seven Chabad Rebbes over the years connecting back to the inventor of the Chassidic method, the great Kabbalist, The Bal Shem Tov. We hear about the Zohar for the first time and learn that in the Chassidic path it is the job of the Rebbe to learn Kabbalah directly and then explain the Kabbalistic concepts using practical references, thereby making it more digestible to the average disciple. This method attempts to avoid some of the historic pitfalls associated with Kabbalah study. This path is known as Chassidus within Judaism. Steven sees the books of Kabbalah used by the Rebbes, the main Kabbalah text is called the Zohar. The book is behind glass making the point that the students are restricted from learning directly from the Kabbalistic text.

BROKEN VESSELS

Kabbalah describes a world of higher consciousness that remains beyond the perception of all but a few characters in history who had the unique potential for spiritual attainment. Those people wrote about a method for rebuilding the collective spiritual vessels of all humanity. As Steven learns he begins to appreciate that these “broken” connections between people are part of the work being described in Kabbalah. Steven decides that he wants to reconnect with the religious side of his family. He makes plans to join his religious relatives for some Jewish holidays. The film crew, of course, goes with. Steven takes the opportunity to hear his relatives’ opinions about Kabbalah. True to the metaphor implicit in The Orchard story Steven finds that some of his relatives are engaging in Kabbalah study and some feel that to do so is misguided and troubling.

With a certain amount of ambivalence, Steven’s wife Miriam joins him on the visits. True to her nature Miriam doesn’t offer much of her feelings but from her uneasy glances, it is clear that she is uncomfortable with Steven’s almost giddy interest in all the religious practices and talk of Kabbalah.

RABBI YEHUDA ASHLAG --THE BAAL HASULAM (OWNER OF THE LADDER)

Short, dynamic, documentary style, montage introducing the audience to the Baal Hasulam. A quick bio is offered and an explanation of his political/ideological/theological views. Namely that he was adamant that Jews must study Kabbalah in order to save the world. He is controversial in most traditional religious circles for this belief and agenda as we will learn throughout the movie.

Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag was an ultra-orthodox, Rabbi and his immediate disciples were also ultra-orthodox. But now two generations after his death there is a new generation of students who are breaking with orthodox tradition. These new disciples believe that the Baal Hasulam’s intention was that Kabbalah should be studied independently from the revealed Torah and should be practiced by secular and non-Jewish people. This conversation is nuanced and complicated. How much of this conversation can or should be covered in our film will be reviewed continually throughout the edit. Both Bnei Baruch and KabbalahCenter trace their methods back to the teachings of the Baal Hasulam.

ISRAEL: BIRTHPLACE OF Kabbalah

NYC is a center for Jewish life. It has one of the largest concentrations of Jews in all of history with a vast diversity of Jewish culture spanning the full spectrum of communities from the completely secular to the ultra ultra-orthodox. That being said, no investigation of Kabbalah would be complete without exploring the world of Kabbalah as it exists in the land of Israel. With this in mind, the decision is made to take a trip to Israel in search of a greater understanding of Kabbalah.

(EDIT NOTE: B roll of New York Jewish life. Also might make a V.O. here ending with a little bit of a production meeting.)

During a production meeting (*EDIT NOTE alt. heard in V.O.*) some of the goals of the trip are outlined. Goals of the trip: Learn more about Kaballah, visit the birthplace of Kaballah, meet with authorities from different communities and find out more about their approach to study and ask them about the current trends in Kaballah in the USA and around the world. Gain an understanding of the place of Israel in the developmental process of creation. Meet Steven's Rabbis who he has been learning with over Skype and follow Steven's personal story as he learns more and tries to make decisions about his personal life and the effect his choices will have on those he cares about.

TENSION AT WORK

When Steven informs his partners that he plans to take a trip to Israel they are less than supportive. The timing of the trip is not great as the company has some big meetings scheduled and Steven's attendance is deemed necessary. Steven calls Rabbi Jacobs and discusses the issues. Ultimately Steven decides that he will move forward as planned with the trip to Israel. It's clear that Steven's focus is on the movie project. Tension with the partners seems likely to mount.

ACT II

KABALLAH: A MODERN DAY PHENOMENON

ACT II opens with a Montage. (*EDIT NOTE: V.O. Narrated by Steven or more likely a neutral narrator who will handle all the fact-based, historical and "objective" montage sequences. This will allow Steven to maintain his own perspective and take a personal position for his character alone. Steven will have numerous personal V.O as needed.*)

This short sequence talks about the advancement of Kaballah has an international phenomenon with Jewish and non-Jewish adherents. We hear about and see the celebrity aspect of Kaballah and mentions Kaballah center, Hollywood and Madonna.

Steven makes the point that in order for the audience to understand this modern phenomenon we have to trace back to the source of Kaballah, within the Orthodox world in Israel. To that end, the crew needs to traveling to Israel to try to meet with the more traditional Jewish authorities and try to understand how this trend got started and what different communities have to say about this explosion of Kabbalah.

(EDIT NOTE: Perhaps we see something mundane about the crew arriving in Israel. Or maybe we just time jump to the Wall for maximum effect. TBD)

THE WALL

Steven tours the Western Wall in Jerusalem, the holiest site within all of Judaism. Steven puts on Tefillin with the Lubavitchers at the Wall. Steven approaches the Wall for prayer and has a breakthrough and dramatic spiritual experience. This scene powerfully speaks for itself. No additional context needed.

Steven meets Rabbi Moshe Schlass and connects to him in a personal way. Rabbi Schlass gives Steven his interpretation of the very emotional moment he just went through and they talk about drugs and the

illusion of enlightenment it gives the user.

RABBI SCHWARTZ

Steven meets up with Rabbi Schwartz. Although they have been learning together online this is the first time they are meeting in person. They discuss many issues surrounding Kaballah. Namely, why is it so popular in the world? Who is it for and why? Interacting with other faiths, the role of religious observance in Kaballah study and spiritual advancement, and personal lifestyle choices and the role of Israel in the development of human consciousness.

Actually, they talk about the fact that Kabbalah sees every step in life as meaningful, and Steven relates to that. Rabbi Schwartz explains to Steven his concept of “All-ing” and leads him to the meditation session. *(EDIT NOTE: At this point in the movie the tone is shifting from confusion and open questions to a general sense that we understand the subject being discussed in Kaballah.)*

Steven and joins Rabbi Schwartz for a Kaballistic meditation session.

RABBI CABLE

Steven and Rabbi Cable go to the Banyas waterfall in northern Israel. They have a discussion about Kaballah and the perception of reality, etc.

Steven reflects on the different approaches of Rabbi Schwartz and Rabbi Jacobs vs. Rabbi Schiff and Rabbi Cable. Steven sees the value of both approaches but is overwhelmingly attracted to the esoteric and spiritual aspects more.

RABBI ARON

Rabbi Aron and Steven talk in Jerusalem. These conversations are clear and have a comfortable tone but are really clarifying the topic of Kaballah. Rabbi Aron has a brilliant ability to explain complicated concepts in a universal and digestible way.

(EDIT NOTE: This is another turning point in our film where the audience will hopefully start to feel that they are beginning to understand the subject matter of Kaballah.)

SAFED: CITY OF KABALLAH

Steven and the film crew travel up north to the ancient mountaintop city of Safed the home of Judaism’s most noted and universally accepted Kaballist of the modern age Rabbi Isaac Luria also known as the Holy Ari.

Montage sequence with Neutral Voice Over that gives us a visually dynamic and fast-paced history of Safed as the epicenter of Kaballah throughout the ages; we hear a quick timeline of historical events and facts that give context to our trip and to the city of Safed.

This montage leads us into our personal tour of the city (famous synagogues and grave sites and the mikvah) and conversations with local practitioners. Safed is a city that attaches many people searching for spiritual advancement. The city is filled with Kaballah students, artists and musicians all seemingly focused on Kaballah. We visit with various people and learn about their practice.

STEVEN GOES TO THE MIKVAH (RITUAL BATHS)

Like the scene at the Western Wall Steven's experience of spiritual cleansing at the Mikvah is experiential and emotional. The basic explanation of a ritual bath is explained but everything else powerfully speaks for itself.

THE LAG BAOMER FESTIVAL IN MERON

During our tour of Safed Steven and Judah are lead, onto a roof-top where a tour guide points out a far-off hilltop where an annual festival is held for the celebration of the greatest Kabbalist of all time and author of the seminal text of Kaballah called the Zohar, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

Steven inquires about when the festival is held. He seems particularly interested in the festival.

Unfortunately, the festival does not occur for many months, long after the film crew will return to Israel.

Steven reflects:

(EDIT NOTE: because this footage was not shot in Israel it might not end up here in the final edit but it will be necessary to set up the climax (anti-climax) later on in the story. TBD Steven talks about why he had stuck a strong reaction to the festival in Meron. Steven has always been into sporting events and music festivals. He always loved the strong electric communal energy that occurs only at these types of mass gatherings. Now that he is studying Kaballah, he understands the spiritual mechanics that are at the root of this energy. Kaballah explains that all of humanity is truly one single organism that intrinsically desires to unify. We are on a developmental course to reconnect all of humanity into one spiritual vessel that will only then be able to experience the total fulfillment intended for humanity. Steven seems really disappointed that production didn't know about the festival earlier so that they could have planned to be in Israel for it.)

PHONE CALL FROM HOME

Steven talks to the girls. Sorry, I really wanted to be there, he says. Also hears about Halloween - kinda awkward in the context of the film considering Halloween is a pagan holiday.

NA NACH NACHMAN OF UMAN!

(Na Na Nach... is a Kaballistic chant used by the modern disciples of Rabbi Nachman the spiritual leader of the Breslover Chassidim)

Before leaving Safed the crew meets with a Breslover Rabbi who talks about spirituality and Kaballah. Intercut is a quick and short montage telling giving us a little background on the Breslovers --they are an extremely popular Chassidic movement in Israel and like the Lubavitchers, their leader Rabbi Nachman of Sloveche was one of the greatest Kabbalists of the modern age. The Rabbi has a very universal message of joy, acceptance and personal dialogue with G-d as a pathway to enlightenment.

TEL AVIV

Aware that there is a large movement of secular people studying Kaballah the production heads to Tel Aviv to meet the secular people, of Tel Aviv and seek out conversations with none-orthodox people studying Kaballah

Short fast-paced Montage sequence showing the BB organization's online presences reaching millions

of students, their publishing operation and their annual conferences that are held across the globe and attract thousands.

We have a series of short conversation with leaders and students from BB who explain the BB philosophy about religion, Jewish observance, Kaballah and actively working to raise world consciousness and thereby alleviate suffering. (EDIT NOTE: *Although the movie will not shy away from truth-seeking, accurate reporting and dramatic topics our overreaching goal is to create a tone that is accepting and affirming to all viewers. Perhaps Steven will actually articulate this position of the film. TBD.*)

BACK IN THE REAL FAKE WORLD

Steven with his family in NYC: After the spiritual high of traveling around Israel we see Steven back in NYC with his family. Although his family is well adjusted and loving the contrast is undeniable. We are reminded of how secular Steven's day-to-day existence truly is.

MIRIAM MEETS WITH KaballahWOMEN (PUT WOMEN'S NAME HERE) IN PARK

Steven and Miriam meet with a Kaballah teacher in the park. The woman has great energy and seems well versed in Kaballah but when she starts suggesting to Miriam about how she should defer to Steven's authority as he attempts to advance spiritually through religious and spiritual practice, Miriam seems genuinely put off. Miriam is an educated and spiritually engaged person and has well-informed positions. Her pushback is subtle but powerful. Steven seems to appreciate that the distance between their perspectives is substantial.

SIUM HASHAS

100,000 orthodox and ultra-orthodox Jews gather in the Met Life Stadium, in New Jersey, to celebrate the seven and a half year learning cycle of the revealed Torah known as the Talmud. This is the core of the mainstream traditional orthodox community who has the firm tradition of studying the foundational texts of the Torah before engaging in the esoteric study. Steven, respectful and open-minded as always, comments that these people are 100% committed to Torah. If they are resistant to overt Kabbalah study by everyone but the most advanced students they must understand the dangers. Their opinions and impressions should not be dismissed out of hand.

RABBI SHIFF

STEVEN meets with Rabbi Schiff they talk about where Steven is holding. Steven mentions his impressions about going to the Sium and seeing 90 thousand people who all believe as Rabbi Schiff does that learning Kaballah should only be undertaken after years of foundational learning is accomplished and full religious observance is maintained. Steven says that he still feels that his path is correct for him and others like him but going to the sium certainly made an impression on him. Rabbi Schiff suggests that he and Steven go to buy Tefillin in Brooklyn. Steven and Rabbi Schiff in a Brooklyn Judaica store. Steven purchases Tefillin.

STEVEN MEETS RABBI CABLE

Rabbi Cable comes in from Israel. They meet at night at the Brooklyn Bridge and catch up. Steven seems focused on the challenges of his lifestyle and religious observance. Steven hears more about how observance is not easy but that people from Rabbi Cable's stream of Judaism believe religious observance is an integral part of spiritual advancement.

Lost in a private moment of contemplation down by the water's edge, Steven seems to appreciate that he has serious choices to make and those choices will have real consequences for those who are closest to him.

ACT III

KaballahDAY

Steven organizes a day of Kaballah at Aish Ha Torah. He works with Rabbi Jacobs and Rina to book speakers and catering, etc.

There is a good response on the day. The speakers are well informed and the audience members have a meaningful experience.

WOMEN AND Kaballah– THE RISE OF THE FEMININE

Steven invites his wife and mother to Kaballah day. Each of them seems respectful and engaging but there is no denying that they both have their reservations. Miriam, we know about and Steven's mother has a long-standing issue with Orthodox Judaism because of their treatment of women. We hear from Steven's mother. She happens to be a psychiatrist and otherwise well educated but her understanding of the meaning behind the interactions between the sexes according to Orthodox Judaism is limited. This is not to say that her perceptions are completely without basis – we hear the arguments and try to move the conversation forward; hearing from various Kaballah teachers that we have met during Steven's journey. Steven feels that his mother is hung up on her feminist perspective and must be willing to shift her paradigm in order to begin to understand the relationship of masculine and feminine as addressed in Judaism and Kaballah. We try to demystify the subject looking at gender discrimination in religion as well as sexual objectification of women in secular society. We hear the Kaballistic explanation about the rise of the feminine aspect as we move into higher states of collective consciousness and talk optimistically about the future.

WHERE AM I?

Steven talks about his journey so far. Spiritual work takes patience and dedication. There are peaks and valleys (assents and descents in the language of Kaballah). A person has to constantly assess where they are in the work. Sometimes there is a strong sense that progress is being made and other times a person can feel as if they are moving further away from truth and goodness. (*EDIT NOTE: perhaps we hear this in V.O. as we see Steven walking contemplatively etc.*)

Steven identifies two main issues. He has started to make a few small changes in his life. His family and friends have certainly noticed and some have even been impacted by the changes. He is studying regularly but his observance level has not really increased all that much; maybe it is time for a dramatic

change in lifestyle. *(EDIT NOTE: Maybe we see footage of Steven wanting to grow a beard.)* There is certainly something in his character that draws him to the thought of doing something radical or “opting out” of modern society as it were. *(EDIT NOTE: maybe intercut some of Steven’s musical tastes, The Dead and hippie culture.)* What is clear is that he feels conflicted, part of him wants to make a big change and part of him feels that he needs to go slow especially because of the needs of his wife and daughters. Maybe he is pushing himself and others too hard?

Secondly, there is the issue of the movie. Steven has agreed to have a film crew follow him on his journey of self-discovery and spiritual awakening but now he is unsure about what he should be saying in the movie. These are complicated and personal issues and presenting a position to people comes with a certain amount of responsibility. Steven seems somewhat unsure how to proceed.

SKYDIVING

Cut to crazy footage of Steven jumping out of a plane. Crazy footage – the contrast to the last scene is severe.

Steven explains how he ended up going skydiving: Skydiving was a 50th birthday gift from Steven’s buddies. On the one hand, there is a very healthy and interesting aspect to this adventure. Steven explains the Kabbalistic perspective. When you jump out of a plane there is a shift in perspective. The force of gravity weakens and a person sees the world from above, etc. Being able to step outside of one’s self and look at yourself from a neutral perspective is one of the first steps to being able to work introspectively. Good stuff!

On the other hand, Steven admits that there are other – less healthy - impulses present. He has always had a wild streak and there is clearly a self-destructive or reckless tendency to taking unnecessary risks. Steven reflects on the 4 arch type characters of the Pardes story and makes the connection. Steven sees aspects of himself in each of the 4 types.

Steven discusses his relationship with Miriam. Miriam is more reserved while Steven seems more inclined to the extremes. Interestingly Steven is attracted to both the structured life of observant Judaism and the more dramatic impulses of spiritual transcendence. Steven also talks about how he has had to lie to Miriam about the skydiving trip by only telling her after the fact. He clearly feels uncomfortable about the lie and its implications.

THE KaballahCENTER

Interviews with teachers and students from the Kaballah Center; we try and learn about the organization and their views. We meet with Hollywood celebrities who study at Kaballah Center. We speak to our experts and try to explain the connection between growing vessels and the pursuit of spirituality. Why do people who have so much material success remain unfulfilled and often turn to spirituality?

STEVEN AND MIRIAM

Steven and Miriam take a walk in Central Park or do other family activities. They are clearly close. Maybe Steven tells the story about how he was walking with Miriam and they passed a Chassidic Jew and Steven made a joke saying that he could be that guy and Miriam fired back that if that is Steven then the two of them are over. It was a joke on both of their parts but the exchange speaks for itself not

the less. *(EDIT NOTE: Not sure where this story goes, probably earlier. TBD)*

Perhaps Steven bridges up some hypothetical questions about his (and by implication the whole families) lifestyle choices and Miriam reacts. For example Hey Miriam, what would you say if I told you that I wanted to make the house Kosher, etc. etc.?

PLUGGING AWAY

Steven practices Hebrew with Rabbi Schiff and learns with Rabbi Jacobs in person and with Rabbi Cable and Rabbi Schwartz on Skype.

Steven reviews all of the books he has read with us. Looking at all the books Steven has studied makes a big impression.

PARDES REVISITED

Steven takes a walk by himself; clearly lost in thought. We are invited to share his personal thoughts as he silently reflects on his world. With a series of superimposed images and/or animation we revisit the theme of the four sages who entered the Orchard as Steven and the audience wonders which of the archetypes best illustrates his personality; perhaps all of them but which one is dominant is the question. We are reminded of the four sages: One goes insane, one becomes a heretic, one dies and one comes in peace and leaves in peace... We are reminded of some of the warnings about Kaballah. How healthy has all this study been, Steven now wonders? Perhaps his focus on the esoteric and the spiritual has taken him down a road that is not easily navigated. *(EDIT NOTE: this chapter might be moved to a different place in the edit and be tied to another conversation such as Steve going skydiving. TBD)*

BACK TO ISRAEL WE GO??

Production meeting. Always the optimist Steven chooses to be proactive about the issues on his mind and announces that he thinks the film crew should go back to Israel for the Lag Ba-Omer festival in Meron. The rest of the team is surprised but Steven explains his reasoning: As we heard earlier, Steven has always felt the power of these types of mass gatherings and feels that he will gain clarity by going since he doesn't know how to proceed on two major fronts; firstly he feels like he wants to make some real lifestyle changes but doesn't know how healthy these impulses are; making big changes won't only affect him but his whole family. As we know, Miriam is really on a different page than him and this is a real issue.

Also, Steven feels like he has hit a wall as far as his point of view in the movie goes. Steven feels that they have had some great experiences and spoken to a lot of awesome people. But he has been studying for a while now and realizes that there is no substitute for hours of learning in the books with trusted and knowledgeable teachers. Spiritual advancement happens through a series of questions and answers with a lot of soul searching and confusion along the way. What is his message in the film? What is he actually trying to say and how much can be explained in under two hours? Steven hopes that by setting Meron as the deadline he will gain clarity on both these points.

MEETING WITH SOME WELL KNOWN SECULAR THINKERS, FUTURISTS, AND NONPROFIT AID ORGANIZATION ORGANIZERS

Conversations about the future of humanity, science and the secular world. We hear about other groups trying to do good in the world. We hear about the Kaballah perspective; our movie point of view is supportive of people working for good in the world but we offer a final perspective; Kaballah teaches that a person's actions are important and doing good acts is a good thing but ultimately an individual's intention must be scrutinized. People are sophisticated and many acts of good are really taken – at least in part - out of egoistic self-interest. If a person does what appears to be a good act but has ulterior motives – even motives that are subconscious that he is largely unaware of - his actions can cause damage. Kaballah addresses the problems facing humanity at its source. It is man's nature that must be transformed and then everything else that flows out of that will be transformed. This might be a difficult concept for some people to assimilate but this is what is explained in Kaballah. As people evolve their motives and natures must be corrected and this is the place of the real solution for humanity.

[[EDIT NOTE FROM ILANA: Perhaps a Rabbi tried to bridge the gap for us between the revealed Torah and work on Pnimit Ha Torah (Kaballah). How does doing simple actions in the physical world make any change in the spiritual world? "I thought we just learned that Kaballah says that the motives and nature of a person must change?? This seems to be a contradiction between the revealed Torah and Kaballah. The answer is From Lo Lishma to Lishma. (translation: from "not for her name" to "for her name). This is an involved lesson. The basic idea is that a person moves from doing the physical mitzvot for lower reasons (reward in this world and the next) and a higher practice of changing their nature in order to gain adhesion to Hashem.

There is, also, a Tanya lesson that explains the energy level of a physical mitzvah done by rote. There is always a minimal amount of kavanah or intention when doing any action by rote. Although this energy is minimal it is enough to connect a person to the collective intention and move them forward towards a future where they will have greater intention.

If you're gonna go into Tanya at all, it's important to note the Tanya's essential stance which is not only that we want adhesion to God, but to do the mitzvos, in order to bring His presence down to the physical realm for eternity. This is Chassidus' way of expressing the "transforming global consciousness" idea, I think.]]

LAG BA OMER IN MERON

Back in Israel, we take in the Festival in Meron. It's a world away from life in NYC. The camera takes it all in. It is truly a tremendous event and seeing all these people together is exhilarating. Steven meets the surfing Rabbi and has yet another awesome conversation with a strong universal message.

THE BIG LET DOWN

Back in New York Steven discusses his experience. He had a great trip and feels like his understanding is growing all the time. But as for the timeline he set for himself he is a bit disappointed. Steven was hoping to feel something "otherworldly" in Meron. He was set for some kind of cosmic experience, which would leave him changed in some fundamental way. He thought that in Meron he would gain some higher clarity and know how to proceed in his personal life and come away with an encapsulated direct message for the audience of the film. Pointedly, none of that happened on this trip.

SCIENCE AND KABALLAH

A short animation filled montage explaining the connection between Kaballah, quantum physics and consciousness. We meet with well-known quantum physicists who explain how science is now beginning to understand how consciousness fits into the scientific understanding of how our universe truly operates. Many of these ideas are still controversial or have yet to be fully proven but we are left with a fascinating insight into how our internal “world” of mind and emotion might hold the secrets to other dimensions and the true nature of our existence. The Kabbalistic connection is made as we begin to appreciate how much the Kabbalists understood and how their system is meant to help humanity enter into higher states of consciousness and unity. Today all of humanity has advanced to a point where many of these concepts - which in the past were considered fantastical – are considered scientific facts. This itself is an indication that humanity is already advancing towards a stage where heightened consciousness is possible.

BNEI BARUCH BROOKLYN

Steven goes to the Brooklyn chapter of the BB organization and takes an online class with them. He talks to the members. They discuss various topics, spiritual advancement, changing the world and maybe religious observance and Kaballah.

RABBI SCHWARTZ IN NYC

Rabbi Schwartz is visiting the states and Steven invites him over to his house to speak to his family and friends.

Miriam gets a good vibe from Rabbi Schwartz and decides to begin learning with him over Skype.

RABBI ARON IN NYC

Rabbi Aron is in NYC for a visit and Steven and the Rabbi take a walk in Wall Street area and have a talk. The choice of going for a walk in Wall Street is not random; Steven wants to make the point to the Rabbi that his life in New York City is fully saturated with materialism and distraction of monumental scale.

LESSONS FROM MERON

Rabbi Aron and Steven find a quiet spot overlooking the NYC skyline for a conversation. Steven talks about his trip to Meron and his disappointment when he returned to NYC. He explains how in an attempt to organize the movie he probably framed the trip too narrowly. Now that some time has passed Steven realizes that this approach was somewhat misguided. Setting the festival as some kind of endpoint in his journey was probably doomed to failure.

It is clear that Steven already seems to have embraced a new enlightened way of approaching his spiritual work and life in general. Rabbi Aaron puts a finer point on things for the audience.

Spiritual work is a process. This process has been unfolding throughout the course of human evolution and so as individuals we certainly have to appreciate that this process demands patience and humility. Change cannot be forced. This is a deep lesson in Kaballah. True change is actually a gift from Hashem above. The work must be done by us below and a sincere prayer must be offered but only G-d can

change a person's nature. This subtle nuance in the mechanics of spiritual advancement can take years for a person to internalize.

Steven realizes that, even though he didn't see it at the time, this is what he learned from his trip to Meron. He has already started to apply this type of thinking in his life. Steven realizes that this must be his approach to himself and his family. He has been studying now for more than a few years and even though he desires change he has to approach the circumstances of his life with respect and patience. He doesn't know how observant he or his family will become and he doesn't know if he and Miriam will end up embracing the same worldviews in regards to religion but he has better internalized that everything in his life both the good and the bad have a higher reason.

Rabbi Aron explains how spiritual work must be undertaken each day anew, the work is a series of ascents and descents all leading to higher and higher levels of understanding and connectedness. This frequency is what people respond to when they are around someone giving off good vibrations. Steven offers that he now realizes that THIS is really the message he should relay to his audience. If possible, he would love for people who see this movie to take away this understanding about spiritual work. He feels today like he is just starting his journey. His studying and the whole endeavor of making this movie has brought him full circle to a point where he feels that he is just starting out. There is a wondrous freedom in this knowledge. Perhaps this is an insight into what people talk about when they talk about being in the moment. It's a way of connecting to the Eternal, of having that sensation of being above time and space. Steven now understands that this is precisely the quality that is apparent when he is around certain people he has met who are deep in the work of self-discovery, Tshuvah or soul correction.

Steven and Rabbi Aaron walk the boardwalk along the river on the west side. The tall glass and metal skyscrapers of downtown NYC and the new yet uncompleted freedom tower are offset by the calm, soothing waters of the Hudson River flowing into the bay. The light has shifted from the too bright blue of summer day the deep saturated blue that accompanies the approaching sunset. The low hanging sun gives everything a golden edge and the film's music indicates that our main character Steven Bram has arrived at a new comfortable plateau. A place that acknowledges the contradictions and limitations of life just as it welcomes the challenges of a new day.

FADE TO BLACK

This appears to be the end of the film but then after a few beats, a new image appears on screen.

FADE BACK IN

MIRIAM REALLY LIKES RABBI SCHWARTZ

We visit with Miriam and hear about her Skype sessions with Rabbi Schwartz. Although she is on her own spiritual trajectory Miriam's bonding with Rabbi Schwartz is a point of common ground between Steven and Miriam. The tension between Miriam and Steven that we witnessed earlier in the movie, appeared to us now as an opportunity for further understanding and growth.

We see images of Steve with the family. We feel the hopeful and positive energy. The scene is simple, even mundane but seen through the lens of Steven's journey and the progress that has been made it takes on a magically powerful and profound quality.

End

A SHORT OVERVIEW OF OUR THEMES

Here is a short review of the central spiritual themes, subtext and beats in our film, written out in a conversational tone to further help guide the edit. All of what is said here has been conveyed in one way or another throughout our footage. This summary can be used as a basis for voice over work as needed.

Spiritual work is a process. Learning is a lifelong pursuit. Spiritual advancement must be renewed regularly as the same actions are revisited with a higher understanding and sense of connectedness. A person is influenced greatly by his surroundings so a good environment is important. A person has to seek out positive role models and friends who will influence him and support him in his goals. Ultimately each person has to take on this private work for him or herself and find out where along the spectrum of thought and practice they belong. There are different paths; some time-tested and accepted and others modern, controversial and even secret. There is no easy way to decide how to proceed and a person must have patience, a strong desire, and faith that he or she is being led by a higher power. The four levels of the Torah are really four languages, all talking about the same thing. The Torah is an instruction manual for life and a guide to attaining the spiritual worlds. G-d has a plan for creation and this plan is to give over the greatest good to all of His creation. People attempt to find fulfillment through ever-growing egoistic desires and physical pursuits but ultimately there is no greater pleasure than connecting with the source of our existence. G-d is bigger than what any of us perceive Him to be. He is infinite and pure goodness. There is a tremendous amount of baggage and confusion surrounding religion and a person must work to uncover the truth by peeling away the layers of innuendo or misrepresentation. For some of us that means building more structure and observance into our lives and for others, it means breaking away from paradigms that stifle or limit us. Knowing the Creator is not a simple endeavor. In order to know the Creator, humanity has to evolve and unite into one collective spiritual vessel capable of receiving G-d's abundance. In order to unite humanity will have to transcend its selfish and egoistic nature and become giving and altruistic and take on the nature of the Creator. This is not some quick magic trick but a profound, life-long pursuit, which must ultimately must include everyone. Each person in the world is holding at a different place along the evolutionary process. Each of us has their own DNA and their own life experience and therefore sees his or her own slice of reality and truth. Great care must be taken when interacting with others. Respect and patience is the only way to engage people. We must remind ourselves of the deeper truth that what we see in others is really an egoistic projection of our own uncorrected internal selves and that everything that happens to us is being given to us by the creator so that we can might take our next step towards Him. As we reflect back upon Steven's journey we now appreciate and are grateful for the people we have met. People who are living a deep spiritual existence, who have to help us drawn back the curtain a little bit and reveal the higher truth of our world. There are people around us who have managed to free themselves from the incessant draw of materialism and moved beyond the unexamined performance of religious ritual and discovered a method for raising their consciousness, transcending the ego and Godliness. These people toil in this work known as Torah and Mitzvot or the method of correction called Kaballah. This study and practice is part of their everyday existence, it is not an event but a habit and a living conversation with the universe. These are quite humble people who exude a quiet energy of compassion and love and seek only to share what is in their hearts in the service of others.