

They Saw Childhood's End

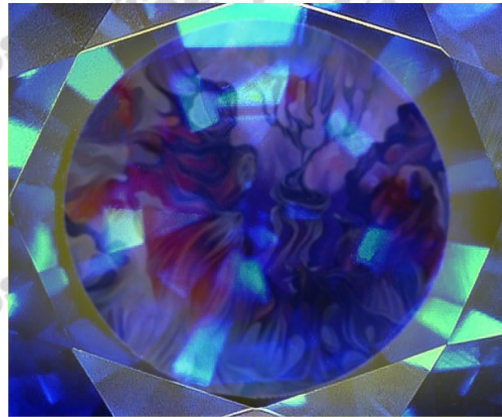
By HaRav Ariel Bar Tzadok

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“And Moshe and Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, and seventy of the elders of Yisrael ascended, and they saw the G-d of Yisrael, and beneath His feet was like the form of a sapphire brick and like the essence of Heaven for clarity.” (Shemot 24:9-10)

What on earth did they see? Maybe it is better to ask what from not of this earth did they see? This one episode contradicts the belief that all spiritual experiences are nothing more than internal psychological phenomena of the individual.

RaMBaM and most other Sages write that prophecy and visions happen within the individual minds of the beholder and that this is why each one is unique and different. But here we have seventy-four unique individuals who simultaneously are seeing the same thing. They each see the “G-d of Yisrael” and some form of a “sapphire brick of extreme clarity” beneath Him.



This therefore could not have been some personal inner psychological vision because each man then would have seen something different. The fact that they all saw the same thing proves that this was more than a mere prophetic vision; this was something objective. There was something real there, something external to themselves, something very unusual, and let me use the right word to describe it, something very “extraterrestrial.”

In our days, we love to praise the rational, the intellect and the academic as being the forefront of human consciousness and accomplishment. And then we come to a Torah episode of this nature that defies rationale and which cannot be explained honestly using the intellect or the best of our academic knowledge. The leaders of Yisrael collectively witnessed and saw something actual and real that transcended their individuality and was clearly from out of this world.

I cannot be so bold as to describe for you exactly what they saw. No one on Earth can do this. What the seventy-four saw was clearly some reality the likes of which does not exist here on Earth. This is why the description begins with the term “the likes of.” Maybe today, if we were able to gaze upon this sight with our advanced technological sophistication combined with our expanded imaginations in the realm of science fiction we would be able to describe such an experience in different words and possibly offer some kind of rational explanation of what we saw. Then again, maybe with all our modern advancements such a “close-encounter” would still be beyond our abilities to describe.

What we learn from this episode is a good lesson in humility. For as wise as we become and as smart as we think we are, and as knowledgeable of Torah we consider ourselves to be, this episode comes to remind us of just how little we actually do know. The grandiosity of parallel-dimensional, multi-universal reality is so far beyond anything we can even imagine. And yet, it exists and above it all is a Primordial Consciousness, a Universal Mind, a Singularity of Being and Purpose. This is the true reality and nature of the Creator, the G-d of Yisrael; far beyond what any image could ever hold.

How can G-d, the Creator be so grandiose that all existence resides within HIM/IT and not that HE/IT resides within creation? HE/IT is bigger than all existence and still His "Image" can be seen by seventy-four men? What was this Image? What did they see? To answer this question we must reveal one of the greatest secrets of the ancient reception (kabbalah) of knowledge handed over to Yisrael from this moment at Sinai. This is the secret of what centuries later Kabbalists would call the "Hitlabshut b'Partzufim" (the cloaking of the Sefirotic faces).

Over centuries, Sages, mystics and prophets alike have all experienced the Heavenly realms in many different forms. Granted some of these experiences have been inner visions and are therefore subject to the individual interpretations of person's mind. Perceptions are unique to the individual, therefore any description of an internally experienced phenomena will be subject to archetypal imagery. Yet, when something external is experienced, not just by the individual, but by a group, the ability of the individual mind to describe such a reality using the symbols of the subjective mind has reached its limitations. Everyone is seeing something objective; something is really out there.

How can it be possible for the Active Being of the Universal Mind to take a form and cloak itself in an "Image" that can be collectively seen and perceived by those IT has created? , How, we may never know, but why, we do know. The great reality is that the Active Being of the Universal Mind does cloak Itself in a form for the sake of communicating with those entities with which IT chooses to make contact with in this way. G-d is no grandiose human being. He/It has no form, nor semblance of form. Yet, He/It does cloak Him/Itself into a form so as to enable us the opportunity of perception. What we see and experience therefore is only the cloak, and not the true essence that the cloak conceals.

This itself should not surprise us, for earlier in the text, G-d advises the people that He would be doing exactly this. G-d reveals that He is sending His Agent, and actual concentrated Presence that in its invisible and clearly "extraterrestrial" form will march before the people and guide them to the Promised Land. This agent is a form of representation of the Active Being Itself. This Agent is nothing other than ITS "cloak." This Agent is called G-d's messenger, Malakh in Hebrew, usually translated as "angel."

The verses thus say, *"Behold, I am sending an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Beware of him and obey him; do not rebel against him, for he will not forgive your transgression, for My Name is within him."* (Shemot 23:20-21). The verse says, "My Name is within him." The angel is the cloak for the Name and the Name is the cloak for the essence. This is why we recite in our daily prayers, "Barukh Hu u'Barukh Shmo" (blessed be He and blessed be His Name), for the Essence is cloaked in the Name and the Name is cloaked in its agent of action, it's Malakh/angel.

In order to enable our small limited human minds to understand the grandiosity of Greater Things, the Active Being of the Universal Mind concentrates them and cloaks them into forms that our

present insignificant intelligence and intellect can grasp. In our skewered arrogance we think that what we see is real and the forms that we perceive are the actual true forms of things. But this mistake of the intellect, arrogant and wrong as it is, is what causes us not to look at things correctly or to contemplate what could possibly be their true nature.

Thinking that one knows something that indeed one does not is terribly immature and childlike. Then again, modern humanity is only in its childhood. Torah was given to us to educate us through our elementary stages. When Mashiah comes, childhood's end will come along with it.

Today we see all things through the cloak, the limitation of present forms and structures. But all that we perceive is but "the angel of G-d" and the "likes of a form." All our perceptions are only "cloaks" that conceal within them Higher Realities. This is true not only of the commandments of the Torah, but of all reality itself, including everything we see and learn in the scientific realms.

We see the forms; collectively we see them together in the same way; but what we see is not what is objectively real. We see only the projected image. We do not see the Projector and the true nature of what is projected. We see the cloak and not what is within it. Remembering this is the beginning of wisdom. Seeking to penetrate underneath the cloak (or behind the veil) is the true pursuit of wisdom and reality. But in order to do this, intellectual arrogance must come to an end. The illusion of thinking that one knows what in reality one does not must be outgrown.

Childhood's end is upon us. How many are willing to mature, graduate and move on? See the Test. Answer its questions. Learn its lessons properly. When the time comes, and shortly will it arrive, the educated children will be raised up to gaze beyond the "likes of the form of a sapphire" and will collectively and together recognize "the G-d of Yisrael."