

God & Israel, The Original Family Feud Kabbalistic Insights into the Dormita of ZA, and the Yihud of Partzufim

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Both husband and wife are totally pissed off at one another! Each have turned their face from the other, and want to go their separate ways.

Such breakups happen all the time here on Earth. After all, we are only human beings, and there is just so much that mere mortals can tolerate. Yet, what happens when the breakup in question involves not just mere mortals, but also involves the Supreme Being? What happens when the family feud is between God and Israel?

Throughout the Bible and later literature, the relationship between God and Israel is symbolically described as a marriage, two partners that come together for the benefit of both parties. Equally, throughout the Bible and later literature, Israel is often portrayed as being an unfaithful partner, leading God to take disciplinary measures to bring His “wayward” wife back into the proper fold.

Even before the people entered the Holy Land, Moses, prior to his death warned the nation of the consequences of breaking faith with God.

“Because you did not serve the Lord, your God, with happiness and with gladness of heart, when [you had an] abundance of everything. Therefore, you will serve your enemies, whom the Lord will send against you, [when you are] in famine, thirst, destitution, and lacking everything, and he will place an iron yoke upon your neck, until he has destroyed you.” (Deut 28:47-48)

“If you do not observe to fulfill all the words of this Torah, which are written in this scroll, to fear this glorious and awesome name, the Lord, your God, then the Lord [will bring upon] you and your offspring uniquely [horrible] plagues, terrible and unyielding plagues, and evil and unyielding sicknesses. And He will bring back upon you all the diseases of Egypt which you dreaded, and they will cling to you. Also, the Lord will bring upon you every disease and plague which is not written in this Torah scroll, to destroy you.” (Deut. 28:58-61)

The later prophets of the First Temple period, specifically Hosea prolifically uses the husband/wife metaphor to describe Israel's breach of faith with God, and warns of impending doom because of it.

If indeed these metaphors were in any sense literal, then we would understand this relationship in human terms, and we could apply to this marriage human approaches to making peace and finding amicable solutions. However, we should never delude ourselves into thinking that metaphor is indeed literal, for poetry is not prose, and neither is a parable a rendition of history.

With the destruction of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem in 586 b.c.e., the exile of Israel began. This was not just an exile of the people from its ancestral land, but also an exile of the people from their ancestral God, YHWH. While the people have returned to the land, too this day, the people have never returned to their God, and neither has their God returned to His people. This needs to be understood.

Theologically speaking, God is omnipresent, so technically God cannot go away. However, using the metaphorical terminology of the Kabbalah, God can and does turn, or hides, His “Face.” While God's omniscient power is ever present, nevertheless, His overt supernatural involvement in the daily lives of His people is concealed within the natural order.

When the Ark stood in the Temple, (and before that in the Tabernacle), YHWH would intervene directly in human affairs, often overriding the natural order. With the removal of the Ark, the supernatural manifestations of Divine power also left.

Too this day, religion thrives. Yet, too this day, religious hypocrisy, as it existed in the days of Solomon's Temple has not dissipated, or been reduced. That which drove God to hide His Face, in the first place, continues to this very day.

The people in the days of the destruction of Solomon's Temple were practical in minding their own needs. Their faith to their ancestral God, YHWH, was bound with YHWH providing for them their daily needs. With the destruction of the Temple, the people of the day did not blame themselves, or their sins. On the contrary, they blamed YHWH directly, and held Him personally responsible for their misfortune.

The peoples of that day would embrace whatever religion that they believed would bring them success in their worldly endeavors. When YHWH punishes His people for their transgressions, the people had enough of YHWH and pretty much gave Him a “divorce.” This is how it appears from the scripture recorded in Jeremiah. Responding to Jeremiah's prophecy from YHWH, the struggling band of First Temple survivors say (Jer. 44:16-18):

"The word that you spoke to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken to you. But we will do everything that has emanated from our mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and to pour libations to her, as we did, we, our forefathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, and we were sated with bread, and we were well, and we saw no evil. But since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring libations to her, we lack everything, and we have been consumed by the sword and by famine."

And so these people passed on into history. Since those days, even with the building and destruction of the Second Temple, the relationship between YHWH and His people has been contentious. YHWH continues to hide His Face and many of the people continue to turn their faces to YHWH.

It seems like a lose-lose situation, like a stalemate in a spoiled marriage, where both partners may want reconciliation, but neither is willing to take the first move. Yet, remember, while we use the metaphor of marriage, we are not talking about a human couple here, and therefore human values and solutions do not apply.

How to turn the people of Israel back to their ancestral God is easily known and understood. All one has to do is turn to scripture for guidance and insight. Indeed, the final prophecy that God gave to Israel speaks about this return. In the early days of the Second Temple period, YHWH spoke through his prophet Malakhi (3:22-24) and said:

“Remember the Torah of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel, [its] rules and laws. Behold, I am sending to you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome Day of YHWH, and he will turn the hearts of the fathers back to their sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers.”

Elijah is to come and inspire the people to reconnect to their roots, symbolized here as the hearts of the sons turning to their fathers. Yet, how are we supposed to get YHWH to turn His Face back upon Israel, and restore the glory of the lost, forgotten past? This is what the prophecy means when it says that the hearts of the fathers will also be turned back to their sons. While all this sounds so very nice and poetic, it still does not explain anything practical or pragmatic.

The Kabbalists, using their classical language of abstract metaphors, offer us insights as to how the overt Divine Presence is to be restored in the presence of the people. The metaphor says that during this time, when our relationship with God is symbolically “back-to-back,” the process of return begins with a metaphorical act of surgery of sorts.

The Kabbalists associate the relationship of God and Israel to Adam and Eve, and use them as metaphors to explain a profound process. Originally, (symbolically speaking, of course), Adam and Eve were created as one being, standing back to back, facing in opposite directions. In such a position they could never see each other face to face, and certainly had no hope or opportunity to intimately couple.

In order to rectify this state of affairs, using the symbolic language in Genesis, God puts Adam to sleep, and then removes Eve from his side and brings her to him as a now separate, detached and independent human being.

In this series of symbolic expressions, Adam represents God. Eve represents Israel, and the highest, concealed element of the Divine represents here God, whereas the symbol of Adam refers to God as He is revealed here in creation.

Adam being put to sleep symbolizes the removal of the Divine Presence. Adam's sleep symbolized the present state of human disconnection from the "Face of God." During this period, while Adam is asleep, Eve, on the other hand, is wide awake.

During this period while Adam is asleep, God deals directly with Eve, building her into a complete individual. Therefore, this sleep period, this "exile" serves a double good, in that it builds Eve into her completion, and then allows Adam to have his proper mate.

Understand these metaphors as the Kabbalists intend them, and we receive a profound insight, and understanding about human history and secrets about the nature of the Divine.

Stripping away the metaphors, the Kabbalists are teaching us that the family feud between God and Israel was, and is, serves an ultimate good purpose. For Israel/Eve is wide awake during the time that God/Adam is asleep. During Adam's sleep, God communes directly with Eve, building her, and making her a complete, whole individual. During the period of exile, Israel no longer relies upon miraculous Divine interventions to get itself out of dangerous predicaments. Rather, Israel/Eve learns to stand upon its own two feet, to grab destiny by its horns, and forge its own path, and way in the world, without God having to hold the nation's hand, as He had to during the days of the First Temple.

Israel chooses to listen to, or not to listen to God, without fear of Divine retribution, or expectations of Divine rewards for obedience. Israel takes its place as a nation among nations, and learns its place, and thus fulfills its destiny of being a light and an inspiration, all the while standing upon its own. In this way, acting independently, Israel acquires true merit before God by acting righteously on its own, and not just because of Divine coercion. True, God is always watching and helping, but the level of Divine revelation, and presence in First Temple times, is not only gone, it is also no longer needed.

Once Israel learns to stand upon its own feet, then God escorts Eve back to Adam, who is awakened to gaze upon his new bride. Before this, sharing a single back, Adam and Eve fought like proverbial cats and dogs. To end this fighting, God put Adam to sleep, and separated Eve from him, built her to be independent and whole, and then reunited her with her husband, now to live happily ever after.

This metaphor means that in the future, when the nation of Israel is independent and strong, faithful to itself, it will then be reintroduced to God, by Divine design. At such a time, both husband and wife will rejoice in their reunion. The family feud will be over, and an eternity of peace will have begun. We call this future time, the coming of Mashiah.

There really is a plan and a purpose to the crazy history of the nation of Israel. Although Kabbalistic metaphors are extremely difficult to understand, nevertheless the Kabbalist's message of hope, strength and vision is rather easy to both see and embrace.