

KosherTorah School
for Biblical, Judaic & Spiritual Studies

www.kosherTorah.com

email: arieltzadok@gmail.com

Ariel Bar Tzadok, Director, Rabbi



Shalom,

Welcome to the KosherTorah School of R. Ariel B. Tzadok.

Here is a selection of my writings which outline the foundations, and teachings of our School.

If you find yourself in agreement with our beliefs, and principles, please consider joining us, and become a contributing member of our School.

Your support is always welcome, and needed.



Here now is our

1. **Statement of 42 Principles.**
2. **Introduction into KosherTorah Kabbalah,** and
3. **The Book of Analysis,** an in-depth series of lessons about faith, and Kabbalah.

Enjoy your time here at the KosherTorah School. Learn well!

Blessings,

Ariel Bar Tzadok

Statement of 42 Principles of the KosherTorah School

for Biblical, Judaic & Spiritual Studies
by **Ariel Bar Tzadok**

Let it be known by the following statements the principles, beliefs and truths that I hold sacred and upon which I have built the KosherTorah School.

1. I believe in God.
2. It is because that I believe in God that I am also able to believe in my fellow man.
3. I believe that God created us all, and in spite of our differences, be they those made by God, or those made by us, we are all children of God, created in the Divine Image.

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4. I believe that being created in the Divine Image gives each of us a responsibility and obligation, to respect one another, and to care for one another, that this, above all else, is our human calling, and what defines for us our humanity.
5. I believe that God is the origin, and originator of all things.
6. I believe that all things came forth from God with intelligent design.
7. I believe that God is a Sentient Consciousness, not to be confused with a person.
8. I believe that God is the information, and intelligence within everything in existence.
9. I believe that God is the Universal Mind.
10. I believe that God is not a He or a She, but that God is something far greater than anything we humans can presently possible imagine.
11. I believe that God communicates with that which It has made.
12. I believe that God has a plan, for all things, for our universe, for our planet, and for us.
13. I believe that God communicated with our ancestors.
14. I believe that God directed the giving of the Torah to the nation of Israel at Sinai.
15. I believe that the Torah is an extraterrestrial code that when properly understood can unlock many of the secrets of the universe.
16. I believe that the Torah contains God's Will for the nation of Israel.
17. I believe that the commandments of the Torah are to be observed by the children of Israel, and that the lessons of Torah can be understood universally, and embraced by all.
18. I believe that religions in general, for the most part, divide and separate, rather than bridge and unite.
19. I believe that all religions, including my own, have been infiltrated and compromised with teachings and beliefs that promote prejudice, hatred, division, and other teachings that contradict God's Torah, God Will and God's Purpose.
20. I believe that it is the moral imperative of all sincere religious individuals, of all religions, to condemn any and all religious teachings, including their own, that promote prejudice and hatred, that these contradict God, and thus must never be taught in the name of God.

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21. I believe that we all must make every effort to root out prejudice, hatred and violence.
22. I believe that it is the Will of God for all humanity to live in harmony with one another.
23. I believe that it is the Will of God for us to all be different, and that our differences be respected.
24. I believe that our differences are merely superficial, and that when we take a deeper look within ourselves, we will find that we are ultimately one, united as we are by the inner Divine Image.
25. I believe that it is God's Will for each of us to individually take this deeper look within ourselves, and to expand our personal perspectives.
26. I believe that all our different faiths, beliefs, and practices may not all be right, and may not be all wrong.
27. I believe that I can be different from you, and you from me, and that this is acceptable as long as no other is harmed, or otherwise deprived of what may be reasonably considered to be rightfully theirs.
28. I believe that we all have equal right, and equal access to God, Its Will and Way.
29. I believe that we can learn much about the Way of God by observing the natural world that God has made, and learn from it how to be natural.
30. I believe that living naturally is God's Will, and Way for humanity. We are part of this planet, and therefore, should act as part of it, and not in contradiction to it.
31. I believe that technology, and science are God's gifts to humanity.
32. I believe that the purpose of technology, and science, is to enable us to properly understand the natural world around us, and by understanding it better, to live in harmony with it.
33. I believe that it is God's Will for us to explore the boundaries of human imagination and thought, and to make our world and universe a better place.
34. I believe that every human being has the right, and the responsibility to earn a living, and should pursue all moral and appropriate avenues to secure one's place in this world.
35. I believe that each human being has the moral obligation, and responsibility to do one's individual best to become self reliant, independent, and to assist our fellow human beings to

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accomplish the same. I believe this to be the Will, and Way of God.

36. I believe that no one should be compelled to accept the views, and beliefs of others. No one should be compelled to do anything that the individual finds morally objectionable, unless such behaviors are deemed necessary for the greater good, and agreed to by all parties so affected.

37. I believe that human governments and politics will forever be corrupt as long as corruption rules within the human heart.

38. I believe that there is no one true system of government, other than one directed by moral human beings, with the sincere intent to promote the blessings of prosperity, and good for all.

39. I believe that people have the right to live as they will, and as they wish, as long as they do not harm any other in any reasonable way.

40. I believe that it is the Will of God for man to prosper and evolve, and that it is the Will of God for each of us to assist one another towards these most sacred of goals.

41. I believe that although many who may come to the KosherTorah School come from walks of life that I personally cannot and do not endorse, I nevertheless welcome all and invite them, if they so wish, to embrace our teaching here at the KosherTorah School, as they may see fit.

42. To express these beliefs, and to establish these goals, I have created the KosherTorah School, and invite all human beings, created in the Image of God, to partake in whatever materials of value that I may produce for public benefit.

May God continue to bless you, and keep you.

Sincerely,

Ariel B Tzadok

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An Introduction into The Kabbalah of the KosherTorah School

By Ariel Bar Tzadok

Secret codes, so sublime, so mystical; who can understand them, who can grasp their meaning?

A code is a form of concealment. The code is used to substitute one thing for another. One who knows the means of substitution will understand the code. One without this knowledge can only view the form of the code without ever understanding what it is truly saying.

The purpose of a code is to keep outsiders outside, and to only allow inside those who have been granted access. Herein lies the great danger.

Human nature is intensely inquisitive. Codes, therefore, attract much attention and are considered a great challenge, a prize to be won, a battle to be fought. The mere knowledge of the existence of a code invites multiple attempts to break it.

Many try, and fail miserably. Many others try; fail miserably, but at the same time claim to have broken the code. Many outsiders who do not recognize the true inner meanings concealed within the code unfortunately accept these false claims. Many are those who are desirous for the code to be broken, and still are totally oblivious to what the code means. Therefore, those willing to be duped will believe anything that they are told.

Many go on believing that they have broken the code, know well its secret meanings, and are happy with their false accomplishments. All this time the masters of the code consent to this deception, for they know that the veil of self-induced deception provides yet another layer of protection covering the real secrets being hidden.

There is no greater hiding place for a thing than out in the open, in the very place that one ignores, and more so despises. This is the way of secrets. Mastering secrets requires one to master the arts of deception.

Only one who knows how to conceal a thing can protect a thing. Only a concealed thing can grow unhindered to full strength, and accomplish its purpose, unhindered by opposition, and the occasional interference by the bothersome curious.

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Let us shift now from general to specific. For some, what follows might as well begin with the words, “once upon a time.” Not everyone is willing to accept what I am about to discuss as a matter of fact and history. Those of this persuasion will dismiss outright everything which I am about to address. So be it.

I do not have a need or desire to confront, or challenge. There is one reality that nature always proves true. In the end, what is true becomes self-evident. If what I am about to address is true, then it does not matter whether or not it is believed or accepted by anyone. Time will tell, and future history will bear out past events, no matter how deep they lie buried in the ancient past.

Over three thousand years ago, according to our beliefs, a nation of individuals, representing all humanity, was chosen by a Higher Power to experience a most peculiar encounter with an extraterrestrial Force. The purpose of this encounter was to provide humanity with direction to enable us collectively to evolve to our highest innate potential.

This extraterrestrial Force entrusted us with a “book” of sorts. Yet, this book is no ordinary book of words, sentences, stories, and meanings. This “book” can be more properly compared to a computer code, a multiple layered program that contains so many elements that even a vocabulary to describe them all has not yet been developed by even the most pioneering scientists.

We call this extraterrestrial communiqué, “Torah.” It means “teaching” or “instruction.” It has become many things to many peoples. Yet the internal code used to unlock its true secrets and meanings still remain in the hands of a select few, as it has for centuries since the initial reception.

For millennia now, Torah beliefs have been given a special title, and realm of knowledge. This was the creation of religion. Yet, Torah was not meant to be relegated to this new domain. Torah is not a matter of religion. In actuality, Torah is what today we call science. Due to the fact that most faces of Torah shown today in the public arena endeavor to interpret Torah metaphor in literal fashion, many rational minds, and scientists, dismiss Torah as having any actual scientific merit, or basis in truth.

As we see, the secrets of the Torah remain concealed within it, in full view, open for all to see, yet at the same time, disregarded, and dismissed. The secrets therein, therefore, stay as safe today as they have been for millennia.

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Now, let us address the reason why the Torah must contain secrets, and why for centuries it has been deemed dangerous to have those secrets made known to unprepared parties.

There is an inherent difference in the maturity level between children, and adults. Adults not only have the benefit of experience, and greater education than do children, they are also more biologically advanced. The adult human brain can comprehend information and analyze it, digest it, and integrate it in ways that children have yet to learn.

Unfortunately, children, within the context of their limited abilities of comprehension, are never are willing to accept that adults know more than they do. Children, therefore, place themselves, however innocently in danger's way. If not for adult supervision and rules, many children would unfortunately succumb to the consequences of their limited scope of vision. When children endanger themselves, adults do not blame the children, they simply protect them from hurting themselves. Adults recognize the limitations of the child, and act accordingly.

It is a well-known, and evident fact of life that just because one matures chronologically in years one may not equally mature psychologically. Many are those who are adults in body, and yet remain children in mind. While this may have some benefits, true, still, one who does not mature and embrace adult responsibilities never achieves the fullness of what it means to be an adult.

One who is not an adult cannot be trusted with adult things. Therefore, growing up must be more than chronological. The job of the mature adult is to educate and direct children to reach maturity. This applies to both chronological children, and to psychological ones. Mature adults have the responsibility to educate immature adults, and to teach them how to be mature, responsible, and disciplined. This is true on an individual level, and this is true at the collective scale of humanity as a whole.

Many are those who are mature adults. Many are those who are immature adults. Immature adults cannot handle the responsibilities of their mature counterparts. If given a mature task the immature adult, like a child, is unable to handle it. The results are that damage is done to oneself, and often to others. Indeed, the damage caused by immature adults, one towards another, is often severe. We merely need to look at the history of human events to see the carnage, and savagery of immature adults acting with the out-of-control nature of children.

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An adult, due to his physical size and social role in society, is able to direct and discipline a child, directing him in the ways of maturity and responsible adulthood. This natural advantage however is lost when the mature adult endeavors to educate the immature adult.

The results of this interaction are often disastrous with the immature adult, instead of receiving direction, acts out with rejection and resentment, often with flares of violence. The mature adult, therefore, has to act with care, subtlety and craft in order to educate his immature peers, and at the same time not arouse their childlike ire.

The ways and means of directing immature adults into maturity must therefore be carefully guarded, and concealed so as not to arouse resentment, anger and worse, jealousy and violence. This natural state has been the truth of human reality as far back as records can document.

Into this situation comes the Force from “beyond,” wherever that may be. It has intervened in order to provide instruction and direction, to enable maturing individuals to continue along the path to psychological adulthood. It provided a framework and system that can be passed down generation after generation to educate, direct, enlighten, and inspire. It gave us the Torah. The only condition for receiving it was that the Torah’s directions must be followed.

We all know that when we acquire something new, especially something that needs to be built, it comes with a set of instructions. How many of us have learned, often through hard experience, that following the enclosed instructions is the key to successful assembly. As this is true with physical objects, so it is with humanity itself. We too have our instructions manual; this is Torah. When we follow it, everything seems to work out well. It is when we decide not to follow the proper directions that matters get out of hand, and things break down instead of build up.

There you have it, the meaning and reason why Torah was given to the nation chosen to represent humanity. The instructions were to follow the Torah, and thereby serve as a light to the rest of humanity, leading them into proper psychological maturity. By doing so, we as a race would then be able to commune with those who gave us the Torah, and thus join a greater universe of beings, doing what I guess we will find out when the time comes. Of course, that time has not yet come, but judging from the rapid changes in humanity, technology, and developing current events and science, our eventual close encounter draws ever closer.

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The Torah was designed to have multiple levels of meaning and application for each generation of humanity, and for each level of human psychological development. Thus, anyone can look into Torah, and find meaning and relevance in it. However, that which the individual sees is but one of the infinite facets that there is to be seen.

The guardians of Torah have always maintained that there are infinite levels of understanding the Torah, and as many ways of understanding each individual level. Historical scholarship has shown that the library of Torah based material is overwhelming.

As humanity evolves, greater and deeper levels of Torah information are being discovered, and exposed. As our knowledge of science and technology develops, and we apply many of its lessons to Torah research, indeed, Torah begins to unveil itself as being the multiple dimension, extraterrestrial resource that it is, replete with strata of until now unknown knowledge. The Givers of Torah placed all this within it, with more yet to come. All that is needed for this discovery is for humanity to evolve to the point to learn how to look, and what to look for.

These deeper levels of knowledge concealed within Torah are not meant to be publicly taught until such time when humanity, as a whole, has evolved psychologically to a point when such knowledge can be integrated successfully, and used constructively. It would be irresponsible to place dangerous tools into the hands of unprepared children. Yet, while we wait for humanity as a whole to evolve, entitled individuals who have matured to a proper level may be granted individual access to the knowledge for their own personal betterment, and improvement.

This is why Torah was written in code form, to provide access and opportunity to those who have proven themselves mature and responsible, and at the same time to prevent access to those not yet mature and responsible. The decision between who is who, as always, is not in human hands.

Torah appears to us in its most external form as a collection of stories and ritual observances. Throughout the centuries, Torah masters have admonished us not to be deceived into believing that the surface is all that there is. Unfortunately, their warnings have often been ignored. For centuries, there have been arguments, even wars, over the correct meaning of the surface of the Torah, how certain stories are to be understood, and how specific ritual observances are to be observed.

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On the surface of matters, one may view the Torah as being the source of much destruction and devastation that has come to humanity. As bad as things have been with entire nations warring over their interpretations, and applications of Torah, human history would have been significantly worse had the Torah not been there at all. Wars would still have been fought.

The depths of Torah knowledge can only be accessed by a specific code key. This key will never be stumbled upon haphazardly. The Givers of Torah protected well their treasures. Instead, they entrusted the keys for unlocking the deeper knowledge in the form of the code. The code itself is intensely difficult, and at the same time intensely simple. This contradiction is something no childish mind will ever be able to balance and integrate, whereas the mature adult mind, with some effort and training is able to master.

While the human mind enjoys the challenge of unraveling the complex part of the code, it cannot succeed in doing so without the simplistic part. The human mind is baffled by simplicity, and finds itself often unable to grasp it, and embrace it. Yet, without simplicity, complexity will also never be grasped and embraced. One needs to draw close to the one, in order to embrace the other. Only the psychologically mature will be able to learn, and thus do this.

The code for unlocking the deeper levels of Torah is given to those individuals who have shown themselves sufficiently mature, and responsible to receive it. The keys to the code are a gift. They cannot be earned, or acquired by any means. One receives them individually from a specific individual who has already received them, or one does not receive them at all. This is a one to one transmission. This is the way the system was established in the beginning. It will maintain itself this way until the dawning of a new era for all humanity, when collectively we will evolve beyond our present status.

In the Hebrew language, the historical bearer of the code, the term used to define this reception is simply the Hebrew word for reception. This is Kabbalah.

All too much public information is disseminated under the name of Kabbalah; the vast majority of it is absolute rubbish, garbage and trash, having nothing to do with the authentic deeper knowledge of Torah. Of course, the disseminators of these information systems will argue, and fight saying they have the true Kabbalah, and that all contradicting them is false. We have heard such arguments about the true interpretations of Torah for thousands of years. There is nothing new under the sun with the modern claims.

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The code remains safe. The true Kabbalah remains well concealed, out in the open, trampled upon, and ignored by almost everyone. Everyone seeks the depths of unraveling the code, using the best of their intellectual faculties. Yet, the code will always defy intellect. The key to the code is simplicity. Simplicity is a function beyond intellect, involving a realm which today we can psychologically call, spirit. This is a dimension of mind that the intellectual cannot grasp, for it is the opposite of intellect.

The psychologically mature mind is the spiritual mind. The spiritual mind will be one that can embrace both simplicity, and complexity. In doing so, the mature mind experiences the ability to embrace, and integrate opposites. This is a necessary ability for one who wishes to venture into the concealed truths of the universe.

Everything in reality is not as it appears to the physical eye. Science is quickly becoming acutely aware of this. Not everything in the universe can be grasped, and understood within the limitations of our present outlook and intellectual approach. Being able to accept contradictions, and to “go with the flow” becomes of paramount importance to one who wishes to evolve, understand the universe, and to embrace Heaven.

The original Givers of the Torah knew well this matter. Extraterrestrial as they are, they are also extra-dimensional beings. In our mythologies we have come to call them by all kinds of religious names, most common being “angels.” Yet, these entities are far from being sweet, kind, and loving. They are most foreign and different from us. Yet, they have a connection to us, in that it is their role in the universe to look after us, and to assist us in our evolution so that we can one day join them, and fulfill our universal destiny.

The Torah, therefore, reflects humanity well. It has its surface and it has its depths. Just as no human being today has ever reached the depths of one’s own unconscious mind, so too has no one ever reached the depths of Torah. One depends upon the other.

The greater we allow ourselves to evolve psychologically, the more windows of Torah can be opened to us. The keepers of the keys are faithful in their duties. When we do our share, they will do theirs. Yet, it is each individual that must make the proper moves and not wait for the whole of society.

When the individual is ready and makes the appropriate moves to evolve and mature, they will be met in like kind. And thus the process of evolution continues.

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I have now revealed to you much about the proper workings of human psychological evolution, the origins of Torah, the nature of its code, and the true meanings of Kabbalah. Now you must decide what you wish to do with this information.

I will continue to provide for all my readers the instructions necessary to embrace both complexity, and simplicity. Yet, I warn you, as a student of Torah, I write following its format. My written words also have levels of meaning. What I say on the surface conceals that which I mean beneath it. Learn well what I write, and you too will be able to see the simplicity within the complexity, and by doing so be lead to unlocking the secret code.

This is Kabbalah and I will endeavor to be a teacher to all those who are willing to learn, to learn properly, to mature and to grow psychologically, to embrace simplicity.

Silence now your mind and still your heart, return to the place of unity and experience there the reality of the One.



The Book of Analysis

Understanding Deeper Within

An Analysis of Faith **Analyzing the Kabbalah**

by Ariel Bar Tzadok

An Analysis of Faith

Introduction

Faith, it seems, is one of those funny things in life. One cannot live without it, yet, living with it can often be most difficult.

Faith(s) have become a problem to many. In order to fix a problem, one must first understand it. Analyzing faith thus becomes the first-step in correcting the problems inherent in faith, as well as to extract new good that faith(s) may have lying dormant within them.

Let us compare matters of faith to physical matter itself. First, let us define faith as those ideas, and beliefs that each of us embraces and accepts as “truth.” This can apply to the realm of religion, but is certainly not limited to this domain of belief. Everyone of us embraces faith in one thing or another. And, we all know that for many, one person's truth is another person's lie. In order to better understand more about this phenomenon, let us begin by using a metaphor that compares faith to physical matter.

Faith cannot be properly compared to the solid, physical state. The physical is tangible, solid, and heavy. Faith is rarely any of these things. Nevertheless, we always hear of one proclaiming a faith that is “rock-solid.” Usually, upon examination, we find such expressions of faith to more accurately be expressions of stubbornness, often combined with ignorance. “Bedrock” faith may sound very loyal to one's cause, but this leads to the question, just what is the true nature of this “bedrock,” upon which one's faith is built.

Let us compare faith to water. In many ways we can metaphorically say that faith is very much like water. Like water, faith can flow, and can change its form. Faith can be

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fluid like water, but only for those who are pliable enough in their faith, not seeking to “freeze” their faith into an unchanging solid.

Is faith like air? It certainly can be. Air is what we breathe, air is the source of life. For some, faith is the same. Yet, like air, faith can often be fleeting, light, and relatively intangible.

Is faith like fire? Again, for some, yes! Faith like fire can burn. As fire symbolizes passion, so too can faith be expressed through passion.

So, in conclusion we see that we can metaphorically compare faith to each of the four elements. While this may reveal to us something about the nature of faith, I believe that these metaphors can be even more revealing about the individual who embraces a faith, specifically by defining which metaphor of faith does one find to be most descriptive of oneself.

It is important to understand the different perspectives about faith, for all human beings place great faith in one thing, or another. That which is the “bedrock” of one’s faith reveals a lot about a person. The attitude with which one is able to discuss the essential faiths of others also describes much about a person, specifically with regards to their level of mutual self-respect.

Faith can be a strong force. It can bind together many, making them tight as a single unit, or faith can divide with such intensity, that it can lead to comprehensive violent destruction. What the individual believes goes far beyond personal expression, and individual world-outlook. One’s faith can build, or destroy worlds, (and certainly the people within them).

Faith can often be manipulated. One can claim to embrace a faith, and attempt to rally others under the banner of said faith. Once gathered under said banner, one has an army, with which many things can be done, for good, and for evil.

Faith, regardless of the type, often clouds rational judgment. If we are honest enough to admit it, most of the sacred beliefs that we embrace in the name of faith often can never be proven true. Of course, proof, like faith itself, is proper and correct, only in the eye of the beholder. One person’s proof is another person’s folly. What one sees, another does not. We all know these simple truths. Nevertheless, in spite of not having any objective rational foundation, many times faith is adopted, and embraced, and the story (and logic, and rational discussion) ends there.

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Rightly so did the philosopher Karl Marx call religion, “the opiate of the masses.” For once faith enters the heart, and bloodstream, like a drug it can stupefy the mind, making one numb, and intoxicated. Faith does not always do this, nor must it always be this way. But, as Marx noticed, it does tend to be the truth with regards to the unthinking masses, who just accept a faith, without fully thinking it through. Then again, the process of thinking itself is often compromised by faith, and symbolically speaking, faith clouds one's mind, like a drug can cloud one's perceptions.

The mind on drugs is never a good thing. How then can the mind “on faith” be considered a good thing? Do not let this question be confusing. Everyone of us has faith in something, without which we could not conduct our daily lives. I have to have faith in the food I eat, or else I would starve. I have to have faith in all kinds of elements of the society around me, or otherwise I would have to retire from society, and go live in a cave. I do not suggest for one to stop eating, and to go live in a cave. We have to have faith in some things. Without faith is something, one simply cannot live.

With this being true, this does not at all apply to faith in the domain of religions. One can be religious, and one can be non-religious, and still have faith in oneself, and in one's fellow human beings. In my opinion, faith in one's fellow human beings is a faith that, in many ways, is superior to faith in a Supreme Being residing in Heaven! And yes, I am aware of the Biblical scripture that states the opposite of what I just said.

Psalm 118:8 states, “It is better to take shelter in God than to trust in man.” The validity of this statement can be argued by those open enough not to accept it with blind faith. Certainly, there are times when it is true. Then again, there are times when it is glaringly false! For those who have faith in Scripture, this can be a dilemma, this can be a challenge to one's faith. In response, one's faith will take on one of the symbolic forms that we mentioned above, earth, water, air or fire. Like I said, when one's faith is challenged, we expose, and discover more about ourselves than about the object of our faith.

Everything that we embrace in faith can be challenged. Every sacred belief, and faith is subject to scrutiny, skepticism, and outright disbelief. Yet, if we tear down all faiths, with what then are they to be replaced? For the religious, this has always been an easy question.

The religious faithful always proclaim, “my religion is right, and yours is wrong, my religion is better than your religion, and my God is better than yours!” Most of the religious faithful do not necessarily see their faith in this state of child-like arrogance,

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nevertheless, if one could only be objective enough to look honestly at oneself, one may very well see the face of the fundamentalist staring back at one.

This is especially true for those who wish for faith to be “as solid as bedrock.” Rocks are very thick and heavy. They do not tend to be pliant, and to fit in well with others, without having to be chipped down to size, and molded into position. Faith in the tangible. Faith in the intangible. Faith in the here, and now. Faith in the hereafter. There are all kinds of faiths, just like there are all kinds of the faithful, who embrace the different faiths, each in their own unique way. Is there really one that is better than another? Is this not a matter of personal decision, and personal choice?

No one has the right to judge the faith of another. But at the same time, we each must address, and judge one another's behaviors. What one does, and how one lives certainly affects the lives of many, both close to one, and afar. How one lives one's life, and what one does, regardless of why one does what one does, and what one believes about what one does, still can have a strong affect upon others who very well may not share the same beliefs. Human society creates laws and rules specifically to protect the individual from the unwelcome beliefs, and practices of others.

What one believes is not as important as what one does. One may indeed lack critical thinking, but that does not mean one has to act immorally. While I may put my trust in God, I will do so only in a philosophical way. Practically speaking I turn to my fellow human beings, and have faith that they will indeed act properly. Otherwise, how can I live in a society with the daily expectation of law, and order? Some will say that this is faith in God, in action. Some will say the opposite. Like I said, what one believes, who cares? I focus on actions!

In my religious world view, I believe that human beings (here on Earth, in the here and now) each have value, worth, and are thus each due respect. I also understand the Bible story, (recorded in Genesis), about Adam and Eve eating of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. This story was never meant to be understood in any literal way, like those with “bedrock faith” claim. Rather, it has always been understood to be a psychological metaphor describing the state of the human mind in relationship to understanding the natural world.

According to my faith, all human beings are equal in value by right of birth. Whether or not each individual maintains that equality, excels above it, or descends beneath it, is always a matter of personal choice, decided by the course of an individual's actions over one's lifetime.

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According to my faith, and my personal experiences interacting with others from many different walks of life, over many decades is that, for the most part, most individuals want to believe that their individual world outlook is, not only the right one, but the only right one, with all others being wrong! According to my faith, this attitude of narrow-mindedness is nothing less than asinine, ridiculous, and foolish.

The psychological understanding of the Biblical metaphor of the eating of the forbidden fruit of the tree of Knowledge indicates that human knowledge is far from perfect. Therefore, our perceptions of reality, and all of our competing world views are nothing more than small pieces of a greater puzzle, with no one being able yet to see the “big picture.”

In conclusion, it is because that I believe in my fellow human beings that I am able to believe that we have the potential, and I pray, the destiny, to recognize the futility of considering individual faiths as comprehensive world views. Each world view, each religion, may very well represent certain universal psychological truths. It is this common, universal core that is referred to in Kabbalistic literature as, “the light that is concealed with the fallen vessels.” When the walls of division that divide religious faiths can be transcended, and the inner psychological essence cloaked within each of world's faiths is exposed, I believe that it will be then, that another religious metaphor will be realized, this being the fabled, and long awaited era of the messiah.

The path to human redemption begins with a healthy, rational analysis of the tenets, and doctrines of faith. Everything must become subject to scrutiny, examination, and review. We may indeed become iconoclasts, and shatter long held sacred beliefs. But, in the end, maybe many of these sacred beliefs are not so sacred after all. Just because certain beliefs are held to be sacred, and thus not subject to challenge, does not make such beliefs to be true. Then again, it does not make them false.

Faith that is like “bedrock stone” might sound appealing to the faithful, but it truly weighs down one's intelligent mind. This is, after all the result of the eating of the forbidden fruit. This is why the Kabbalists speak about the “shattering of the vessels.” Building upon a Talmudic concept, the Kabbalists understood that the act of shattering was indeed a positive step forward (shevira'tam hi tikun'am).

Faith that is like fire, can burn. It lashes out, and can destroy the believer, and non-believer alike. This is why the revolving sword of fire was placed outside the Garden, from which Adam was expelled. Fire burns down gardens, thus the fire could not be within it. Faith that is like fire is equally destructive. Those who embrace faith in this

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way are a danger to “God's garden,” and therefore, for the safety of the Garden, need to be kept out of it.

In Talmudic literature there is a story that speak of four Sages who endeavored to ascend into the “heavenly garden,” (pardes). The legend describes how three out of these four failed miserably, and faced unfortunate consequences. The story does not fully elaborate on the nature of their failure, but those familiar with understanding the way of Talmud recognize in the story the subtle warnings placed in the narration. These four Sages rightly express our four metaphors of faith discussed above.

Until “Adam/Man,” (and thus all humanity) learns to “handle water” with wisdom, we will never “quench the fire,” and thus allow ourselves “back into the Garden.” With water, we can re-enter the Garden, to water and nourish it. Water is also the metaphor for wisdom, and the universal Way, which in Hebrew, is the true meaning of Torah. The only Sage of the four just mentioned (R. Akiva) to have safely survived the visit to the Garden is associated with the metaphor of water. The lesson is that faith, like water must be pliant, and allowed to flow. One who attempts to create divisions, symbolized by R. Akiva's warning not to say “water, water,” indicating such division, will indeed suffer dire consequences, as the story relates.

Analyzing faith begins with becoming intellectually pliant, and fluid, like water. In this state of mind, symbolized by water, one can come to understand the four symbolic state called air. The Biblical word for air is Ruah, which also means wind, and spirit. This also echoes back to the reference in Genesis (1:2), when “the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters.” It takes the wind to blow the waters. It takes the open mind to direct the open heart.

The path to sincere spirituality begins with the pliant intellect, and from there one graduates to spiritual maturity, the psychology of unity that seeks to unite again all humanity, as it was in the beginning, and to leave behind the forbidden fruits of the Tree of Knowledge that seek to divide. This is the meaning of the Kabbalistic symbol, of the Tree of Life.

The Tree of Life is a powerful symbol of unity, and integration. It can only be embraced by those willing to surrender the forbidden fruit, and to embrace the permitted fruit. Faith alone can be good and/or evil, thus it is the forbidden fruit. Knowledge will always be incomplete because this is our human limitation.

The one spiritual message that is universal speaks about the unity of all humanity, and of humanity's unity with all creation. This is a faith worth striving for. At least it is one

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that will remove division, and sectarian violence from among us. The logic of this should be clear, and evident to all.

Now that we have addressed the issue of faith, let us proceed to discuss the issue of faith in God.

Analyzing God

What do we really know about God? If we answer this question honestly, we will have to admit, what for the religious, will be a very uncomfortable truth. We cannot prove anything that we claim that we know about God. We must go further and admit that we cannot even prove the existence of God. For the religious, they of course, believe in God, and hold rather definite opinions about what God is like. Each religion views God as its own, and therefore ascribes to God all kinds of attributes, and beliefs. Yet, as religions spread like weeds, the good Lord in Heaven has not been very active in contributing to humanity any answers about His (Her?) true nature.

Indeed, the good Lord in Heaven has not been actively involved with humanity, in any overt way that is incontestable, and above skeptical challenge. While religions, and the religious will argue back and forth, God remains silent. As such we are left to have to admit that what we know about God, if indeed He (She?) even exists is not next to nothing, but totally nothing.

Let us proceed to analyze what we think that we know about God, and learn from it what we really do, and do not know.

Being that God does not conduct interviews, or holds news conferences, there seems to be no direct, overt, and undeniable communication from God to humanity. We have no lack of books that claim to be the “word” of God. There is no lack of books that claim to contain prophecies from God. There is no lack of books that claim to speak authoritatively about God, and what is God's Will for humanity (or a portion thereof).

It seems that all we have is two things. We have books, and we have people who believe in the books. Needless to say, due to the large number of books that claim to be from God, and about God, and the large number of opposing views that these books represent as God's Will, there exists tremendous confusion, to the point of hostility, between the various “peoples of the books,” and what they believe God really said, and wants. And through this all, God is silent, and offers no comment to help guide the billions who fight, and compete in His Name.

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So, what do we really know about God? Well, the answer to this will change in accordance to whom we ask the question, and from what book such a one will take the answer. Needless to say, answers will differ greatly between followers of one religion, and another. But even within the same religion, we find variant voices, each of whom claim to be speaking for God, and about God, that seeks to disqualify, and devalue what others in one's own religion have to say about God because their views are not found to be agreeable.

Sectarian fighting within a religion has shown itself to be as bad, if not worse than the violence shown to members of other religions. So much violence, prejudice, hatred, and intolerance exists toward members of faith, from members of the same faith, and other faiths. One would think that a basic tenet of religion is that God Himself teaches to hate, and to persecute all who would disagree with Him. Yet, the irrationality, and insanity in such a view is clearly self-evident.

Most religions proclaim that God is all-powerful, and all-knowing. If this is indeed the case, then God would know who is acceptable to Him, and who is not. We would think that an all-powerful God who does not tolerate dissent would throw down from Heaven His mighty thunderbolt, and smite the evil dissenter. But alas, there must be a shortage of lightning bolts in Heaven, for the number of religious dissenters who dare to defy the Word of God, and its proper meaning by the hands of self-appointed authorities, only seem to be growing in number, and growing in boldness.

Therefore, the “faithful” proclaim if God is not going to act to speak up for Himself and to defend His own Word, then the right, and responsibility to do so falls into the hands of the many faithful. And thus, in lack of the actions of the all-powerful, all-knowing God, the individual groups who proclaim themselves to be the faithful, will act for God, to avenge His “tarnished” honor. What this says about the so-called faithful is obvious. Each group is as maniacal, and insane as is the other. But what does this terrible state of confusion, and lack of intervention say about the God who is the cause of all this confusion.

Where is this God who is the cause of so much human suffering? All of the religious books each has their answer to this most pressing question. Yet, all we have are the words of books written on pages. We have no Word from God Himself to explain anything. This deafening silence is itself an observation that all can see. The rational mind that observes this silence, therefore, must attempt to make sense of it, and to seek an interpretation of it, although at the same time, the rational mind must admit that all we will ever have is the ideas, opinions, and thoughts of human beings.

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We cannot know what God thinks unless God Himself tells us. And if God continues to remain silent in the face of all human inquiry, then the nature of said inquiry will have to raise the uncomfortable questions of whether there is a God that cares about humanity, or even whether or not there is a God, at all. The religious faithful will stew in their rage, and anger over such inquiries. Nevertheless, in the face of a silent God, these inquiries are indeed justified, and valid.

To declare that there is no God is, in and of itself, a statement of faith. After all, if there is no proof for the existence of God, then there is also no proof for the non-existence of God. And one must remember that even the definition of what exactly is, and is not proof, is subject to heated debate.

The religious faithful all have their theological reasons to explain God's silence, and tolerance of human suffering. Whenever something terrible happens, due to no fault of one's own, the religious always declare that the ways of God are mysterious, and that God's justice transcends human knowledge. The religious will bend over backwards and twist logic beyond the breaking point to justify God's inaction in light of the worst of tragedies. Yet, to those who suffer in shock and pain, the rationalizations, and justifications of the religious tend to offer little comfort. God is proclaimed as "just," regardless of the level of tragedy.

Many of the faithful have seen through this type of theological whitewash, and have turned their backs on both God, and religion. Who can blame them? Why pray to a God who does not answer? Why believe in a God who is not involved? And yet, many of the religious stay religious, and many others leave religion behind, and still there is no word, or sign from the Big Guy in the sky. Again, this is more of a statement about God than it is about religion.

No one can deny that the world is full of harshness, and cruelty. Good and bad befall the righteous, and the evil in a somewhat balanced, and equal way. Putting aside all previous notions of faith and belief in God, if one were to simply observe the way things are in the world, one would most likely conclude that there is no God(s) in charge, at least not one who is actively involved on a day-to-day basis, or one that actually listens to, and responds to supplications, and prayers.

Nature itself is the ultimate decider of reality. For the religious, nature is the creation of God. What therefore do we learn about the Creator by observing His creation? We may very well draw conclusions about the nature of God that are radically different from the attributes ascribed to God by the various religions, and their followers.

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Much of religion deals with describing God, and the many attributes ascribed to Him. In the Bible God is portrayed as a male entity seemingly always focused on social justice, and individual morality. The wrath of the Biblical God is harsh, and severe. Yet, the Bible does not present this severity as being inherent within God, or natural to Him, but rather as a response to the injustice, and immorality of humanity. Essentially, what we learn about God in the Bible is that God rewards righteousness, and punishes wickedness. Yet, although the Bible often promises this, in God's Name, we equally often find many recorded narrations that may indeed bring “God's justice” into question.

With regards to written texts, and historical hindsight, anyone can come forward to second-guess anything, including the recorded “acts,” or “decision” of God. If there is no word from God to properly direct the interpretation of sacred scripture, then interpretations can grow like weeds, with everyone being different, maybe even radically so, from one another. And without God Himself to intervene to bring clarity, who is to say that God doing this or that, does or does not, mean just what the interpreter says that it does. This conflict in Biblical interpretation is no small matter. Christianity came along centuries after Judaism, and adopted in-full the Jewish Bible. Yet, it re-read the Jewish Bible, and interpreted much of it in ways that the redactors of Judaism flatly rejected as being false.

In a world where might makes right, and the acts of man are interpreted as being the “acts” of God, Jewish Biblical interpretations were no match for the powerful Christian church. The history of Christian polemics against Judaism is well documented, so too is the long history of violent Christian persecution of Jews, all because the “stubborn Jews” refused to “see the light” of Christian Biblical interpretation. And all through the many centuries of polemics, prejudice, violence, and hate, the Biblical God of social justice, and personal morality did not in any way intervene, or get involved in the fray in order to create peace, or to restore harmony. Religious literature justifying God's “inaction” abounds, all of it of course, justify the God of justice, and condemning the “sins” of man.

In literature, it is an easy thing to write a justification of the “action” or “inaction” of God, and to describe to God whatever reasons, and/or attributes that any individual author may chose. Of course, a problem arises when readers come to believe that the words and opinions of these many authors are divinely inspired, and thus raise their words to the level of the holy, or maybe even to become cannon, or scripture. How then does one argue with the “word of God,” as revealed by this or that individual, who, in reality, is speaking for no one other than for his/her own imagination, or thoughts? And

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through it all God in Heaven is silent with regards to all the many contradictory voices that claim to be speaking for Him, and from Him.

So, what do we make of this all? What can we conclude and say about God? Needless to say many have spoken and written, each one either “in the name of God,” or in the name of the Word of God (in the Jewish sense, the Torah). But God Himself has said nothing to confirm, or deny that any of the words or ideas ascribed to Him have or have not any legitimacy. So, without the active involvement of the Living God, conflict and debate will continue unending.

Surprisingly, there actually is a way around all this, a way that can seek to make some peace, and order among all the chaos. This way is nothing new. Actually, it is rather old. It was an attitude adopted centuries ago by the Rabbinic sages of Torah in their Talmudic discussions of religious law, and Biblical interpretations.

These sages knew full well that God did not speak to them, or to anyone. They even went so far as to interpret the verse in Deuteronomy (30:12) which says, “the Torah is not in Heaven,” as a mandate to ignore Divine direction, and to take matters of Biblical interpretation into their own hands, and to decide the practices of Biblical law based on communal needs, placing the needs of human beings first and foremost over any other consideration (ref. TB, BM 59b). This concept of discussion and debate is the foundation of what we today call Rabbinic Judaism, and it laid the foundation of the original Jewish spirit of tolerance in variant religious practices, and beliefs.

Being that God does not seem to be involved on a day-to-day basis with matters theological, or doctrinal, human beings claiming to speak for the Big Man upstairs continue to write their books, and to promote their opinion about God, and His mysterious ways. Each individual's personal opinion will be swayed in the direction towards one's own inclination. Nevertheless, these opinions are what they are, the ideas of their individual authors. Some will believe them to be divinely inspired, and others will not. As long as tolerance rules, each opinion can be respected for what it is, and not embraced for what it is not!

When it comes to the study of religious literature we must approach it from this open, and tolerant point of view. We must understand that we are not reading holy writ, but rather we are reading what some may indeed consider to be divinely inspired holy writ. We cannot ascribe to God anything, therefore we cannot ascribe to any literature a closeness to, or correctness about God that He Himself does not endorse. So we come to the study of literature with an open mind, with the intent to learn what it is that the author(s) are trying to say. In this light, we may or may not learn anything about God,

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but we certainly learn much about the ideals, and beliefs of our fellow human beings. And these by themselves may be the most valuable of lessons to be learned.

Analyzing the Bible

How is the Bible to be understood? Are the stories in Genesis to be read, and understood with the same literalness as are the historical narratives of Joshua, Judges and Samuel? What about the later books of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs? They are both beautiful literature, but are they really to be understood as “the word of God,” instead of the the words of their individual authors? What about the stories of Job, and Jonah? Are they historical accounts of actual individuals, or are they ancient Hebraic forms of fictional, moralistic literature? Just how should we approach understanding the Bible?

Since the earliest times, large portions of the Bible were always interpreted figuratively, symbolically, and metaphorically, with no literal application whatsoever. Then again too this day, there are the literalists, who read the words of the Bible, (often in translation), and insist that every word is to be understood literally, and that any other interpretation, (other than their own) is blasphemous.

We thus have Biblical interpretation that runs the gamut from complete symbolism, with no literalness, to its opposite, compete literalness, with no symbolism. Needless, to say, the two extremes are mutually exclusive, and each school of interpretation conflicts sharply with the other. Let us not forget to mention that there are also many other school of interpretation left in the middle. Many of them are also in conflict with one another.

When it comes to the Bible, it seems that we come to an open book. And this understanding, in and of itself is part of a greater misunderstanding about the Bible. First, let us start off with a relatively commonly known truth. The Bible is not a singular book, written by a singular author. The Bible is a collection of works, written by numerous authors, over period of many centuries. Although, printed, and published today as a whole, the Bible was never written as a complete whole.

This fundamental concept of separation is what underlies the Jewish division of the Bible into three different sections, with each preceding section understood to be of greater sanctity than that which comes after it. The three-fold Jewish division of the Bible is called TaNaKh. This title is derived from the capital letters of the three Biblical sections, the Torah, the Prophets (Nevi'im) and the Writings (Ketuvim).

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This understanding of lessening sanctity was not adopted by the Christians, when they embraced the Jewish Bible as their own. This is shown in that their arrangement of the books that they call the “Old Testament” are different from their order in the Jewish TaNaKh. The Christians, of course, added a fourth section to their Bible, which they call the New Testament. They declare all the books of their canon to be of equal “divine” status. A common Christian term to refer to this sanctity, is “the gospel truth.”

Whether or not any specific books of the Bible have any more, or less sanctity is also more or less just a theological point of difference. In practicality, no one really cares. For most Bible believers, Jewish and Christian alike, the holy book is the holy book; it is the word of God by which they live, and there is no room for further discussion! Jews continue to interpret the TaNaKh as they do, and Christians interpret the “Holy Bible” as they do.

In matters relating to daily morality, there is usually a consensus of interpretation between the groups, and thus we can speak about there being a Judeo-Christian work ethic, and moral code. In matters of historical narration, there also tends to be an agreement of understanding, which has led to some interesting modern-day political alliances. Yet, even with all this commonality, there still remain wide gaps of understanding so many other things. Needless to say, the Christian New Testament, in and of itself, is a unique interpretation of the earlier Jewish scriptures and prophecies. Again, needless to say, the Christian interpretation of Jewish scripture is not an interpretation shared by the Jewish community. So while there are areas of agreement, the gap of the divide between the two religions remains as wide as ever!

Since the beginning of their religion, Christians, have turned to the words of the Jewish Bible, and claim that they mean something different from what appears to be their superficial, and literal meanings. This, of course, is the bone of contention between the two faiths. And yet, both faiths will have to agree that not every word of scripture is to be taken literally, for if so, may of the foundational teachings of both religions will be undermined.

Jewish interpreters understand certain phrases in the Torah to mean things completely absent from a literal rendition of the words. Christian interpreters understand certain words of the ancient Jewish text to be prophecies about the coming of their Messiah. Jewish Biblical scholars deny that what the Christians call messianic prophecies are anything of the kind. Each group will have to admit, there is more to reading the Biblical books than mere reading, and literal interpretations.

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For centuries, commentators have written their Biblical interpretations. Some of these commentaries have become so common, and well accepted, that in certain circles not to accept what the commentaries say is tantamount to challenging, or denying the Bible itself. And thus we have the building of layer, upon layer of interpretations that add to our distance from understanding what the Biblical books actually taught, and what was the original intent of their numerous authors.

What was the original intent of the Biblical authors? How did they intend for their books to be understood? Did each individual author intend to write history, a rendition of history, or maybe a novel-like epic? What parts of what an author wrote were literal descriptions of historical reality, and what parts were symbolic prophetic visions, seen only in the eye of the author, and therefore subject to interpretation like all other dreams and visions within the mind?

Questions like these are rarely asked by those reading the Bible expecting to find nothing more than the “absolute word of God.” But the authors of these books might not have had in mind that this is what they were writing! Unless one delves into true Biblical scholarship to investigate the Biblical books, and to subject them to literary, and other forms of analysis, one may never come to a proper understanding of anything that any of the Biblical books actually intend to teach.

Especially for those who hold the Bible to be the “word of God,” it is imperative to discover what exactly the Bible intended to teach, as opposed to how the Bible has been interpreted over the centuries by one or another polemic motivated commentator. Far too many Biblical commentators have arisen over the many centuries, and have stretched the words of the Bible to limits challenging not only rational sense, but even the limits of imagination itself. When we read the words of this or that commentary, we are left with the nagging question, “is this what the Bible really teaches?” Often, after a proper investigation of the Biblical text, we may come to the conclusion that, no, this is not what the Bible really teaches! It may look like it's saying one thing, when in fact, upon examination, it is saying something very different.

We must explore Biblical texts. We must ask difficult, and often challenging questions. We may discover answers previously unconsidered. We may raise questions, to which there are no answers. But this must never stop us from asking them! Whatever approach that we take to analyzing Biblical texts, one thing is certain, we will walk away from the endeavor much more educated, and enlightened that we were before we began.

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Analyzing What is the “Word of God”

What exactly is the “word” of God? Is everything that is said in God's Name, in reality from “God's mouth”? Anyone familiar with Judaic literature will immediately answer, no! The Rabbinic Sages have since the days of the Greeks adopted Grecian forms of story-telling to relate important moralistic, and religious truths to the general public.

Although the Bible itself is no stranger to fictional literature, the later Rabbinic literary format follows what for them was the more-modern Grecian format than relying upon ancient Hebraic formats, which for the most part were forgotten by the masses. Too this day, many of the fictional stories of the Bible, such as those of Jonah and Job are mistaken to be literal history, all because the majority of Biblical students had forgotten the true nature, and psychology of the ancient Hebraic mind-set.

Rabbinic literature is full of a rich, and vibrant literary device known to us today as “Midrash.” A Midrash is a story. Often it can be an embellishment of a Biblical tale, adding in all kinds of novel-like details that are unrecorded in the Bible. It was never meant that any of these additional renditions were ever to be understood literally. It would be considered sacrilegious for these midrashim to be considered historical, factual, and/or part of the actual Bible itself. A story is, as a story be. It was meant to inspire the public to proper moral, and righteous behavior.

Unfortunately, as generations pass, that which one generation knew so well proceeding generations were beginning to forget. Eventually, the true form, and purpose of Midrash became lost. Many began to believe that the Midrash(es) were actually historical, or literal. This mistake has led to many far-reaching conclusions that has shifted and altered the face of Judaism, and Jewish Law.

Another equal, great mistake arose when the words of the Rabbis were transformed from being the opinions of their individual authors, and elevated to being “divinely inspired.” This tragic mistake continues to this day, and is the source for many of the terrible conditions existing today in many segments of the religious Jewish community.

So, over the many years, a two-edged “perfect storm” developed. First, the symbolic, metaphorical teachings of the Rabbis were mistaken to be literal facts, and second, instead of considering their words to be just the opinions of their individual authors, the words of the Rabbis were elevated to being “divinely inspired.”

So what began as moralistic story-telling became transformed into a completely new face of the Jewish religion, one endowed with “divine” authority. To question this was to

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question God Himself, and this was considered tantamount to denying the whole of Torah. Anyone found guilty of expressing these sentiments, or even considering these thoughts was condemned as a heretic, and cast out of the Jewish community. During centuries gone by when communities were isolated by social norms, and physical distances, being cast-out could become a death sentence. The realities of the day helped keep the general public in line. Over time, as matters solidified, very few ever bothered to question that which they had been raised all their lives to believe.

Rabbinic literature became more and more accepted as the Jewish sacred texts. Yet, almost lost to history was the canonization process of the three books which today encompass the Jewish Bible, these being the Torah, the Prophets (Nevi'im), and the Writings (Ketuvim), together called the TaNaKh. The text of the Torah is rather exact, with existing copies surviving for almost 2000 years. There is no great debate over the sanctity of the Torah itself. The same can be said for the Prophets. The Writings, however are another story. There was controversy over including certain texts, such as the Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. In the end, we have the TaNaKh as we have it today.

However, there were other books that were rejected from the Jewish canon. Some of these books are still around. Most of these books such as Ben Sira, and Jubilees are almost unknown to most modern Torah students. Nevertheless, they still are of academic interest to many scholars. Jubilees is however considered canonical by the Beta Israel community of Ethiopia, and even though the younger generations of that community are assimilating into the greater Israeli/Rabbinic community, still, many of their old timers resist such change and stay true to their own sacred origins, which in many ways differs sharply from that of the Talmudic Rabbis.

Since the days of the Second Temple the way of the Rabbis has ruled supreme in Israel, especially since the double debacle of the fundamentalist extremists who caused the destruction of Jerusalem, and the later banishment of Jews from most of the Holy Land. Over the centuries, the way of the Sages has proven itself wise. Judaism survives today because of the keen, and wise insight of these brilliant, and tolerant human beings spreading out over centuries of the most tumultuous times in Jewish history.

So Rabbinic literature grew! And with it wisdom, understanding and knowledge proliferated in Israel. As an expression of their tolerant wisdom, the Talmudic Sages often recorded many different ideas, beliefs, and opinions, not only those that they embraced, but often even those opinions which they rejected. They were recorded, and commented upon, so that future generations would not stumble upon them, and invest the time and effort to reconsider that which earlier generations had rejected.

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The body of Rabbinic literature grew and grew. There arose many different styles as there were topics of discussion. Legal discussions followed the laws of rational logic. In this pursuit, intellectual analysis was sharpened to a fine point. The realm of midrashic literature grew and grew as more Sages put together collections of sayings, and teachings both old, and new.

As the centuries passed, a new type of Rabbinic literature began to develop. This was a uniquely Jewish version of older Neoplatonic, metaphysical philosophy. These teachings eventually became known as the Kabbalah. However, these teachings were very different from other secret traditions that arose before them. Nevertheless, since the thirteenth century, these schools of Kabbalah, which today we call the Theoretical School, have become part and parcel of the greater Torah tradition.

Analyzing the Kabbalah

I think it may be one of the greatest ironies in the history of Torah study. So much Kabbalistic literature is now so widely available, more so than at any other time in history. At the same time, the level of understanding all this Kabbalistic literature has fallen to an all-time low, possibly the lowest in history.

And why is this irony so? It is simply because of a simple psychological truth that is regularly ignored. The rule is this: “the right means, in the wrong hands, will cause the right means to work in the wrong way.” In other words, just because someone reads the words of Kabbalah does not mean that they understand them!

Yes, one can read all the Kabbalistic texts in print, and draw conclusions about their meanings, and teachings, and still be understanding them 100% wrong, thus missing the point of the entire system. For the most part this is exactly what is happening in these days. Why this sad case of affairs exists, and what can be done about it is what we need to address here.

Today, the teachings of Kabbalah encompass many schools. For the most part, the schools that teach the true “secrets of the Torah” are ignored, with some rejecting them outright. These schools have nothing to do with the Spanish metaphysical philosophies that grew up around books like the Zohar, and the later schools that developed from it.

Indeed, the original “secrets of the Torah” schools are today often not even considered to be part of “Kabbalah,” with this term being used almost exclusively to refer to Zoharic schools, and its teachings. Therefore, I distinguish between usage of the terms “Kabbalah,” and the authentic “secrets of the Torah.” Do I infer by this distinction that

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the Zohar, and the systems that came forth from it are not the original “secrets of the Torah”? As we say in the vernacular, “you betcha!” The Zoharic system, and the Lurianic schools that came forth from it are not the historical, original “secrets of the Torah.”

The Zoharic system is a lovely, profound, and valuable addition to the body of Judaic metaphysical literature. Yet, due to its format and style, Zoharic literature is almost always misunderstood. First of all, as historical scholarship has so adequately proven, the Zohar is an elaborate pseudepigrapha. The Zohar was not at all authored by Rebbe Shimon Ben Yohai, or anyone else even remotely associated with him. Therefore, to ascribe antiquity to the texts, and the authority that is associated with such antiquity, is misplaced. This point is pivotal with regards to Halakhic issues discussed in the Zohar. Secondly, the Zohar relies overwhelmingly on poetic metaphors, obtuse symbolic imagery, and elaborate usage of midrashic/homiletic story-telling. These styles only contribute to keeping the Zohar a closed text, even to those who read it regularly.

Because of this combination of styles many come to these studies of “Kabbalah,” and make grievous fundamental mistakes. Unprepared Kabbalah students are often ensnared into interpreting the symbolic to be literal, incorrectly interpret poetry as prose, and completely confuse the fact that the Zoharic/Kabbalistic teachings are speaking exclusively about internal psychological archetypes, and not about any actual physical, or spiritual reality in the external world.

Zoharic literature created an entire world of wondrous fantasy, and vivid imagination in order to cloak within it sublime metaphysical lessons about the truths of human nature. This was accomplished with amazing success. Much of the Zohar reads like an exciting novel, rich with wondrous characters, and magical circumstances. When reading these stories as the myths they are one can best appreciate their beauty, and the marvelous literary achievement of the Zohar's many authors.

When, however, one reads the literary Zoharic literature as actual reality, one descends into a quagmire of confusion because the fantasy of a novel is never meant to be understood as literal fact. When one confuses novel for fact one creates a layer of fantasy that forever separates one from reality. In the Kabbalah, this layer of delusional fantasy is called “klipah,” the husk/shell that surrounds the light, and blocks it from shining. Kabbalistic literature is full of warnings about the dangers of the “klipot.”

As long as people come to the study of Kabbalah and interpret it, as we say in Hebrew, “k'peshuto” (literally), they will drift further, and further away from authentic Torah teachings, and cross over into the Biblically prohibited domains of idolatry. Yes, you

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read me correctly. Many modern day students of Kabbalah have embraced Biblically prohibited idolatrous ideas, and are completely oblivious to the fact that they have indeed done this.

Any literal understanding of Zoharic, and Kabbalistic metaphors perverts the entire system. R. Hayim Vital, the famous redactor of the Lurianic Kabbalah is the man who innovated an entirely new system of in-depth metaphors. Yet, he emphasizes numerous times, throughout all his writings that all his exotic metaphors are simply to give some semblance of descriptive terminology to obtuse abstract concepts, the likes of which we describe today in the language of psychology. Miss this, and you miss the entire system. Being that so many today do indeed miss the pseudepigraphal, psychological undercurrents of the Zohar, this explains the irony of how we have so many students of Kabbalah, and so little understanding of anything Kabbalistic.

Since the beginning of recorded history, civilized human beings have always looked out upon their world, and tried to make sense of it all. By modern standards, we would say that they were woefully unprepared to undertake such a grandiose project. Nevertheless, the ancients certainly did not consider themselves to be woefully incapable of doing anything. What they did not know, or understand about the world around them certainly did not stop them from “filling in the blanks” with the best of what the combined intelligence, and imagination could provide. What they developed has come down to us through the centuries as mythologies. Yet, underlying every story is the mind-set of the people who created it.

Throughout the ages, and even today, trying to see the “big picture” is a large attraction. What once was the exclusive domain of religion, and philosophy, and made room now for a third sibling in this family of human intellectual endeavors. The third sister to pursue the greater knowledge, we now call science. And today, we make a strong distinction between science and the other branches of knowledge, religion and philosophy. This distinction, so adamantly made today, was not the case in ancient times. For the ancients, science, philosophy, and religion were all one field.

From our modern point of view this integration of perception has both its benefits, and its demerits. The benefits of the old system is that it provides for us today a window into the past, to see how the people then thought about their world. This helps us understand the evolving nature of human psychology. However, what is detrimental is that many too this day look to the stories of the past, and fail to see within them their philosophical, and scientific elements.

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Instead, many today look to the stories of the past, and adopt them as incontestable religion. Instead of understanding the depths of symbolism in the old ways, some continue to persist to interpret the old literally, in spite of the fact that literal interpretations have been clearly shown to be mistaken, and incorrect. Nevertheless, the religious consider it part of their faith not to evolve as their ancestors did, and to cling to a superficial understanding of the past, which their ancestors never did!

Judaism, as a culture, and religion, certainly did not escape this human psychological progression. Throughout the many centuries numerous Sages have arisen who have each contributed to the vast amount of Torah literature. Some have reinforced the superficial viewpoint, for the sake of the uneducated masses, they say. Others have stripped away the superficial, digging down to the religion's core to expose what is the Torah's view of the universe, and humanity within it.

One group that did both, reinforce the superficial, while at the same time digging down to the Torah's core, were the Kabbalists. They sought to know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help them God, but upon discovering this truth, they were faced with a disturbing dilemma. Not everyone could receive or handle that truth. Some truths were dangerous in the minds of those not properly prepared to receive them. Therefore, the Kabbalists built a system that on its surface would reinforce the superficial, for those who needed it, and at the same time would provide clues, and passageways into the greater depths for those ready and willing to take these paths.

If one wishes to truly understand, according to the Kabbalists, the depths of the Torah path, and its universal outlook of the world and humanity, then one needs to begin with the superficial words of the Kabbalah, and from there dive down into them to discover their hidden meanings.

Analyzing the Kabbalah as the psychological system that it has always been enables the student to not only learn about the system itself, it also teaches many lessons about the psychology of the self, and revelations about our true human nature.

Those who study Kabbalah at the surface level never get any of these lessons. They still believe that they are learning about external spiritual realities somewhere “out there” in the greater universe. Those, “in the know” however, have long ago realized that all the descriptions of all the worlds spoken of in the Kabbalah have nothing to do with outer space, but rather with inner space.

All the Kabbalistic worlds are domains within the human psyche, and describe not the creation around us, but rather the creation within us. Understanding Kabbalah in this

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way is its true face, and presents truths, that, like I said above, some are not willing, or able to receive. Nevertheless, the act of teaching, and education must move forward. In lessons to come, we will pursue Kabbalistic teachings, and endeavor to open them up to discover the psychology, the humanity, and the universality that is hidden with them.

This introduction will serve as a beginning for us to go on a journey through Lurianic, Zoharic, Kabbalistic, and other literature on a quest to properly open up these teachings, and to understand them within their correct psychological framework. In the essays to come, I will chose selections from many different writings, translate them, and explain them in full proper, psychological detail. They must be translated properly, and then interpreted correctly, so that once and for-all their true psychological value can be expressed, and at the same time, the layers of myth, superstition, and outright misunderstanding of the symbolic as literal can be safely discarded, cast away, and buried. In doing this, by providing rational, and honest Kabbalistic teachings, my intent will be to remove the klipot from modern Torah, and Kabbalah studies, and to bring back the many wayward students who have inadvertently sunk into the quagmire of chaotic, delusional theology.

So, in conclusion, we have discussed difficult, and possibly disturbing issues with regards to faith, with regards to God, God's Word, religious authority, and the way that many religious use to reach out to God, this being mysticism. I have tried to address here, what for the religious, may be very difficult for them to consider. But in order for one to have a proper and healthy spiritual outlook, one must dispel with all elements that makes spirituality sick, divisive, and primitive.

I asked the difficult questions so that through answering them correctly, we can together reinforce a faith, and a mysticism that reaches out, and touches far more than just divisive polemics. Together, we are on a journey in the exploration of the truth of our human existence. We may never finish this journey, no matter how long we try. Nevertheless, try, we must. We owe it to ourselves. For the more we discover about ourselves, the more we will discover about God who is found within us.

And so, our journey begins.

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Analyzing the Kabbalah

Recognizing the Macrocosm within the Microcosm

Analyzing the Tzimtzum

The Primordial Contraction of the Infinite Light of God

It is an age-old question, if God is omnipresent, meaning that God is everywhere, where then does the universe exist? If everywhere is not only full of God, but is actually God, then there is no place for there to be a universe. Yet, a universe, we have. So, where did God put it?

Is there a place which is not God? If so, then God is no longer omnipresent, and this would create a serious theological problem, for if God is not omnipresent, then God is also not omnipotent. For how can God be all-powerful, if He is not all-present. In a place that God is not, then God's power equally is not. Therefore, in order for the universe to exist as an entity with its own unique identity independent from God, we must limit both God's omnipresence, and His Omnipotence. And if God is anything less than everything, than we must ask whether or not such an entity (or being) is actually the "God of all" (Adon HaKol) in the first place. As we see here, simple questions can lead us to serious complications in theology.

The Lurianic Kabbalah, as defined by R. Hayim Vital was acutely aware of the conundrum created by this age-old question. His answer to it stood the world of Kabbalah on its head, but for very good reason, and with very good results. R. Hayim, in the name of R. Luria introduced to us a concept called the Tzimtzum, the primordial Retraction of God's Light.

Before we jump into discussing the Tzimtzum in particular, let me first digress to cover some general points about discussing matters that are subject to faith, and speculation, but can never be proven.

When we come to discuss metaphysical matters, such as the Tzimtzum, and the order of the spiritual worlds, the likes of which can never be proved, or not proved in the light of rational intelligence, we are left with a serious problem. How can we ascertain what is true, or real, and what is not? By what criteria can we judge? How can we know for sure, that which cannot be known for sure?

When it comes to discussing matters of Lurianic metaphysics we are squarely in the seat of the unprovable. Therefore, faith in the subject matter becomes paramount, and takes the place of intelligence. Yet, herein lies another problem. For what happens

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when one intellectual view is embraced with unswerving faith, and then another intellectual view, possibly divergent, and contradictory to the first, is equally embraced by others with equal unswerving faith. What results is polarized camps of believers, who exclude, and often attack one another, each one convinced of the correctness of their actions.

When the mind is full of rigid beliefs, then there is no further room for additional insights. In other words, when the vessel is full, there is no room to fill it further. In application to human beings, this is a dangerous condition for any spiritual mind. In humans, this condition is the opposite of what the religious mind needs to be, and indeed the closed mind can never reach out (or within) to embrace, and experience the reality of God within. But our discussion must take us back to the dawn of consciousness, prior to the existence of anything human, as we discuss the “Awakening” of God.

The condition of existence, prior to its existence, when everything was just simple, and pure unending Light, is the state which the Lurianic Kabbalah calls the Ayn Sof. The Tzimtzum is the primordial contraction of Light from a point “in the Ayn Sof,” leaving an “empty space” into which the universe would be created. For how can there be a place for the universe to exist if every place is the primordial light of Ayn Sof?

This question make rational sense to the logical mind. But herein lies its flaw. We are not talking here about a physical universe that operates under the standards of modern, observable natural law. We are talking about a realm, a dimension, a level of reality which is far beyond any human comprehension even to imagine. So, how can we draw conclusions in a discussion about these things, what is, and what is not rational? At this level of discussion, nothing does, or does not make sense. There is no sense to be made of anything in these discussions. Therefore, any discussion, whatsoever, about this topic is considered to be a waste of time.

But is it really a waste of time? This all depends on how we look at the teaching about Tzimtzum, and whether we choose to understand its message within the realms of cosmological metaphysics, or perhaps in the realm of transpersonal, human psychology. Like I suggested above, metaphysical contemplation is a philosophical pursuit, which can not prove, or disprove anything. All such contemplation can lead to is to more contemplation, verbal discussions, and possible heated argument.

What if, however, instead of applying the teaching of Tzimtzum externally as it applies to the metaphysical cosmos, we instead apply its teachings internally to discuss the genesis of the creation of Mind, and Thought itself.? Now here is realm that we can

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explore. For Mind and Thought are part of each of us. So instead of gazing outside of ourselves for answers, we instead gaze within.

The unconscious part of the human mind reveals to its conscious counterpart many things about the true essence of human nature. Maybe Tzimtzum has a psychological component to it. Maybe indeed Tzimtzum happened in the Mind, in the first place, in the Mind of “God.” If this is indeed so, then we human beings, created in the Divine Image will discover the reality of the Tzimtzum, not out there in the external world, but rather within us, within the very recesses of the human mind, in that place where all Mind and Thought begin prior to its diversification into the countless number of individual souls, and separate soul/minds. If we wish to understand the Lurianic Kabbalah then we must first attempt to understand the individual minds of the men who taught it, Isaac Luria, and Hayim Vital.

With regards to the teachings of the Ari'zal in general, we must ask the question how exactly did R. Hayim Vital receive his information. Legend has it that the immortal prophet Elijah revealed these secret teachings to Luria, and then Luria transmitted them verbatim to Vital. This is the “official party line” of this school of Kabbalists. However, upon deeper investigation into the writings of Vital, we discover that the “party-line” is not exactly so.

Throughout Vital's writings we find him repeating two different things. One, he often questions what exactly did Luria teach him. In other words, Vital admits that there were sometimes, some things that he forgot. Second, Vital speaks about Luria coming to him in dreams long after his death. Essentially, the image of Luria taught Vital as he slept. In light of our modern insights into human psychology, we can rightfully inquire whether indeed, it was the spirit of the late Luria who spoke to Vital from Heaven, or perhaps it was just the psychological archetypal image of Luria within Vital's mind. Then again, who can really say if there is indeed a difference between these two in the first place.

One way or another, Vital records that Luria would teach him verbatim, and then Vital would learn these things anew from within his mind. It is this second, psychological circumstance which interests us. For if R. Vital could gaze within himself and see both his departed master, as well as images of the supernal worlds, and its intricate workings, then what works for one, can work for another. In other words, R. Vital's insights arose within his mind, but as the image of Luria represents, the insights did not originate in his mind. R. Vital was clearly tapped into something much deeper than mere philosophical speculations.

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We know from Vital's many works that he was a practitioner of the old schools of prophetic meditation. These schools taught one how to enter into a spiritual trance, the likes of which would make one conducive to receiving visions of psychological archetypal realities. What R. Vital was tapping into as he contemplated the Ayn Sof, Adam Kadmon, and the emanations of the worlds was the order of the evolution of the universe, true. But the universe that R. Vital contemplated was the universe as perceived by humanity. Therefore, the entire Lurianic system is a revelation of the cosmos, as the cosmos are perceived as emanating from the collective unconscious of the human race. This is the psychological reality, and why when we read the Lurianic teachings we attempt to understand them psychologically as they apply to each of us, for this is their true meaning, and intent.

So, when R. Vital contemplates the Ayn Sof, and visualizes the Tzimtzum, what archetypal reality was he gazing upon? Contemplating the beginning of everything, in human terms, would be a contemplation of the beginning of consciousness itself. Essentially, R. Vital gazed upon the beginning, when individual consciousness dawned, and began to individualize from the collective. While deep into this contemplative thought, needless to say, one's rational mind is not disconnected. Therefore, R. Vital gazes within, sees what he sees, and then tries to make sense of it all.

Prior to the existence of separation, there existed only unity, and wholeness, a singularity which defines Oneness. This primordial homogeneous state is what R. Vital calls the Ayn Sof, what he calls "Ohr Pashut," simple, undifferentiated Light. It is curious that he refers to this state of Light, and yet is so emphatic that this state is so far above any type of description that no word, letter, part of a letter, name or appellation can be applied to it. For R. Vital, the Ayn Sof is simply, "Ohr Pashut," undifferentiated Light.

Yet, by describing this state as a form of Light, what kind of Light is it, if and when there is nothing to be seen in its brightness? How bright then can the primordial Light be? From our present standards, we are so accustomed to refer to Light as something brilliant, blinding in its intensity, and if we were to ascribe a color to it, we would normally say, "white." But this Ayn Sof is not a Light by human measure or standards, it does not enlighten anything! If this Ohr Pashut of the Ayn Sof is to be associated with any kind of Light by human standards, maybe we should ascribe to it a "black Light."

Ascribe to the Ayn Sof a Light that conceals, not reveals, a Light which by nature shows uniformity, not one that would in any way highlight any existence of distinction, or difference. The primordial Light of Ayn Sof is not a physical Light, of the photon kind, that we know in modern science. The primordial Light was by our standards the opposite of everything that we know, and understand about Light. I refer to it as a

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“black Light,” or maybe better to refer to it as a “dark Light,” similar to the nature of what we presently call dark matter, and dark energy. Dark is the term used to describe what we do not see, and what we do not know. In relationship to consciousness, the dark Light of the Ayn Sof becomes clear to us as being the great collective unconscious, the source from which all comes, yet, a source whose very essence and nature remains a total mystery to all that has come forth from it.

The nature of the Ayn Sof can now be understood, but what about the act of Tzimtzum itself? Why must a “place” be created in order for individual consciousness to exist? R. Vital answers this question with, what for him, is a rational answer that makes sense in a literal world. He begins by stating, “there arose a Desire” in the Ayn Sof, “in its very center.” Needless to say, being that the Ayn Sof is everything, and everywhere, ascribing to it a center, from a physical point of view, must be totally arbitrary. After all, who can point to the center of infinity? This is why we understand this reference to a “center,” and a “Desire” to be completely symbolic, and metaphorical, with no relationship to space, or physical location.

There arose a Desire, but is not a desire a thing? Does not the existence of a desire indicate the equal existence of its opposite? If there is desire, let's say, to move, is there not an equal, or oppose desire, not to move? Something separates in consciousness to materialize as a “desire.” This creates the initial expression of division, and separation. And this is exactly what happens. For how can a desire manifest in a mind that is unconscious of itself? The mere existence of a desire identifies the dawn of consciousness. And in order for a conscious mind to manifest, it must first distinguish itself from the unconscious. In order for this to occur, a place of sorts must first exist, a “clean slate” of sorts, upon which the unconscious mind can “engrave” from itself, that which it desires. This is the birth of the conscious mind, which as we know from human birth, is a conscious clean slate, but at the same time, full of personality, awaiting to materialize as the infant matures, and grows.

The process of what we call the Seder HaHish'tal'shut, what I call the Order of Spiritual Evolution, is the process observed by R. Vital. What the Rabbi, and possibly Luria before him saw, was the birth and development of individual human consciousness, as it applied to humanity as a whole. This was perceived in the context of applying to all existence, and to God, because it is only through consciousness that any human can become aware of these things, or any thing. What R. Vital saw was a vision of the macrocosm as seen through the microcosm, for nothing outside the microcosm can be seen other than through itself, for only in itself does perception exist.

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The details of R. Vital's description of the Tzimtzum reinforces this psychological understanding of the process. Therefore, one should not look to the Tzimtzum and seek to interpret it as referring to the cosmos, and to the universe outside, surrounding us. For what can we possibly know about the universe surrounding us other than through the medium of the conscious mind that perceives it? And who can say that our present perceptions of reality are, in any ways, correct? When we realize the existence of such things as dark matter, and dark energy, and that these make up the vast, vast, majority of the physical universe around us, then we have no choice but to conclude that what we know about the universe surround us is infinitesimally small.

The unconscious surrounds us, and binds us together. It is the boundary between, what for us differentiates the definition of “something,” from “nothing.” Here is the dawn of creation, the dawn of consciousness, long before self perception evolved into being. For consciousness itself must exist, before one can become aware of one's consciousness. That which follows in R. Vital's order is the evolution of consciousness, and the process, which in psychology we call individuation. Essentially, R. Vital's system is a psychoanalysis of the evolution of consciousness in collective humanity, and then by comparison, to God Itself. For at this stage of Divine manifestation, God is neither “He,” nor “She,” and should be referred to in the neutral gender, as an “It.”

The important message to extract from the lesson of the Tzimtzum is that for consciousness to materialize there must first be a “place” for it to exist. While this place is not a physical one, it is a psychological one. When the primordial Desire arose for the Ayn Sof to be called by its many Names, we must remember that at this point these names did not exist, and neither did the thought of them exist. The Ayn Sof is above thought, it is unconscious. Thought requires consciousness, and consciousness did not yet exist. Although there was not thought, there was a Desire. Yet, this Desire was still in the unconscious.

R. Vital describes the forming of this Desire to be in the very center of the Ayn Sof, yet, as we have already pointed out, how can one determine the center of infinity? This cannot be done, and therefore, this center is certainly no point of proximity of location. The center of the Ayn Sof is essentially not a location, but a purpose. Even the Ayn Sof has a purpose, although that purpose is unconscious. The first step then in materializing purpose is to focus Desire on the yet unmanifest purpose, enabling it to start to take form. This is how consciousness takes form. For each individual consciousness, materialized in each sentient being, is a separate and unique Desire coming to fruition. As we see and know from the reality around us, no two individuals are alike. No two people, no matter how similar, want exactly the same things to the point of the loss of individual identity.

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Essentially, the act of Tzimtzum begins creation. Technically, we should not say that it begins existence, for the Ayn Sof does exist prior to the Tzimtzum, however, there is no one, or no thing, to be consciously aware of the existence of the Ayn Sof. So, if no one is there to know of it, can we say that it exists anyway?

The Ayn Sof is itself Ohr Pashut, simple, unadulterated Light. Prior to the Tzimtzum, it was completely unaware of Itself. So how can we ascribe existence to that which doesn't even know It, Itself exists? This brings us into the conundrum known today in Quantum Physics. Perception defines reality. If there is no perception of the Ayn Sof, not by Itself, and certainly not by any other, than indeed, does it truly exist? If not for the primordial Desire, we might never have known. This is why throughout Jewish and other ancient western philosophies, the Ayn Sof was always referred to as the "Matzui Rishon," the First Presence, from which all else would come forth.

The lesson of Tzimtzum also contains other relevant, down-to-earth psychological messages. The following ideas are expressed by Dr. Mordechai Rotenberg in his book, "The Psychology of Tzimtzum" (Magid Books 2015). This is non-Kabbalistic psychological text outlining a system of therapy based upon the author's understanding of Tzimtzum.

"Tzimtzum – An entities willingness to contract itself in order to make room for others."

The Psychology of Tzimtzum by Dr. Mordechai Rotenberg (Magid Books, 2015, page 124)

"Tzimtzum generates the possibility of awareness of change, an awareness that does not reconstruct a previous situation but rather aspires a new one. In light of the tendency of religions to encourage people to emulate God (imitatio Dei), this concept of God self-contracting could lead to an ideal model for human beings, according to which they contact themselves, while simultaneously giving to others, thereby mirroring God's creation of the world."

The Psychology of Tzimtzum by Dr. Mordechai Rotenberg (Magid Books, 2015, page 3)

Analyzing the First "Light"

The Relationship of the Igulim, and the Yosher

From the beginning, we again delve into elaborate metaphors, the likes of which were visualized in the minds of Isaac Luria, and Hayim Vital.

Out of the Nothing of the Ayn Sof comes a thin beam of Light. This Light fills the empty space created by the Tzimtzum, but doesn't fill it fully. There is still space left between

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the Nothing outside, and the now something inside. We have the dawn of precognitive consciousness. This state, although presently unconscious to itself, is nevertheless aware, and charged with purpose. It is the seed from which all else will grow. It itself is not yet self-aware, therefore it cannot yet be called “mind.” The Kabbalists came up with an innovative description, and called this seed level of consciousness, the Crown, (Keter) that sits on top of the head. This Keter/Crown was also called the Supernal Will (Ra'avah Ila'ah), and given a special name, Adam Kadmon, Primordial Man.

Now, it must be remembered that Kabbalistic literature is inundated with highly cryptic metaphorical terminologies. A mere reading of the words in the texts will offer no clue as to what they actually mean. Although the Lurianic system of 16th century Safed is the crown of this metaphorical literature, its main redactor, Hayim Vital, even when stating that he is writing abstract concepts in a way to make them intellectually accessible, nevertheless may not have realized that even his best efforts to emphasize the symbolic nature of his writings, for the most part fell of deaf ears in later generations. Very few, then and now, actually pay attention to the symbolic state of Kabbalistic terminology, and this, of course, is the reason, why most who engage the literature, even many Kabbalists, fail to grasp its actual intent, and meaning. Apparently, Kabbalistic teachings remain closed, even when written down. There still remains a healthy, and concealed oral tradition of instruction, without which the written word remains forever misunderstood, and concealed, even to the so-called Kabbalists.

Luria, and Vital both, like the authors of Zoharic literature before them, did not simply make-up out of thin air the ideas and beliefs that their literature presents. In spite of Orthodox dogma, these authors were most likely not taught by Heavenly masters who descended to Earth in order to provide instruction, at least not by Heavenly masters who would take on physical form.

If Heavenly masters were indeed involved, be it the prophet Elijah, the angel Metatron, or anyone else, then these masters would have appeared as images and visions in the mind of the individual. These very well might have been formalized archetypes of the collective unconscious, taking shape in the individual mind in accordance to the thought parameters, and limitations of the individual seeking such vision and revelation.

Whether a vision of a Heavenly master is merely a figment of one's imagination, or an actual telepathic close encounter with an extraterrestrial being may not be so different from one another, in spite of how such a contradiction might sound to the inexperienced mind. Luria, Vital, and others certainly received insight from somewhere beyond limited conscious imagination. With Vital specifically, because we have such a large body of his literature, we cannot only learn about what he thought, but we can actually

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piece together how his thoughts must have come to him. From this insight, we can extrapolate just what was the source of his insights, and then understand better what it was he was really looking at.

With this being said, let us turn back to the idea of an Adam Kadmon. Let us review what is taught about it, and then endeavor to analyze these lessons in light of human psychology.

Hayim Vital describes the return of the primordial Light of the Ayn Sof into the vacated space (called the halal), in two different ways. At first the Light emanates back into the halal in the form of concentric spheres. At the same time, the Light also emanates back into the halal in the form of columns, three in number, right, left, and center. It is this form of columns, that construct the Sefirotic Tree of Life, which is said to be the primordial pattern of Man, thus Adam Kadmon.

Vital states that almost all of the Zohar, and almost everything that he will continue to describe has to do with the Light of these columns, as opposed to the Light of the spheres. While most who read these concepts in the original Lurianic texts simply accept, and embrace them, very few see the significance of what this insight says about the parameters of Kabbalah. Let us discuss the nature of these two forms of primordial Light that take up the halal, and form the Adam Kadmon.

In Hebrew, the concentric spheres are called the Igulim, and the columns are called the Yosher. Igulim are the concentric spheres of primordial Light that reemerge into the primordial cavity to fill it again, almost. Vital states that the Light enters and fills almost all. A lip of sorts is left vacant so as to distinguish between the Light in the halal, and the Light outside it. For physical logic would dictate that if the entire empty halal was refilled to its brim with the Light taken out from it, we would find the original state restored with absolutely no difference. From the point of view of physical physics this would make total sense, and in spite of however abstract Vital tends to be, his rational mind always seems to place parameters on the visions of his imaginative insights. Again, this is case in point of the lesson taught by Maimonides, and others that all prophecy, divine inspiration, and heavenly communication all come into the individual mind in the form of vivid imagery, which is unique to the person experiencing them. It is no wonder then that Vital's contemplations, and visions follow the natural, human psychological order.

The concentric spheres of the Igulim are the primordial forms of that which will also later become known as the Ten Sefirot. The Sefirot are emanations of God's Light, and serve as vessels, or tools, through which the original Light of the Ayn Sof can finally take

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some semblance of definition that will eventually lead to the fulfillment of the purpose of this entire exercise, that being for God to be called by “His Names,” in other words for the process of Divine Individuation to occur.

The Igulim are said to emanate with a dual Light, an inner Light (Ohr Penimi), and a surrounding Aura (Ohr Makif). Even at this stage, Light is dual in both nature, and purpose. Inner Light in this context would mean consciousness, and Surrounding Light would mean the subconscious. This dual nature is to be expected, for it, itself reflects the greater dual relationship between the Ayn Sof, and the all the Light within the halal. The Light in the halal is the growing consciousness of the Ayn Sof, whereas the Ayn Sof itself serves as the subconscious, or unconscious of the Creator. This dual nature of Mind, above and below is a pattern repeated at all levels of emanation. In its own way, this dual nature is what gave rise to the Igulim, and the Yosher. As we shall see, the Yosher will form a deeper level of consciousness, within context to the Igulim.

The Igulim, one concentric circle within another, Ohr Penimi, and Ohr Makif, indicates how the Light of God permeates all reality, and how the closer we return to the Source (the Ayn Sof), the greater the nature of the Light. Yet, just what this Light is, or what is its purpose is never fully explained independently of the second parallel form of Light, called Yosher, the Columns. The Igulim are the general pattern of existence, yet aside from existence itself there is a second context to it, this second context can be rightly called the birth of consciousness.

The Yosher columns, Vital says take the form of a “Man.” Again, Vital is highly metaphorical, and will continue to discuss this Man, and his body, using terms that sound so highly anthropomorphic, yet which are totally the opposite. The Yosher columns form the pattern of the Ten Sefirot which is the primordial blueprint for the kernel of consciousness, the manifestation of which is yet to come. The Yosher form of Light, therefore speaks to the reality of sentience, human consciousness, and consciousness in general, be it found in humanity, or elsewhere.

As the Yosher forms the primordial Man, the Igulim form the primordial world. Thus we have from the beginning the distinction between man, and his world, or better to say, internal reality (Yosher), and external reality (Igulim). By seeing two distinct forms of the emanation of Divine Light, Vital was visualizing the clear distinction, experienced by him, of the difference between the internal way of man, and the external way of nature (the natural world).

Yosher is the form of “Man.” This primordial Man, Adam Kadmon is the complete archetype of collective humanity. It consists of all the integral parts that encompass the

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human experience. These integral parts of greater Man (humanity) are represented by the archetypal symbol of the Ten Sefirot/Tree of Life. As Vital points out clearly, there is a significant difference between the Ten Igulim (which represent nature), and the Ten Sefirot, which represent Man.

Nevertheless, these two, Igulim and Yosher are merely two different dimensional perceptions of the same reality, this being the Light of the Ayn Sof filling the halal that was created to receive it. The two forms which lead to the manifestation of God (God being called by His Names), are later represented as the two primary forces in the universe, the positive/negative, male/female, or yin/yang.

In Kabbalah, based upon Biblical references, this dichotomy is represented by the two Names of God, Elohim and YHWH. Elohim represents the Igulim, natural form of Light. This is also referred to as Din, severity. YHWH represents the Yosher, the form of Light found in Man. This is also referred to as Hesed, mercy. Yet, even these two symbols Din and Hesed encompass far more than their mere names suggest. Although we are given a presentation of the appearance of a duality between the Igulim and Yosher, we must remember that we are dealing with symbols, and metaphors. The two, Igulim and Yosher are considered one and the same Light, they differ only from the point of perspective.

Another metaphor that Vital uses to describe the relationship of the Igulim to the Yosher is that of the two lower parts of the evolving (to be) five-part soul. The Light of the Igulim is the Nefesh level of soul, whereas the Yosher is the Ruah level of soul. Again, this association reinforces the associations already mentioned above. Nefesh is the level of soul that corresponds to Malkhut, the lowest Sefirah, which itself corresponds to the physical world. Ruah is the level of soul that corresponds to the six Sefirot, that make up the sefirotic construct (Partzuf) known as Zeir Anpin. It is this construct which serves as the archetype for Man. Therefore, to make this association with the primordial Man (Adam Kadmon) is only appropriate.

Aside from associations, we must acknowledge that the introduction of “soul” here also indicates the introduction of sentience, for that is what any reference to “soul” indicates. Based on ancient Greek philosophy, the Kabbalah believes that everything has a soul, even inanimate object, have the most rudimentary soul, Nefesh. It is here that the Nefesh is first materialized. Essentially, Vital is saying that existence itself, the first manifestation of the Light of the Infinite (Ayn Sof) manifests a life-force, from which everything else will come forth.

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This essential life-force, the Nefesh soul, acts in conjunction with, and compliment to the Light of the Adam Kadmon, the next highest soul level Ruah. The Ruah level of soul is higher than the Nefesh level in consciousness, and sentience. The two thus interact together in that unique relationship described above. What we have here is the beginning of what will later materialize as the relationship of inner and outer worlds, or internally as the relationship between body and soul. This is the fundamental origins of human perception, and thus this origin is projected here as being the first manifestation of Divine Light in all existence. From the perspective of human consciousness, and sentience, this is indeed so.

Vital, and possibly Luria before him were practitioners of contemplative meditation. They would study a topic of metaphysics, usually from the Zohar, and then sit back and think about it. In this deep state of contemplation, they would go into a state of altered consciousness, maybe similar to a trance, but not necessarily into a dream state. In this mind-set they would have inner visions, and insight into the nature of that which they contemplated.

As mentioned above, these deep states may indeed have included visualizations of perceived heavenly masters either dialoging with them, or actually showing them images of the thing that they would later write down. We have the record of what Vital wrote down, be they the teachings he received from Luria, or from what he believed to be Luria's spirit, after Luria had died.

We have the record. But Vital was not one for elaborating exactly what he meant with his overwhelmingly intricate use of metaphors. Granted, he does often repeat that he writes in symbolic fashion to make otherwise sublime spiritual truths understandable to our mere, mortal minds. Yet, he never really explains exactly what all his metaphors mean.

This has led to many generations of Kabbalists, who read, and study his works to take his lessons literally and to conclude that all discussions about the halal, the primordial Light, Adam Kadmon, and the proceeding world as all literal facts, describing external reality. This school of Kabbalah study is very popular and predominant today. And it is as misguided, and misdirected, and misguidance, and misdirection can be.

To gaze inside, and to think that external reality must conform to one's internal reality is the height of narcissism. Vital, and Luria before him certainly never made this error. Unfortunately for many who came after them, they were not so fortunate. Kabbalistic teachings are called the Mashal in Hebrew, which means the example. Yet, for every Mashal, there must also be its Nimshal, which is the explanation and meaning of the

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example given. Looking to an example without understand to what it is referring, is to misunderstand the example altogether. This is what happens when Vital's teachings are not understood as the Nimshal that they are.

The Igulim and Yosher are primordial psychological constructs that lay the foundation of how all of human perception, and consciousness will proceed to unravel. The Igulim are the example of the external world, and Vital clearly taught, we rarely deal with the Igulim. In other words, Kabbalistic pursuits are not in the realm of the Igulim, the external world. The external world is the realm of nature, and is therefore subject to scientific investigation. This was beyond Vital's scope. The internal world (Yosher) is the realm of man, the exploration of human consciousness, and perception. This is Vital's domain, and thus the domain of the Kabbalah, the domain which we shall continue to explore in its proper way: psychologically.

Analyzing the Name YHWH

The Four Forms of the Active Divine, and their Relationship to Human Psychology

The imaginative mind of Hayim Vital was prolific in its originality. Vital embraces numerous Zoharic metaphors, and embellished them with meanings all his own. While most are inadequate for this endeavor, Vital rose to the occasion, and we see that the results of his efforts have become the standard of all later Kabbalah. Yet again, we must never read Vital at face value, or interpret him in any literal way. Vital has a wise “method to his madness,” and careful study of what he said, and how he said it reveals to his readers many profound truths about human nature, as well as Vital cosmological vision of the world.

The central archetype found throughout Vital's writings is the Sefirotic (Partzuf) of the “Small Face of God,” called Zeir Anpin. This Small Face of God will be discussed in its appropriate details in its proper place. I mention it here to introduce us to the concept hinted to in the Biblical verse that states, “you are the children of YHWH, your God” (Deut. 14:1). Humanity is called God's children. Yet, specifically we are the children of the Name, YHWH.

YHWH is the Name of God that represents the Divine Presence, the Active Being everywhere. Human consciousness, (as metaphorically portrayed by the Biblical Adam), was originally said to encompass the entire universe “from one end to another.” This metaphor means that the extent of human consciousness is limitless. This is how Adam was, and how humanity can potentially be.

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YHWH, and Adam (humanity), form the macrocosm/microcosm relationship. As such all that which is to be found in God's manifestation is also to be found in Adam (humanity). This does not mean that man is God, or that man is equal to God. One cannot compare a microscopic fragment to the entire whole. Nevertheless, a single strand of DNA does include within it, everything that the final form of being will become.

The YHWH/Adam relationship throughout Lurianic literature is most profound, and most definitely needs to be understood exclusively within psychological parameters, or otherwise a literal reading of Vital might lead one to the conclusion that renders an image about humanity that is terribly, and falsely aggrandized.

Vital seeks to explain to his readers how the name YHWH is more of a formula for the intricate interactions, and operations that happen within God, and thus by definition also in the microcosm, Adam/humanity. Each letter of the name YHWH is aligned with certain associations, both within the world at large, through the symbolism called TaN'T'O, and within Adam/humanity, the microcosm, through its relationship with the subdivisions of the God Image (macrocosm), which are called AS'MaB.

Now we begin our analysis of the technical terms that Luria, and Vital, developed to help make sense of the complicated spiritual universe that they envisioned.

First, let us quickly review the name YHWH and what it actually means. It is known from the Bible that God is One, and that "He" has no form, nor semblance of form, and no body whatsoever. Making any kind of image of God is considered forbidden, and a sin. God is the ultimate abstract. This abstraction is even understood when analyzing God's name, YHWH.

The name YHWH is actually a conjugated verb, instead of a proper noun, indicating a proper name. The word YHWH is built upon the Hebrew verb root HWH (hoveh), which is the present tense of the verb, "to be." Essentially, HWH means, "being." When the letter Yod is added to a Hebrew base verb, the tense is changed from the passive to the active. Thus YHWH would mean, "active being," or "being in action," or any similar terms we could use to describe the same reality. Essentially, YHWH means the active, real, living presence (being) of the universe. This is a rather abstract concept, and helps to explain why God is considered an abstract being, if we can say that God is any kind of "being," at all.

YHWH is the greatest metaphor to represent the Known of the Divine that emanates from the Unknown of the Divine, the Ayn Sof. It contains all things. It contains the Ten

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Sefirot. It is perceived through the general Five Sefirotic Faces (Partzufim). The name YHWH is considered the grand formula that includes within it all the levels of being. This is true as it applies to God, and this is equally true as it applies to the microcosm, Adam/humanity. Therefore, each letter of the name YHWH is assigned further applications of demarcation, that represent the multiple levels within humanity, and by way of transference, the multiple levels within God.

As the name of God is assigned individual demarcations to express the internal reality of things, so too are the forms that make up external things. These external things, which make up the form and structure of everything in creation, are symbolically the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. As the name of God is divided into the letters YHWH, each with their separate meanings, so too letters in general are viewed as having four different aspects to them.

Kabbalistic terminology begins here. Each term is a metaphorical representation of an abstract psychological, and sometimes cosmological reality. Without understanding what each Kabbalistic term actually refers to will lead one to totally misunderstanding the teachings of Kabbalah in general. We begin with an understanding of the name YHWH, we continue to analyze the structure of letters, and then we will tie them all together, and conclude with a nice package of Kabbalistic terminologies well understood.

The name YHWH is the revealed Presence of the Ayn Sof in creation. As such, it represents all the Ten Sefirot of the Yosher form. In his writings Vital also introduces at this point the concept of the Sefirotic Faces (Partzufim), that represent the Ten Sefirot in a set of five distinct perceptions, or groups. The groups are groups of Sefirot, divided in accordance to their function. The perception is how each group is perceived to function, thus the title Partzuf, which means both a face, and a mask. The Partzuf is the mask, the "Face" of God that is concealed within a specific activity. Before we analyze the name YHWH, we must first elaborate, and briefly discuss the five general Partzufim, and their sefirotic correlations.

The five sefirotic Partzufim received their names from concepts originally discussed in the Zohar. There are five general Partzufim subdivide into twelve. A discussion of these twelve go beyond our present concerns so while I mention their existence here in passing, we do not need to elaborate on them at this time.

The five general Partzufim are called:

1. Arikh Anpin (the Long Face of God), corresponding to the sefirah Keter (crown);
2. Abba (Father), corresponding to the sefirah Hokhma (wisdom);

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3. Imma (Mother), corresponding to the sefirah Binah (understanding);
4. Zeir Anpin (the Short Face of God), corresponding to the six sefirot Hesed (mercy), Gevurah (severity), Tiferet (beauty), Netzah (victory), Hod (glory), and Yesod (foundation), and finally,
5. Nok D'ZA (the Feminine of Zeir Anpin), corresponding to Malkhut (Kingdom).

These five symbolic Faces include within them the different levels of human experience and perception, for as it is in YHWH above, so too is it in Adam/humanity (YHWH below).

All these sefirotic Faces are individual perceptions of the Divine as perceived by the human mind. Each represents an aspect of the Active Being according to levels of ascending, and/or descending sentience. We will continue to elaborate our terminologies here, and apply them psychology as is our intent, however, we will have to wait until another lesson to digress to explore the concepts underlying Partzufim, this being the concept, and idea of just what are sefirot.

The exact nature of sefirot need to be understood in conjunction with Partzufim, in order for the Partzufim to be completely understandable. So, first, let us lay out the terms, and their associations, and in another lesson we will discuss in greater detail the separate intelligences that we call sefirot, and some of the alternate definitions ascribed to them by Kabbalists. Now, let us return to our topic at hand.

The name YHWH is a general archetype, meaning Active Being. Active Being would also generally mean, Universal Sentient Consciousness/Will. As such, in the microcosm Man (Adam/humanity), YHWH equally refers to consciousness. Yet, within Man there are various grades of consciousness (corresponding to the Sefirot/Partzufim). These grades are generally four, which are five.

Arikh Anpin refers to Keter consciousness, but this is a bit of a oxymoron. For Keter, like a crown upon the head, is not an actual part of consciousness. Rather it is the source of consciousness, better fitting to be referred to as the Collective Unconscious, or the Active Intellect, transcending the individual. In Lurianic terms, this level of consciousness is so sublime that there is no letter in God's name that can include it. Therefore, it is represented as being the tip of the letter Yod. Yod, as we shall see relates to the next sefirah, level of consciousness called Hokhma.

The letter Yod is associated with the sefirah Hokhma. Hokhma consciousness is a metaphor for the imaginative, image-based thought processes that emanate from the unconscious mind.

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The letter Hey is associated with the sefirah Binah. Binah consciousness is a metaphor for the rational, intellectual thought process that is created by the conscious mind.

The letter Vav (actually Waw, with a W instead of a V) is associated with the six sefirot that relate to the sefirotic Face, Zeir Anpin. In brief, instead of always having to list the six sefirot, they are referred to by the capital letters of their individual names, thus the six are called HaGaT, NaHiY. HaGaT NaHiY consciousness is a metaphor for the emotion processes, and human feelings. Consciousness at this level is felt instead of thought.

Finally, there is the final letter Hey which is associated with the sefirah Malkhut. Malkhut consciousness is a metaphor for mundane, everyday, mechanical thought, the likes of which fill the minds and lives of most people. So, in summary the name YHWH represents four levels of consciousness, corresponding to the four individual letters of the name.

Referring to one level or another can be rather confusing, therefore, Luria, and Vital developed a code system to distinguish between the levels of consciousness. Since each level is metaphorically represented by a individual letter of the name YHWH, the four levels are each considered to be a manifestation of of the whole name YHWH. In order to differentiate between the levels, the name YHWH became subject to numerical manipulations, based upon spelling out in letters, the letters of the name YHWH itself. In this way we have four different versions of the name YHWH, one for each of the four levels of consciousness that we have outlined.

To understand how we can have four different versions of the name YHWH, we must understand that the individual letters that spell the name Yod, Hey, Vav, Hey can each be spelled out in different ways. Spelling the individual letters in different ways becomes the code that distinguishes the specific levels of the name YHWH.

The letter Yod is always spelled the same with the spelling Yod Vav Dalet. Also, the individual spellings have applied to them their numerical value, based on the standard system of Jewish numerology, gematria. Yod, spelled Yod, Vav Dalet, has the numerical value of twenty (20), whereas the letter Yod by itself is only ten (10). The letter Hey can be written in three different ways. Hey can be spelled Hey Yod (numerical value 15), Hey Alef numerical value 6), or Hey Hey (numerical value 10). Vav can be spelled Vav Yod Vav (numerical value 22), Vav Alef Vav (numerical value 13), or Vav Vav (numerical value 12).

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To differentiate the name YHWH between the four Partzufim Hokhma/Abba, Binah/Imma, HaGaT NaHiY/Zeir Anpin and Malkhut/Nok, we spell the names in the following fashion.

1. Yod Vav Dalet, Hey Yod, Vav Yod Vav, Hey Yod (numerical value 72). In Hebrew, 72 is spelled with the two Hebrew letters, Ayin-Bet. Together they are pronounced AB. This is the symbolic name used to represent the Hokhma/Abba level. In relationship to the four worlds (which will be analyzed at a future date), this name AB refers to the world of Atzilut. As we have already learned, within the human context, the name AB refers to the unconscious level of the mind. This is the archetypal domain of concealment, wherein which resides the Presence of the Creator. Atzilut is not a world that exists outside of the greater collective unconscious.
2. Yod Vav Dalet, Hey Yod, Vav Alef Vav, Hey Yod (numerical value 63). In Hebrew, 63 is spelled with the two letters Samekh-Gimel. Together they are pronounced SAG. This is the symbolic name used to represent the Binah/Imma level. In relationship to the four worlds, this name SAG refers to the world, Beriah. Within the human context, the name SAG refers to the conscious mind of rational thought. Being that both AB and SAG refer to the domains within the human mind, together they are called Mohin (brains, thought). The only difference in spelling between the two is in the letter Vav, where the middle letter Yod is switched for an Alef. This provides a practical difference between the two names, and two modes of mind, conscious, and unconscious. By using the Alef in the Vav, this metaphor also hints to a relationship with what follows.
3. Yod Vav Dalet, Hey Alef, Vav Alef Vav, Hey Alef (numerical value 45). In Hebrew, 45 is spelled with the two letters Mem-Hey. Together they are pronounced MAH. This is the symbolic name used to represent the HaGaT NaHiY/Zeir Anpin level. In relationship to the four worlds, this name MAH refers to the world, Yetzirah. Within the human context, the name MAH refers to realm of human emotions. Being that human emotions, unlike clear, rational thought, is always subject to mood swings, this level is represented by six sefirot, which express the complexity, and fluidity of human emotion. The name of God generally associated here is YHWH. It is this name MAH, which has the same numerical value as the Hebrew word Adam, which means Man. Zeir Anpin, is said to be the heart of the sefirot. The upper sefirot flow into him, and he gives life to that below him. Zeir Anpin is consider the center of the sefirotic tree, and the central sefirotic Face (Partzuf). As I mentioned above Zeir Anpin (the Small Face), which is God revealed in creation (as opposed to Arikh Anpin, the Face of God concealed from creation) is the name of God YHWH. Zeir is also MAH, and MAH is also Man, thus we see the unique relationship between MAH (God) above, and MAH (Man) below. Nowhere

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more that here do we have such clarity showing the essential psychological nature of the Lurianic system.

4. Yod Vav Dalet, Hey Hey, Vav Vav, Hey Hey (numerical value 52). In Hebrew, 52 is spelled with the two letters Bet-Nun. Together they are pronounced BEN. This is the symbolic name used to represent the Malkhut/Nok level. In relationship to the four worlds, this name BEN refers to the world, Asiyah. Within the human context, the name BEN refers to realm of human form, body, and physicality. BEN is called the NOK (the feminine mate of ZA). The relationship between ZA and NOK is always referred to with intimate/sexual terminology. However, one should not make the mistake to consider this discussion to be anything cosmological, or metaphysical. ZA represents the human heart and soul, while NOK represents the human form, and body. The unity of ZA and NOK, continuously mentioned throughout Kabbalistic prayers as the unity between the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Shekhina, is actually a metaphor calling for the unity of one's own personal body, and soul. This then is the crux and focus of almost all Kabbalistic activity.

The unity of the Partzufim of ZA and NOK, also referred to as the union of MAH and BEN is one of the central themes throughout the Luria/Vital system. Understanding that the call for unity of ZA and NOK, MAH and BEN is actually a call to consciousness is vital to understanding, and more so practicing Kabbalah.

The unity of soul with body enables the body to fully actualize all the multiple potentials concealed within the soul. The body gives the soul a vessel, and a vehicle through which to manifest. Essentially, this was the original purpose of the formation of the primordial Halal space. The relationship of the Ayn Sof and the Adam Kadmon are simply the highest representation of this MAH and BEN relationship. The Ayn Sof/Adam Kadmon relationship refers to the potential ideal, whereas the lower MAH/BEN relationship refers to the ideal made manifest.

To assist in review of the terminologies and concepts discussed herein I have created for your convenience the following chart.



The Correlations of the "TaNT'O" and "A'S'Ma'B" Metaphors and Symbolisms			
Based on Hayim Vital's System, as Recorded in his Book, Oztrot Hayim, Sha'ar TaNTO, Chapter 1			
Realm 1	Realm 2	Realm 3	Realm 4
Ta'amim-Cantellations (Music)	Nikudot-Vowels (Pronunciations)	Tagin-Crowns (Moralistic Interpretations)	Otiyot-Letters (Forms, Literal Meanings)
Name: AB-72	Name: SAG-63	Name: MAH-45	Name: BEN-52
Spelling: Yod Vav Dalet, Hey Yod, Vav Yod Vav, Hey Yod	Spelling: Yod Vav Dalet, Hey Yod, Vav ALEF Vav, Hey Yod	Spelling: Yod Vav Dalet, Hey ALEF, Vav ALEF Vav, Hey ALEF	Spelling: Yod Vav Dalet, Hey Hey, Vav Vav, Hey Hey
יוד וי וי וי	יוד וי ואו וי	יוד וי ואו וי	יוד וי וי וי
Unconscious Mind	Conscious Mind	Emotional Realm	Physical Form
Sefirah Hokhma	Sefirah Binah	Six Sefirot HaGaT NaHiY	Sefirah Malkhut
World: Atzilut	World: Beriah	World: Yetzirah	World: Asiyah
Sefirotic Face (Partzuf): Abba	Sefirotic Face (Partzuf): Imma	Sefirotic Face (Partzuf): Zeir Anpin (ZA)	Sefirotic Face (Partzuf): Nok

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Analyzing the Sefirot

Defining the Idea of "Divine" Emanations

When one comes to the study of Lurianic Kabbalah, one cannot enter as a novice student. As my own teacher taught me years ago, one must know Kabbalah in order to properly study Kabbalah. Essentially, the first time that one makes the rounds through Kabbalistic literature, one walks away with a lot of knowledge, but at the same time, very little understanding as to what all that knowledge actually means. Unfortunately, most today who come to study Kabbalah memorize well what they learn, and think that that what they have learned the first time around is all that there is to the study of Kabbalah.

Such superficial, literal understandings of Kabbalah is what we call its facade, the pshat (surface) of Kabbalah, the pshat (surface) of sod (depth), but certainly not its true essence. While the pshat of sod (the facade of Kabbalah) proliferates, the true essence of Kabbalah (the sod of sod, its true depths) is grasped by next to none. Today, only a rare handful delve deep enough to make the necessary connections that enables one to properly understand, and to implement the entire Kabbalistic system. Today, there are many students of Kabbalah, but few "graduates." Many study Kabbalah, but very few know how to practice it, at least to practice it in the proper way.

Hayim Vital never wrote anything for total beginners. True, Vital does address some of his works to those whom he calls beginners. Yet, Vital's definition of beginner is far beyond one who has had no previous exposure to Kabbalah, at all. Certain basic

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concepts, essential for understanding Kabbalah are very rarely discussed by Vital, and even when he does approach the topics, he does so only briefly.

Previously we addressed the topic of the name YHWH, and described both it, and its four-fold expression A'S'Ma'B. We associated the name to different sefirot, and different olamot (worlds), yet we did not, at that time, pause to actually discuss what exactly are sefirot, and what exactly are worlds.

Before we proceed to analyze any more of Vital's Lurianic teachings, we must take a step back to analyze the basic concepts of sefirot, and olamot. Today, these terms are usually given easy and simple definitions, and then the student is left to his own devices to piece together the rest. I have long felt that this approach is partly responsible for the wide-spread misunderstanding of Kabbalah in our days. Therefore, let us turn our discussion to the topic of sefirot, and olamot. Let us discuss what they are in actuality, and recognize their rightful place within the human psyche.

Before I begin this endeavor, let me remind my reader that I myself many years ago wrote a rather descriptive essay describing the sefirot, their relations to God, and to one another. I elaborated the whole system in a condensed, easy to understand form. At that time, I also elaborated on the olamot (worlds). I will attach that essay to the end of this one so that our study on this topic can be comprehensive. I have no need here to repeat what I have have written there (as you shall soon see). Here I will elaborate other topics, and important information that I did not include in my review of the sefirot and olamot from the “orthodox” perspective.

Today one has numerous resources that can be used for research. One can investigate the word “sefirot,” and discover a wealth of information about them. If one pays careful attention to the information publicly provided, one may start to ask more questions than the public information answers.

The most popular definition of sefirot, is that they are the Divine emanations of God, and that these ten (in number) Divine emanations are the bridge that connect the Infinite God to His finite creation. This definition sounds simple, and straightforward enough. Yet, how many stop, pause and think, just what exactly is an “emanation.” We say that it comes from God, but where exactly is the Source, and what exactly is this Source? How exactly does these sefirot emanate into creation, and what is their exact role in creation?

Are the sefirot created by God, or are they part of God? Now, this last question is very important. For if the sefirot are part of God, how then are we to understand God's

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essential unity in light of their being parts thereof? Also, if the sefirot are indeed, part(s) of God, then is it right to directly address a single sefirah in prayer? Is praying to the sefirot not the same as praying to God? All these questions, and more, have been raised over the previous centuries, and understanding both the questions, and their answers is vital to understanding Kabbalah.

It may come as a surprise to many students of the Kabbalah, but the original idea about Divine emanations does not have its source in the Kabbalah. The Divine emanations do not even have their source in Judaism. The original source that discusses Divine emanations is Greek philosophy, specifically the teachings of Plato, Aristotle, and the later Neo-Platonists.

It was the ideas of these schools of Greek philosophers that were adopted by Rabbinic Jewish thinkers, who later applied them within a Torah context. The reason why they did this is clear, and is even suggested so in the Talmud. The Rabbinic Sages recognized the wisdom of the Greeks as having significant value.

The validity of this history is so well documented in writing that no amount of later religious revisionism can erase this truth. The concept of Divine emanations developed to explain how the infinite detached God could have contact, and interaction with a finite world. Needless to say the ideas discussed by the Greek philosophers did not coincide exactly with the Judaic views of their day. This is why the Sages adopted the views that they viewed as correct, and altered them to fit the model of the Torah. From this was born the concept of Divine emanations as expressions of YHWH, God of Israel.

Originally, the Greek philosophers addressed the issue of how what they called the First Cause could have given rise to the physical world that we know. Their understanding of the First Cause is that it is so abstract and disconnected from anything physical that to think that physicality could come forth from it posed a serious philosophical dilemma. They proposed that the First Cause led to a second cause, and then a third. Eventually, the pattern of the Ideal was established, which would then serve as the blueprint for everything else to follow. The Ideal pattern became the Demiurge, and the Demiurge became the Creator of the physical universe.

Anyone with Kabbalistic knowledge will recognize that the abstractness of the First Cause spoken of by the Greeks, and even adopted by Maimonides in his code, the Mishneh Torah, is also adopted by the Kabbalists, and called by them, the Ayn Sof. The Demiurge can easily be thought of as the Kabbalistic world of Atzilut (according to Vital's description of it), and associated both with the name YHWH, and the concept of the Sefirotic Face (Partzuf) of Zeir Anpin.

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It is clear from a thorough reading of Vital's works, specifically certain parts of his Etz Hayim, that he, (like many Kabbalists before him), readily adopted Greek philosophical concepts, and absorbed them into the Kabbalah. Too this day, most Kabbalists do not study Greek philosophy, and therefore do not recognize the Greek origins of many of their sacred beliefs. If today's Kabbalists were to read Plato's Timaeus, and the later writings of Plotinus, they would discover therein many curious concepts that they would definitely recognize. With these origins now noted, let us turn to their development within the Torah tradition.

The first Jewish book to reference the sefirot by name seems to be the Sefer Yetzirah, the Book of Formation. This book is very old, but scholars cannot agree as to just how old, old is. Some consider its origins to be as early as the third century; some consider it to be as late as the eighth century. Either way, the book's influence on Judaism is notable. Although the text was not originally a Kabbalistic one, it has over the years been adopted by the Kabbalah, and is considered to be one of its founding texts.

The sefirot in the Sefer Yetzirah are never given the names that are ascribed to them in later Kabbalah. They are referred to as being “blimah,” a term which itself is subject to numerous definitions. Essentially, bli-mah would translate as, “without what,” meaning without essential essence, or essentially, “infinite.” Yet, nowhere in the Sefer Yetzirah are the sefirot described as being emanations of God. Indeed, the earliest commentaries seem to consider the sefirot to be associated with a related term, Misparim, numbers. Mispar, and Sefer share the same root verb, and the word sefirot can indeed be interpreted to be numbers, or at least, that which is counted. The earliest commentaries look to the sefirot as numbers, who alongside the letters of speech, help format in the human mind the structure of the universe.

One early commentary of the Sefer Yetzirah calls the sefirot, the “inner essence” (penimiyut) of the letters. Essentially, the letters are the mental, or spiritual component that underlies, and activates the spoken word. The fact that the sefirot are only ten in number, while the letters are twenty-two and therefore do not align in a one-to-one relationship is not a cause for concern. Associations, especially in this realm of metaphor, and symbolism, never have to be exact.

One early Kabbalist does seem to suggest that the sefirot are actually levels of human consciousness, the ascent through which, we would define as ascending the sefirotic Tree of Life. Although the earlier Kabbalist does not use this term to describe it, many later Kabbalists do.

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Once we have made the jump from defining sefirot as mere numbers, and transforming them into “the inner essence of the letters,” and “levels of human consciousness,” we have left the external realm of cosmology, the domain of the letters, and all that they build, and have entered the realm of psychology, spirituality, and metaphysics. From here, it is only a small philosophical step to ascribe the sefirot to God, and to ascribe to them Divine attributes. For all inner essence, and all consciousness streams from the one, true Source, which is God, and therefore, these sefirot can be considered to be emanations of God, or so the philosophy goes.

The later Kabbalah is extensive in its teachings about the emanation of the sefirot. In the Lurianic system under the pen of Hayim Vital, the sefirot are addressed as block groups called Sefirotic Faces (Partzufim). Vital is prolific in explaining how each element (level, or group) emanates from God, the Source. Yet, strangely, Vital rarely if ever explains how each sefirah came about individually.

Prior to Vital, Moshe Cordevero summarized Kabbalistic theories in his greatest work, his Pardes Rimoni. To his credit, Cordevero wrote an encyclopedia of Kabbalistic concepts. Rather than elaborate on his own personal spiritual visions like Vital, Cordevero was the collector, and gatherer. Thanks to his Pardes, students of Kabbalah have a source that gathers most of the previous ideas, beliefs, and doctrines about the Sefirot and more. Thanks to Cordevero, unlike Vital, we can examine the development of certain Kabbalistic ideas, and concepts, and see how they have changed over time. It is this style, and manner of learning, that enables the student to extract Kabbalah from the realm of myth, and to study it in the light of intellect, and truth.

So, now we have greater insight into where the concept of sefirot originated, and how it evolved as it transformed from Greek philosophy and into Jewish Kabbalah. Doctrinally speaking, the place of the sefirot in Judaic and Kabbalistic theology is sacred. Whatever its origins, sefirot are now part and parcel of Jewish mystical philosophy.

In order to understand the sefirot as Kabbalists are supposed to, I include here the essay I referred to earlier. The following material I wrote over twenty years prior to what I have written above. Yet, as I see it today, I believe these two pieces are meant to be one, in this order. Please note that the nature and style of this second essay reflects certain forms and structures that I used then, but have evolved beyond now. I offer this older material in its original form.

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The Ten Sefirot

The Kabbalistic Philosophy of How Infinite G-d is Manifest in the Finite Creation
Originally published in Panu Derekh #13 - The Basic Kabbalistic Concepts and Terminologies

Introduction

This article is addressed to those who truly seek an understanding about the Divine. The great Sage RaMBaM (Maimonides) wrote that no one can really know anything about G-d at the level of His Essential Being. This is true. We can only understand that aspect of G-d which is perceivable here within Creation. An understanding about how G-d is manifest in creation inspires us all to seek Him out, to understand Him better, to draw closer to Him and to observe His mitzvot. I pray that this small article might accomplish a part of this lofty goal.

Creation

It is most difficult to describe how the universe came into being. From what vantage point can we possibly speak? The Kabbalists have dwelled long and hard on this issue, and G-d in His mercy has revealed a great many things about the techniques He used in the primordial creation.

In the beginning, prior to the creation of Heaven and Earth, there existed G-d, and G-d alone. Where G-d came from is not a question. G-d is and has always been here (there and everywhere). G-d, in His ultimate essence, is all things, all space, all time, all consciousness, as well as all things that are the opposites of these things. G-d, in His ultimate essence, is unknowable by anything or anyone in creation, regardless of their level of closeness to the Divine source. G-d's ultimate essence in Hebrew is called the Ayn Sof.

The first question that the Kabbalists ask is being that G-d is all places, where could a universe possibly exist? Simply put, being that G-d is everywhere, there is no place for a universe. For G-d to create a universe, He would first have to create a place where such a universe could exist. Where could there possibly be such a space other than within G-d Himself? G-d, therefore chose (so to speak) to "vacate" a space within Himself so that a void would be created. Within this void G-d could therefore create His universe.

All this type of talk, I must remind you is completely symbolic. In actuality there can never be any space void of G-d, not even for an instant. We use this type of terminology simply to roughly explain the process of creation.

The creation of this so-called void, Halal in Hebrew, was brought about by G-d withdrawing His light from a certain place so as to create this other place. This original withdrawal of G-d's light is called Tzimtzum (contraction). For G-d's light contracted

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within Itself, leaving this so-called void.

The Kabbalists then asked the next logical question. If G-d is everywhere, where in G-d then did this Tzimtzum contraction take place? The answer given is that the contraction began at the very center. But, if G-d is everywhere, then there are no boundaries, therefore there cannot be a center!! If we were talking about physical space, this would be absolutely true. But physical space did not exist at this time, therefore its laws are not applicable here.

Rabbi Haim Vital, in the first lecture within his master work, Etz Haim, writes that the Tzimtzum contraction of G-d's light occurred at the source of G-d's desire to create the universe. In other words, the "place" of creation arose out of the desire within G-d's ultimate essence. The place of the origin of creation is the desire of G-d. The place is not a physical one but one where mind meets desire. G-d's desire therefore vacated a space, a place wherein which the desire for a universe could become manifest.

One might ask when did this occur? The answer, of course, will always be "in the beginning". When was this? According to the plain meaning of the Torah, creation occurred in six days, each of 24 hours. But as Albert Einstein has documented scientifically, all time is relative. How time is measured today is not necessarily how G-d measured time during creation. In regards to modern science and how time is today measured in the physical world, creation occurred billions of years ago. The Genesis story in no way contradicts this. In the 12th century the master Kabbalist Rabbi Yitzhak D'min Acco calculated, according to the secrets concealed within the Genesis story, that the universe is presently some 15 1/2 billion years old. Coincidentally, this is about the same age given by modern science. Yet, from G-d's point of view, which is above time and space, the universe is only now being created, even as you read these words. At this same moment, G-d sees the universe ending. All is cyclical before G-d, He is both the beginning and the end. Therefore, from G-d's vantage point the universe's beginning, middle and end are all one.

With the creation of the void, through the Tzimtzum contraction, G-d could now begin to manifest His universe. This was accomplished by G-d shining His light back into the newly created void, but not in the same manner as the light was prior to its removal which created the void. G-d's light had to be differentiated so that when it returned into the void it would not just fill it up as it previously had been. G-d's light, therefore, lessened Itself and began the manifestation of boundary, form and definition. This was all something new, something that did not and does not exist in G-d Himself, but only in His creation.

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G-d, in His ultimate essence, therefore is completely unknowable to us. We do, however, experience G-d (and come to know Him) as He chooses to manifest Himself within creation. Being that G-d has created many different levels or phases of creation, so too the levels of G-d's manifestation in creation differ according to these levels and phases.

The Sefirot

The aspect of G-d's light that beamed back into the primordial void differentiated Itself through a series of filters, sort of spiritual transformers that enabled G-d's light to descend from its origins outside of creation to the very center of the void (which now, by definition, is the farthest point from the surrounding field of G-d's ultimate essence). These spiritual transformers that G-d chose so as to filter His light into creation became the spiritual DNA pattern upon which all of creation is based. This filters that form this pattern are called the Sefirot.

The sefirot are the major Kabbalistic symbol used throughout all Jewish literature (Kabbalistic and otherwise). It is necessary that before one embark on a course of study in Kabbalah that one learn the essentials about the interactions of the sefirot. Yet, prior to this, one must learn what a sefirah is, where it comes from and how it does and does not operate.

When G-d began to cause His light to shine within the primordial void, He did not allow His light to enter in the same intensity that the light was on the outside. Such intensity of light would have immediately filled the void nullifying its creation. The amount of light that G-d allowed to penetrate within the void is therefore only a small portion of the brilliance of His absolute essence.

G-d's primordial light contained within it many varying aspects. Within G-d's ultimate essence all of these aspects were completely merged together as one. With the creation of the void each of these aspects of G-d's ultimate light would now be able to manifest their unique manifestations. The absolute unity is never lost or compromised. G-d's ultimate essence can be compared to a black light. The color black contains within it all colors and possibilities of color. Although these are not clearly seen within the black itself. Yet, when the light is subject to filters then its various shades and hues are able to be individually identified. All of these shades and hues, as different as they are from one another, are still united and one in their essence.

Also, as with color, there is differentiation between one and the other. There are demarcated borders, boundaries and definition. Unlike G-d's ultimate essence wherein which there is no such thing as border or boundary, here within the void, demarcation

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and separation is the chosen manner through which G-d is able to manifest Himself through the creation which He creates. The ultimate light of G-d's essence, therefore, goes through a phase of filters, the purpose of which is to diffuse the light and to allow it to manifest all of it's varying hues.

These boundaries and demarcations (of the light) are called sefirot, coming from the root word safar, which means to count. Numbers are the primordial form of demarcation and separation. What is one is not two, nor is it three. Yet, the relationship and unity between the numbers can never be broken. The word safar is related to the word mispar, which means number and to the word sefer, which means book. As the Sefer Yetzirah teaches, G-d created His universe with three sefarim, with sefer, sapor and sippur. These are the differentiation of G-d's light within their vessels the sefirot.

Remember, G-d is one and His Name is one. The sefirot are only tools to G-d. They have no life or holiness of their own other than what G-d gives to them. The sefirot, therefore, manifest to us how G-d chooses to act in His universe. Through the sefirot and their interactions can we come and see G-d, Who is concealed within them.

There is one point about sefirot that must be understood if one ever wishes to truly understand their nature. The order of their manifestation and interaction is twofold. As they emanate from G-d's ultimate essence (the Ayn Sof) they descend into the void in the form of concentric spheres. This form implies that their order is exclusively hierarchical. While this is true, the sefirot also interact with one another in the form of multi-dimensional columns, which transform the sefirot into polarities of active, passive and balance. It is this form of columns that is the most popular form in which the sefirot are presented today. When the sefirot are in the form of columns they are called the sefirot of Yosher, meaning columns. When they are in the form of concentric spheres they are the the sefirot of Agulim, meaning spheres.

Much of the beginning of Sefer Etz Haim is devoted to explain these two functions of sefirotic interaction. The holy Zohar and the majority of the writings of the Ari'zal deal with the sefirot from the view of Yosher. The view of Agulim is very sublime and profound and is best left for more advanced study in the original texts. For this work here, I will explain the Agulim order of emanation from the Ayn Sof. I will then proceed to explain the sefirotic interactions according to the Yosher order.

The First Sefirah

The first aspect of the light to manifest within the void is the expression of G-d's desire to create the universe. This first aspect of light entered the void like a laser beam and quickly formed a sphere surrounding the outermost parameter of the void. This first

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aspect of creation is the first of ten filters which G-d uses to channel His Divine light from His ultimate essence to the lowest of all lower worlds. It is the primordial essence of all things yet to come.

This first sefirah, the first expression of G-d into the realm of creation is called Keter, which means crown. It is called crown because like the crown upon a head which is above the entire body and is its glory, so too Keter is above all the rest of creation. This first expression of G-d also has other names which better describe its meaning and function.

Keter is also called the Ra'avah Ila'ah, the Supernal Will (of the Divine). For it is the Will more than anything else that defines existence. Will is the force of life. The Will, i.e., Keter, can also be called "Ani", meaning "I". For prior to one being conscious of existence, one already exists. Existence pre-exists the awareness of one's existence. Thus Keter is "I", before the "I" can say "I am". (This analogy is my own).

Keter is also known as Adam Kadmon. As a matter of fact this is the term most often used to describe Keter. Adam Kadmon means Primordial Man. This does not mean that Keter is in the form of a physical man! Rather Adam Kadmon, or A.K. as the Kabbalists refer to this level, is considered the primordial pattern of the universe. A.K. contains within Him all of the lower worlds. These lower worlds will emanate from A.K. just as A.K. Himself emanated from G-d's ultimate essence. In A.K. all things exist in their potential form, waiting to become manifest. Yet, Keter (A.K.) the Supernal "I" is unaware of itself and therefore is in need of revelation. This then leads to the manifestation of the second level (sefirah) within the void, the sefirah Hokhma.

The Second Sefirah

Keter is the Divine Will, the "I" of creation. However, in order that the "I" be realized and actualized, it must be cognizant of itself. The "I" must translate from simply being "I" and become "I am". This "I am" level of self recognition is the second sefirah Hokhma, meaning wisdom.

Although Hokhma means wisdom, I choose to call it intuition. For Hokhma is the initial grasp of awareness, the beginning of consciousness and recognition. Hokhma is like the proverbial light bulb that lights up over one's head revealing a brilliant idea. That idea pops up fully developed, for its source is Keter. Its faculty for recognition is Hokhma. Hokhma reveals inner, subjective knowledge, that which is known because it is an inner truth, not because of an external lesson. Hokhma is the realm of the purely spiritual, that which manifests the essence.

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The primordial Hokhma gave form to the latent power lying dormant within A.K. (Keter). Therefore the "I" of Keter became the "I am" in Hokhma. The two are inseparable. Keter and Hokhma are united as are the soul and spirit are within the body. The original light that entered the void from G-d's ultimate essence only penetrated to the level of this Hokhma. After this, the light of the Keter, cloaked with the light of the Hokhma, took the place of the original descending light, and continued to descend into the very middle of the void.

Yet, once Hokhma had received an influx of awareness from Keter, the brilliance of that revelation still needed to be properly digested, comprehended and understood. Even the most brilliant ideas needed to be worked out and given form. This takes us to the third of the sefirot, Binah, meaning understanding, where the "I am" can understand what it is and thus say "I am . . . (whatever it is that I am). Binah is integrally connected with Hokhma and Keter, but the original light from G-d's absolute essence did not directly descend here.

The Third Sefirah

Binah is the cognitive form where the flash of thought that was emanated from the Keter and received in Hokhma can become congealed, comprehended and prepared to be put into action. Binah receives the intuitive insight from Hokhma and dwells on it in the same way a mother receives the seed from the father, keeps it within her until it's time to give birth to that which comes forth from the union of the two of them.

In the language of Partzufim (that will be discussed later on), Hokhma is traditionally called Abba, father, and Binah is called Imma, mother, for just this reason. It is said that Hokhma (intuition) "impregnates" Binah, (which I define as perception). Thus intuition, once received and contemplated with perception, leads to the "birth" or further creation of the universe.

The sefirah Binah is the level of pure cognitive mind. The essence of Keter first takes on form in Hokhma, though this form is completely spiritual and abstract. Within Binah the received aspect of essence becomes clearly understood, conscious and cognizant. Binah, the level of pure mind, pure consciousness, is thus the mother of invention. It is from within "her womb" that the rest of creation is "born".

These first three sefirot manifest aspects which correlate to the power of the mind. In Hebrew they are called the "Mohin", the brains. Binah is the left brain, Hokhma the right brain. Keter is the skull that, like a crown, is on top of them both. Binah transforms the power of pure mind into action. Yet, prior to the physical manifestation of action, there must first be motivation. Motivation is absolutely necessary, for nothing can be built

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unless the builder is motivated to build. Binah therefore transforms, by the power of cognitive awareness, the essence of Keter as revealed in spiritual, intuitive Hokhma and creates first motivation, and only then physical form, which finalize and join all the levels together.

The motivation that Binah manifests is the power of emotion. This manifests itself in the formation of the next six sefirot. Although these six are unique and independent of one another, they act together as one.

The first triad of sefirot is called KaHaB, which is the capital letters of the sefirot Keter, Hokhma and Binah. Writing names out all the time is very redundant and unnecessary. Kabbalists always abbreviate by using capital letters to refer to terms. Thus Adam Kadmon is A.K., Keter, Hokhma and Binah is KaHaB, and so on. This method of expression is consistent throughout all Kabbalistic literature.

The Six Sefirot - The Fourth Through The Ninth

These next six sefirot are the primordial forces that underlie the creation of the physical universe. Corresponding to these six were there six "days" to creation.

Anything that exists within the mind, be it in the primordial mind or in the mind of man, must be charged with an almost electric type of force in order to move it from the realm of non-corporeal thought into the realm of corporeal being. Therefore, did G-d form the "midot", the six sefirot which are the primordial source of emotion. Emotions charge that which one thinks and gives the thought emphasis, passion and flavor. This is something that mind alone cannot do.

Essence manifests within spirit. Spirit is perceived within the mind. The mind then forms ideas which motivate and steer the emotional tides. All emotions are based upon preconceived mental notions. One feels a certain way about a thing because one has certain ideas and preconceived notions about that thing. Change the way one thinks about a thing, and the way he feels about it will also change. The six sefirot here, therefore, are the powers that transform thought (the upper triad) into action (the tenth and last sefirah). They are six in number for this double triad reflects the dual nature of Keter's manifestation into Hokhma and Binah. In other words, as the upper triad is made up of three sefirot, so must there be three triads, each one reflecting and congealing the light from that which is above it. These then are the six sefirot:

Hesed

This is the first attribute to come forth from the Mohin (brains). In the form of columns, Hesed is directly below Hokhma. For although Hesed comes forth from Binah, which is

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on the left column, Hesed's place is on the right. Just as Keter's first manifestation was to the right, so was Binah's. This zig-zag descent of energy is also clear within the relationship of the human brain to the human body. The left lobe of the brain controls the right side of the body. This method of descent was established by G-d so that all polarities would be able to interact with their opposites thus giving rise to the multiple forms of diverse creations.

Hesed is the force of expansion, of free and complete giving. Hesed is defined as mercy, but I choose to call Hesed freedom, for this word more properly expresses Hesed's function. Hesed is always outgoing, always accepting, always forgiving. Hesed is the creative force which is always expanding outward, formless, boundary-less, without any contraction, constriction, discipline or limitation. Hesed is simply pure, unadulterated abundance. Yet, Hesed by itself cannot create and support a world. For a world without boundaries, definitions and limitations will soon fall into chaos and self destruct. For this reason, Hesed's antithesis came forth next: the fifth sefirah, Gevurah.

Gevurah

This sefirah emanates the force of restriction, severity, discipline and judgment. Gevurah means severity, but it is better described as limitation, within the context of discipline. Where the force of Hesed shines outward without boundary and end, Gevurah describes the boundary and the end. Gevurah says when enough is enough. As such, Gevurah is the source of judgment. Gevurah is also referred to as zechut, merit. For Gevurah will only give forth that which is absolutely deserved. For us in the physical plane we continually rely upon G-d's mercies. We are unable to stand before the unadulterated power of Gevurah.

Gevurah stands on the left column underneath Binah. As Binah constricts the expansive force of intuitive Hokhama, so Gevurah restricts the expansive force of all giving Hesed. Gevurah and Hesed function as opposites, constantly tugging on one another. What results from this constant tug of war is the balance and harmony of the next sefirah, Tiferet.

Tiferet

This is the attribute which is called the heart. As such, Tiferet is the specific revelation of G-d to His creation in time and space. Tiferet is the balance created by the proper alignment of Hesed and Gevurah. Tiferet is also called justice. For herein are the basic forces underlying the universe harmonized and brought together into a form wherefrom justice manifests.

Tiferet embodies and unites these six sefirot which are called the midot (attributes).

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The six are many times referred to as the six appendages of Tiferet. For everything revolves around justice. Justice is the heart of the universe. This is why G-d's holy Name YHWH (Havaya) is associated specifically with this sefirah.

The justice that is Tiferet manifests itself as the written Torah, which is why the Torah deals with laws. The laws of the Torah are the laws of Tiferet. They are the universal laws of the universe and the source of primordial justice. This is why it is paramount for a Jew to observe the commandments of the Torah. Only in this way is the Jew in alignment with the universal force of balance and justice.

Tiferet, as the embodiment of justice, must execute its judgments. This gives rise to the next two sefirot, Netzah and Hod, which while they are two in number act as the unified executors of the judgments of Tiferet. This second triad of sefirot, Hesed, Gevurah and Tiferet are abbreviated as HaGaT.

Netzah

This manifestation of Tiferet comes forth on the Right Column of the sefirot, underneath Hesed and Hokhma. As such Netzah concludes the Right Column by carrying forth and congealing the expansiveness function of the Right.

Netzah means victory, but can also mean conquering. Netzah is the outgoing force that is focused specifically into bringing order and organization. While order itself might be a Left column characteristic, the desire to bring order comes from the expansive, giving nature of Hesed. Netzah, therefore, manifests the outgoing desire that seeks to dominate for the sake of giving good.

Netzah is a product of Tiferet, for it is the nature of justice to want to impose order. And the imposition of proper holy order is an act of mercy, and not severity. Netzah therefore conquers and dominates all so as to impose merciful goodness. Netzah is the force that imposes the justice of Tiferet.

Hod

This sefira compliments Netzah in that Hod, meaning glory, brings home the benefits of what is conquered. For while Netzah conquers all for the sake of the collective good, Hod benefits from the conquering for its own personal good.

Hod means glory. It is an attribute of the Left column under Gevurah. For like Gevurah, Hod restricts and confines the expansiveness of the Right Column. Hod takes the outgoing benefits of Netzah and focuses those rewards for its own personal benefit. Thus the justice of Tiferet is imposed through Netzah and enjoyed through Hod.

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The relationship of Netzah and Hod can best be compared to the traditional role of husband and wife. The husband goes out and makes a living. He expands his energy outwards to create, maintain and expand his business enterprises. The wife, on the other hand, benefits from his work by using the proceeds to fashion and build a beautiful home for her husband, herself and their children. She translates the outwardness of Netzah into an inward form, i.e., the making of a home. This domestic spirit therefore is Hod, it is glory, the fruits of justice, Tiferet. When Netzah and Hod are properly aligned there comes forth the ninth sefirah, Yesod, which balances out the entire sefirotic pattern which is called the Etz Haim, the sefirotic Tree of Life.

Yesod

It is here that all the upper sefirot converge and meet. Yesod is the foundation of the sefirotic tree. It corresponds to the genitals, but not to denote sexuality, but rather to denote the creative energy, i.e., the libido energy that causes both creativity and creation.

Yesod is born of the union between Netzah and Hod. When the forces of justice (Tiferet) rule (Netzah) and its benefit (Hod) is felt throughout, the resulting order leads to the release of the creative spirit; this is Yesod.

Yesod is also referred to as Tzadik, righteousness. For only when there is complete harmony and balance in those spheres (sefirot) which motivate human action can one behave in the proper and correct manner. As a matter of fact, the Hebrew word for correct, Tzodek, is the same root as the word (the) righteous, Tzadik. For only one whose actions and motivations are correct before G-d can be called a Tzadik. This is the one who embodies Yesod. Not only does such a one think the right way, he is also charged (with Netzah) to bring the right way to others. So the prophet and Sage were always at the head of outreach movements, always seeking to impose (Netzah) the proper order (Tiferet) so that the people would benefit (Hod) thereby.

This third triad of sefirot, Netzah, Hod and Yesod are abbreviated as NaHiY.

When all the sefirot are in proper alignment and thus all manifest creation is in harmony, the result is the final sefirah, Malkhut.

Malkhut

This is the final stage of creation, the lowest of the sefirot and the worlds. In Malkhut all of the above worlds merge in perfect union and harmony. This is possible because the laws of the universe of Malkhut are different from those laws of the worlds above her.

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Malkhut is the realm of the corporeal, the physical world around us. As such, Malkhut enables all the supernal forces of will, mind, heart and motivation to become united and manifest in the realm of action, this physical world.

Malkhut, being the final stage of creation, completes the filling of the void. As such, Malkhut is the farthest away from the surrounding light of G-d's ultimate essence, the Ayn Sof. However, as far as she is from the Ayn Sof, Malkhut is still the most important of the sefirot. She is the "icing on the cake" of creation. When G-d began to create His universe, He contracted His ultimate essence from a point which was said to be the expression of His Will to create. This center became the focal point from where the original contraction of G-d's light began. This center point became Malkhut. Although she was the last level of creation, Malkhut was the original intent in the Will of the Creator. We refer to this reality in the Friday night Shabat song, "L'kha Dodi" (Come My Beloved). In the second stanza, we sing "Sof Ma'aseh B'mahshava Tehila" [The Shabat, which embodies Malkhut] was the last creation, but was the first thought [in the "Mind" of G-d].

Of all the worlds, only Malkhut is corporeal. All the other (higher) realms are non corporeal. This becomes extremely significant when we come to understand how the worlds interact and by what laws of physics they are governed. In the non corporeal realms, time and space are different from how they are here in the corporeal world. In the non corporeal world there is no space as we understand it. Therefore, in order to define how close two things are to one another, we must redefine proximity. Here in the physical world, when two things are in physical proximity, we say that those two things are close to one another. This is most definitely not true in the non corporeal planes. Without corporeal space, physical proximity cannot exist. Therefore, non corporeal closeness is defined as similarity. When two things are similar to one another, we say that they are close to one another.

This is not a foreign definition to us. I am sure we can each think of a number of examples to demonstrate this. For example, a husband and wife (or parent and child) are (should be) very intimately close to one another. Whether they be standing next to one another, or living in different cities, their closeness is not diminished by distance (or for that matter by time, true love lasts forever). The bond of love, which is a non corporeal entity, draws two people together regardless of physical space. Therefore, the two lovers are "always together", from a certain point of view.

We can use as another example two people of diametrically opposing points of view (ideas, another non corporeal entity). Two people who are completely different from one another ideologically can be placed in a single room, and can even be physically

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touching one another. Nonetheless, their physical proximity does not in any way make them any closer to one another. Although their bodies touch, the viewpoints make them to be "millions of miles" away from one another. This, then, is where the benefit of Malkhut comes into play.

The laws of physics in Malkhut are different from the other realms. Unlike the other realms, Malkhut can serve to bring opposites into proximity with one another. These opposites can then be exposed to one another and communicate with one another. The potential herein is that the opposites can find common ground and thus merge together within that aspect of unity that is right for each and every joining. Malkhut can thus unite all worlds, which is something that none of the supernal worlds can do. Although in the upper realms of Keter and Hokhma all realms are united, the unity of that place still only expresses potential. It is not until Malkhut that potential becomes actuality and thus fulfills the purpose of creation.

The sefirot therefore serve as the complete pattern that underlies everything in the universe.

Conclusion

G-d reveals an aspect of Himself into creation. This is His Will (Keter).

An Insight (Hokhma) of His Will manifests, and is Perceived (Binah).

This Expands (Hesed) outward to a point when it then starts to Contract (Gevurah).

The result is a state of Balance (Tiferet) which ordains the order of the universe.

This state of Balance-Order needs to be imposed (Netzah) upon the universe so that the Benefit (Hod) of creation can be received.

When this occurs there is Harmony (Yesod) in the universe, and everything is Complete (Malkhut).

This is a very concise understanding of what the sefirot are. Yet, it is not enough to understand what the sefirot are. One must understand how it is that they function within the universe. This takes us into the Olamot, the sefirotic worlds.

Olamot, the Four Worlds

The sefirot are the basic pattern underlying all of creation. Even the sefirot themselves follow this pattern in that each sefirah has ten sefirot within them. Each of these ten has ten within them and so on and so on into infinity. So, in reality there are not just ten sefirot, there are an infinite number, each sefirah being a subjective part of a greater sefirah, which itself is only a part of a greater sefirotic whole.

In order to give some semblance of organization to this extremely complex universe of

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ours, the sefirot are divided into worlds, which are individual spheres of influence. No sefirah acts independently. G-d manifests Himself through specific sefirot within specific realms of creation. That “Face” of G-d which is revealed is called a Partzuf. This aspect will be discussed shortly. The specific realm of creation that manifests a Partzuf is called an Olam (world or realm). Each Olam (realm) is not a physical location, but rather a level of sefirotic manifestation. These realms are the levels of differentiation in creation. Each realm expresses life in accordance to that sefirah which formed it. G-d is manifest in each realm in accordance to the sefirah manifest therein. These realms are the Olamot.

There are five worlds in the general scheme of things, each world is, of course, subdivided into smaller worlds, sefirot and Partzufim. More of the subdivisions will be discussed later.

The first of the five general worlds is called Adam Kadmon, the Primordial Man. This is the realm (Olam) of the general sefirah Keter. A.K. (as Adam Kadmon is referred to) manifests the interactions within the sefirah Keter. The first and highest of the worlds is the “Will” or the “essence” of being. This is the spark of the Divine that gives existence to everything in creation. For without a sense of essence and identity no molecular structure would “know” to maintain its integrity in its given form. Therefore, A.K., the “Will” of the universe, is the primordial blueprint of everything in creation.

Due to the fact that A.K. is so sublime and unable to be comprehended, He has no form of representation within creation. While A.K. most certainly exists within creation, His being is still beyond that which any form (vessel) can hold. Therefore, although A.K. manifests all the other worlds, He Himself is considered too concealed to be revealed. So when we refer to the realms (the worlds), we normally do not count A.K., but only the lower four worlds, for they alone manifest in both force and form. The second of the five worlds, and the first realm to manifest creation, as we know it, is Atzilut.

Atzilut

The realm of Atzilut is where A.K. (Keter) takes a form that is recognizable to the realms below. Together A.K. and Atzilut form a relationship to one another which might be called the “spirit” and “body”. The light of G-d’s ultimate essence descends into the void only to the bottom of Atzilut. Beneath this, the light of Atzilut descends into the lower realms. Therefore, there is a major difference between Atzilut and the lower realms. A.K. and Atzilut together are called the “Creator”, whereas the lower three realms will be called “creation”.

Atzilut is the realm of the general sefirot. Atzilut is the realm of the Divine. Atzilut is

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the realm from where G-d is revealed to creation, although Atzilut is only a “body” to A.K. and A.K. a “body” to the ultimate essence, the Ayn Sof. The realm of Atzilut is the realm of pure “Spirit”. This realm of the Divine is above all human comprehension. It is the exclusive realm of G-d.

Atzilut means “emanation”, for Atzilut is merely an emanation and reflection of A.K. This realm of Atzilut creates the lower three worlds which are each reflections of the subjective levels within Atzilut itself. The first of the three lower worlds that reflect Atzilut is called Beriah, the realm of Mind.

Beriah

This is the realm that begins to manifest diversity in the unity of creation. The word Beriah itself means creation. In Atzilut, G-d’s unity is recognized in all. From Beriah and below, G-d’s unity begins to be blurred. The realm (or level) of Beriah is called the Throne of G-d (Kiseh HaKavod). A spark of the Malkhut of Atzilut cloaks itself within the Keter of Beriah and thus enlivens it. Beriah, however, begins a new form of manifestation. These new manifestations are called souls (Neshamot).

Beriah is the realm of the sefirah Binah, the realm of “I am what I am”, in other words the realm of Mind, the abstract level of pure consciousness. Souls are manifestations of consciousness. They are beyond the realm of body and form as we understand them. Nonetheless, they have a very specific identity that both unites them and distinguishes one from the other.

Beriah is the highest realm outside of G-d, and thus the closest to Him. Therefore, the spark of G-d dwells within Beriah. In other words, G-d’s Presence (in Hebrew, Shekhina) dwells upon (and within) the manifestations within Beriah, which are the Neshamot souls. It is these souls that are the Throne of G-d, for G-d dwells upon (and within them).

As Beriah manifests division (the diversity of souls), it is the source of judgment in the universe (for judgment always decides between what is right and what is wrong). Beriah, which is Binah embodies perception, which is the true definition of consciousness (for Hokhma is unconscious). Therefore, it is Beriatric perception which is pure Mind (consciousness) which constructs the forms (and not the essence) of the lower worlds that are yet to come. Beriah, Binah is the mother of the laws of creation.

When G-d manifests this aspect of Himself, He is called Elohim, which technically means a Judge. This is the name of G-d used when creating the universe (in Gen. 1). This signifies that G-d created the seven days of creation from the aspect of judgment.

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Judging from the severity of the laws of nature, this point should not be in doubt. It is the seven days of creation and their spiritual counterparts that are the next two worlds. The first of which, corresponding to the six days of work, is Yetzirah.

Yetzirah

This realm is the realm of the heart and the place of motivation. It is here in Yetzirah that the pure Mind of Beriah becomes infused with passion; passion being emotion.

The entities manifest at the Yetzirah level are, therefore, very highly polarized and charged to accomplish specific tasks. These entities are not so much “thinking” entities as much as “feeling” entities. Being that they do not emanate from the realm of Mind, these Yetziratic entities do not possess what I will call the “thinking function”, for that is the exclusive domain for those of Beriatic consciousness. Yetziratic entities, therefore, are kind of like the animals in the spiritual, non corporeal planes. We know them as angels, when they manifest functions and missions from above. Otherwise, when these entities perform acts of their own, we know them as demons.

The name Yetzirah means formation. For Yetzirah gave form to that dimension which we know as time. Each of the six sefirot of Yetzirah manifest and form one of the six days of creation, following the form of their sefirotic emanation. Yetzirah as the realm of time also is the realm of emotions. For as time comes and goes but is never stationary, so are emotions.

The realm of Yetzirah is the closest to our physical world. Therefore, emotions, more than pure thought often direct our actions. It is these Yetziratic influences that we are able to cognize in the form of the archetypes of the personal and collective unconscious. Beriatic entities, being that they are pure mind, also take on a pictorial form that our minds cognize in an archetypal form. However, Beriatic beings can only be cognized once the mind is calm and clear of emotion. This level is not reached by the vast majority of people. Yetziratic beings, on the other hand, are able to be cognized whenever there is a strong emotional attachment, be it to something good or evil. The human mind has two functions. One is cognition of the external world surrounding us. The other is the experience of the internal world of the unconscious within us. Therefore, we as humans can experience the archetypes of Yetziratic reality through our unconscious mind. As we know from dream language, archetypal Yetziratic reality is cognized in symbolic pictorial form. Therefore, people experiencing non corporeal reality always picture it through some kind of vision or similar apparently visual experience.

Rabbi Haim Vital writes in his Sha'arei Kedusha (part three) that with the destruction of

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the Temple in Jerusalem, the gateways of direct Beriatric experience were closed. Thus, the prophet Ezekiel “saw” his vision (recorded in Ezekiel 1), through the filter of the Yetziratic realm. Rabbi Haim says that all Atzilutic and Beriatric experiences will today be filtered through Yetziratic archetypes. It must be remembered that when a prophet “sees” a vision he is not seeing an external reality, but an internal one. The pathway to prophecy is within the mind; a mind that is calm and in control of one’s emotions. The Kabbalists have taught that prophecy has its source in the two sefirot Netzah and Hod. One imposes order (Netzah) and the other brings down the benefit (Hod) from that activity. This explains why prophetic messages always consisted of moral admonitions. All prophetic predictions of the future were based upon the rewards or punishments of receiving and conforming to the Divine order (Netzah).

Yetzirah, the realm of the angels, is a domain that is lower than the souls (Neshamot). Therefore, the source of the human soul is much higher than that of an angel. However, the angels are of a higher state when we, as humans, are disconnected from our Beriatric source. This will not be rectified fully until the coming of Mashiah.

Yetzirah is the realm in closest proximity to the final level Asiyah, the realm of the physical. Being that Yetzirah is the closest to us, the physical plane is most subject to its influence. This last realm, Asiyah, Malkhut is the center of all.

Asiyah

This is the realm of the corporeal, both what is seen and unseen to the human eye. The realm of Asiyah is the realm of matter, which traditional Torah sources tell us are divided into the four basic elements: fire, air, water and earth.

However, that which we recognize as these elements are not what these elements truly are. As each realm has within it complete representative aspects of all the other realms, the realm of matter, as we know it, is the Asiyah within Asiyah. Therefore the fire, air, water and earth that we perceive are the four worlds-realms of the Asiyah of Asiyah. Earth, at this level, therefore, is the lowest of the four and thus its subjective Asiyah. Thus, the earth, i.e., the ground under our feet, is the Asiyah that is within the Asiyah of Asiyah.

All forms of physical matter as we know it are, therefore, only the Asiyah within Asiyah. The conclusion that the Kabbalists learn from this is that there exists in the universe, and on our planet Earth, other forms of matter of a higher and purer nature than what our eye recognizes. Some of these other forms we have begun to recognize as atomic and subatomic particles, waves and beams. These and other yet undiscovered forms of matter are as real and concrete as that which we today experience.

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These other forms of matter form entire universes which exist parallel to our own. For example, the Rabbis speak of what is called a “Haluka D’Rabbanan”, which is the Torah term for what today is popularly called the “astral body”. Rabbi Haim Vital in his book, Etz Haim (Sha’ar 50)¹ describes this other body of ours, which clothes our soul and exists within (and surrounding) our physical body. This “astral body” is nourished by the energy effects of a person’s actions within this realm of matter. It thus appears that this astral body, and thus the entire astral plane are made up of a form of matter that we can define as being the Yetzirah of Asiyah, which is one step above the Asiyah of Asiyah of which our bodies are made.

Like the triads of sefirot, the four worlds are also abbreviated and are called A’Be’Y’Ah. Therefore, each world or realm has a complete A’Be’Y’Ah within it. Whenever we discuss a world we have to know which level within which world we are discussing. Without this spiritual road map, one will get just as lost as would one in a foreign country, without any directions, or knowledge of the language.

Analyzing Revelation

Understanding the Parameters of the Images Perceived within the Human Mind

When it comes to understanding Biblical prophetic symbolism, and later Kabbalistic metaphors, it is essential that one be able to recognize, and analyze the psychological components therein. All spiritual experiences, regardless of type or time period share the common denominator of being products of the human mind.

Granted, it may very well be that the individual Biblical prophet, or later Kabbalist is in touch with some force from outside his/her own consciousness. Nevertheless, regardless of whether their spiritual insights and revelation originate from within the individual's imagination, or from an outside source, in both cases they are received and experienced within the exclusive realm of the internal mind, and are thus subject to all the psychological parameters of the relationship of communication between the mind's rational, and imaginative components. This insight is nothing new. The philosophers of old have always recognized this, and the later Kabbalists have proclaimed this, although veiled under mounds of symbolic metaphors.

What then is the purpose of all these metaphysical revelations? If the human mind is cognizing an understanding of the universe, what good is it if the image and idea is only

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theoretical, psychological, and philosophical? What collective value is an individual perception? The answer to this brings us into the realm of archetypal images that arise out of the individual unconscious mind (with or without the aid of an external, other-worldly being).

Archetypes are images that arise out of the unconscious, and into the conscious mind that represent certain collective truths, or universal realities that transcends the limits of the individual mind that first perceives them. The purpose of the revelation of these collective insights is not just for theoretical information, but rather to inspire, or motivate individuals to take steps based upon these revelatory insights that can have actual, functional, transformational affects in the real, external world.

The way one can tell the difference between actual received information, and that which generates within one's personal imagination is this archetypal, universal component. Information from the collective unconscious (however much influenced, or not by any other party in the collective) will address collective, humanistic, universal values, and issues, beyond the limitations of the individual's personal parameters. That which generates from the individual imagination will be limited to the scope of interest, and focus of attention of that individual.

Essentially, one can easily distinguish these two types of psychological expression. Nevertheless, just because an individual originates thoughts out of one's own imagination does not mean that such a one is disconnected from any outside influence. It just means that if such an eternal influence is present, then it is operating within a "box," which is the vessel of the individual's mind, and will express itself only within that limited context.

Within regards to the experience of prophecy, or the reception of Ruah HaKodesh (the Divinely inspired influence), it has long been understood that these are universal, psychological experiences that can happen to anyone. All one needs to do is to train one's mind in the meditative techniques of one (or more) of the individual schools, and then delve into the inner mind following these techniques, and explore where the mental disciplines will guide one's attention. The ability to acquire these mental skills is considered to be a natural, evolutionary progression of human consciousness. What we call prophecy can thus acquired by any human being, regardless of one's cultural, or ethnic background, all based upon the individual's efforts to explore and expand the parameters of the mind/soul.

If one examines Jewish religious material that is viewed as being "Divinely inspired," one will discover that there is no such overt statement in the literature itself. While the

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Talmud is considered sacred in Judaism, nowhere in the Talmud is there a claim that it comes from God. Even the later Zohar, and the writings of Hayim Vital only claim a source from the immortal prophet Eliyahu. When, and how Eliyahu actually materialized and gave such instruction is never detailed in any precise manner.

Essentially, that which is considered sacred, or Divinely inspired is really in the eye of the beholder. Scholars view all literature as the products of their individual authors, and thus subject to critical analysis. Even with regards to the Torah of Moses, there is nothing wrong with analyzing it according to this approach. For the religious faithful, however, while critical analysis might indeed uncover new and interesting tidbits of information, nevertheless, the foundations of belief are beyond question, or assault.

What is believed sacred is held sacred, and no amount of scholarship, or analysis will ever shake it. This is, by definition, what we call fundamentalism. Yet, what does all this have to do with the reception, and transmission of information that has arisen from the collective unconscious? The answer is that material that has an archetypal element to it is for the most-part received emotionally by the religious faithful community. Whereas, for scholars, even archetypal material is received intellectually. Emotional reaction to it, for scholars, is therefore, mostly controlled, even as intellectuals mostly control the entire emotional side of their personalities (at least, for the most part, in their professional writings).

What we have here is a psychological disposition for literary material that clearly defines how it will be interpreted by the reader. So, for example, a secular scholar will come to read the Zohar as an interesting collection of Jewish metaphysical lessons, and legends, whereas a believing Rabbi, like Hayim Vital, will view the material as the revealed word of God, not to dissimilar from the Torah itself. One views the material at arms-length, the other embraces the material placing it within one's heart. The filter of the head, and the filter of the heart, are significantly different from one another, and their differing orientations contribute greatly as to what is considered to be (or not to be) Divinely inspired literature. One way or the other, both are byproducts of the individual's mind, perception, and point of view. In the end, we are left with nothing more, or less than interpretation. For one, such and such literature is the sacred, revealed word of God, and for the other the same literature, may or may not have any value whatsoever.

Secular scholars are the ones who would tend to believe that all imaginative literature emanates out of the individual unconscious, without their being a collective component to it, and certainly not a Divine component whatsoever. Secular scholars are not known for their warm association with God, (be it belief in an Objective Being, or belief in a

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internal psychological Presence). For the religious faithful however, God and religion permeates everything. For the religious, even literature that does indeed emanate from the individual imagination of its author is still often considered as coming from beyond there, and thus is considered sacred, and Divinely revealed. So who can say, and who can analyze with any sense of surety, which literature comes from the mind of the individual author, and which literature comes from beyond it? By what criteria should we judge?

When it comes to our understanding of the realms that we call “the spiritual,” we have already made it clear that we are discussing the realm of the psychological. And yet, we have made it equally clear that the realm of the psychological certainly does not confine itself to the limited domain of any individual's organic brain. Consciousness is something that transcends the individual, and expands out into realms that we cannot measure, and indeed have not yet even perceived. It is some “thing” from these very realms that reaches out and taps into the individual unconscious of individuals. Yet, whatever this “thing” is that taps into the mind, it also must be perceived through the filter of that mind.

This is why what we call “archetypal content,” as general and universal as it may originally be, nevertheless takes on a form that the individual mind applies to it. Therefore, all revelation appears to be emanating from the imaginative mind of the individual, and indeed it is. But this does not mean that what arises out of the mind, and imagination of the individual has its source therein. Thus, the two realms of the psychological, and the spiritual, which to some may appear as being separate and distinct modes of consciousness, are in fact, actually one and the same. Needless to say this requires of us a complete revision of our understandings of these two fields, and a complete alteration of how we proceed to explore new knowledge in both.

Hayim Vital, redactor of the Lurianic Kabbalah is an excellent case study of the contemplative mind, and the vivid imagery that materializes out of it. Vital lived within the psychological context of his Judaic world. He may have been educated in some areas of Islamic Sufism, but beyond that we do not have record of his being involved with the literature, or beliefs of other cultures, or spiritual systems. Therefore, Vital's vivid metaphors that make up his entire system are exclusively within a Judaic package of archetypes. From a psychological point of view, we should expect nothing different.

If, however, Vital had been exposed to a wider variety of spiritual, philosophical systems, we would have seen reflections of these mirrored in the imagery that he used to describe his perceptions of the universe. The fact of what he saw, and how he so prolifically describes it throughout his writings reveals the underlying psychology, and

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education of the individual man.

Vital's revelations and writings, are a good example of archetypal expressions within a subjective cultural context, yet, this same pattern of psychological parameters holds true for everyone. What is in the personal mind frames for that one the nature of imagery that the personal imagination will use to perceive abstract things, including archetypal realities.

Learn from this the vital lesson that all spiritual imagery is psychological, and subjective. This explains why we have such variety in descriptive spiritual experiences. They may come from around the world, yet at the same time, because many of them are archetypal, in spite of apparent superficial differences, they are all describing the one and same psychological human reality. Recognizing this spiritual common denominator enables students to analyze spiritual literature from around the world and to distinguish that which emanates from the personal imagination of its author, and that which shows the author's tapping into the greater collective unconscious, however veiled within one's historical, cultural, and ethnic context.

Analyzing the Lights of the AhaF **The Dawning of Human Consciousness**

Hayim Vital introduced into the Kabbalah a profound intense, and intricate series of symbols and metaphors that since its inception have been so vivid that many who read them interpret them to be expressions of cosmology, as opposed to psychology. The Lurianic system that we have today from Vital's pen elaborates how the Primal Cause, known so very well from philosophy (Jewish and Greek) emanated from Itself multiple other Causes. Vital, like many of the Kabbalists before him called the philosophical Primal Cause the Ayn Sof. In order for the Ayn Sof to manifest a universe, It first vacated the space for such a universe. This was the Tzimtzum. Afterwards, Vital elaborates how a beam of Light emanated back into the Halal empty space created by the Tzimtzum filling it again almost, but not, completely. This Light Vital called Adam Kadmon (primordial Man). Granted, Vital went to lengths to emphasize that this symbol of a Man was just a symbol to enable these concepts to be recognized by human consciousness. Nevertheless, the continuing symbols became more and more elaborate, creating all kinds of confusion among those who seek to interpret Vital's vision. Vital next elaborated on how Light emanated from the symbolic Ears, Nose, and Mouth of the Adam Kadmon manifesting the first of the primordial worlds, which he called the Akudim. We need to now elaborate on the symbols of this world of the Akudim, and bring an understanding of them into the realm of psychology, and how they apply to the dawning birth of consciousness.

Vital's meditative, psychological insights are most profound. Vital was already trained in

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Kabbalah by the time he meet Isaac Luria. Luria instructed Vital for a period of no more than two years, before he died at the premature age of 38. Yet, for Vital, Luria's passing did not mean the end of his instructions from Luria. Vital believes that Luria would often come to him in dreams long after his death. We therefore have the combination of Vital's early learning, merging with his teachings directly from Luria, and with that which came to Vital afterwards. How much of this later learning actually came from the dearly departed soul of the Ari'zal is a good question. For it is very, very possible that what Vital saw in his dreams as the image of Luria, was nothing more than a projection of his own inner/higher self masked in a form that the conscious mind of Vital would find most acceptable. Whatever the case may be, Vital was deeply in touch with revelations and insights that came from the very core of collective human consciousness. Vital experienced these sublime realms and could only begin to describe them using the language that he did. In other cultures around the world where meditative states are also honed into a fine art, these sublime insights into consciousness are also often achieved. The main difference between the systems is that the meditative systems of the East speaks of these states as being undefinable, Vital seeks to define the undefinable. Judging from the centuries of misunderstanding that has layered Vital's teachings, one must wonder if perhaps the ways of the East were not correct in maintaining silence and concealment of certain teachings. For indeed, even though Vital's works are readily available, a proper understanding of them remains as elusive as ever. We, here, will endeavor to change some of this.

The Adam Kadmon symbol represents the whole of everything. The whole of everything exists as a cosmological reality. However, the whole of cosmological reality is only accessible to the human being through processing the experiences and thoughts of the human mind. The human mind and cognition are what makes the world real to us. Without consciousness and cognition, for us, the world does not exist. Therefore, the beginning of the world is the beginning of consciousness. And the Light that emanates from the Ears, Nose and Mouth of this Adam Kadmon represent this dawning birth of consciousness.

The Adam Kadmon symbol, as we know, represents the manifestation of the unknown, and unknowable Creator into the "place" of creation, the Halal (empty space) vacated after the Tzimtzum. The Light of the Ayn Sof was inside this Adam Kadmon, but had not yet come out. We have already distinguished the demarcations of the Light that will emanate outwards. We refer to the Light as God's "Name" YHWH, and mentioned how the Name is spelled in four different ways to represent the four different reflections of this primordial Light. Vital now elaborates a very profound set of metaphors based upon the use of these four forms of the Name YHWH, which again are AB, SAG, MAH, and BEN.

The Light of AB is considered to be high and sublime. The Light of AB corresponds to the sefirah Hokhma. This Light is said to reside within the head of the Adam Kadmon, from his forehead, upwards. Due to the sublime nature of this Light of the AB of Adam Kadmon, it is not revealed outside. Its stays inside concealed. From our psychological point of view, we

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recognize right away what this means. AB represents Hokhma, and Hokhma represents the imaginative faculty of the human mind that resides within the unconscious. The unconscious is concealed, therefore the metaphor used to describe the “light” representing the unconscious is equally concealed. AB is concealed because its corresponding element within humanity is unconscious. Yet, from the unconscious, consciousness awakens, and so it is with the Adam Kadmon metaphor.

The inner Light of Adam Kadmon to first be expressed external to “Him” is the Light of the SAG, which represents the sefirah Binah. Binah, as we know is the sefirah used to represent consciousness, the rational, sentient, cognizant part of the mind. The function of rational understanding (from our human point of view) comes from the process of receiving and assimilating information. This process of understand and communication is mostly associated with our listening, and hearing. So, as it is with us, so too is it with Adam Kadmon. The first Light to emanate from Adam Kadmon comes forth from his symbolic ears, right and left. This place of exit (for Adam Kadmon), is a place of entry for us (humans). Remember, never allow the details of a metaphor get in the way of its archetypal meaning. For us light comes in, for Adam Kadmon Light goes out. It just a symbolic representation, so do not let this difference bother you.

The Light of the SAG of Adam Kadmon is the dawn of consciousness. Adam Kadmon's first emanation is the power of rational, intellectual thought. This is the birth of consciousness, of awareness itself.

Okay, this is all that I have for you at this time, in this place.

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Blessings.
Shalom.

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