



Signed, Sealed, Delivered & Concealed: The Kabbalistic Significance of the Tishrey Holy Days

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Rosh HaShana literally means "Head (beginning) of the year." *Rosh HaShana* is the day on which the whole world is judged both collectively and as individuals. Different reasons are given for the day of judgment concept. In addition on *Rosh HaShana* we blow a ram's horn, as it is written: "*Yom Teru'ah yih'yeh lachem*," "a day of *teru'ah* (sounding the horn) should be to you." On *Rosh HaShana* the whole world – Jews and non-Jews alike – are "signed" into the cosmic "Book of Life." What is the esoteric *pshat* (explanation) of this "Book," what is the purpose of the sound of the *shofar*, and what is the significance of the judgment that is occurring?

Ten days following *Rosh HaShana* is *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, the most sacred day of the year. On *Yom Kippur* the whole world is "sealed" in the "Book of Life" or in the "Book of Death". On *Yom Kippur*, aside for observing the regular restrictions that Shabbat carries with it, there are five additional restrictions. It is forbidden to eat and drink, wash one's self, anoint one's self, wear leather shoes, and engage in marital relations. What is the esoteric purpose of the "sealing," what is the role of these five restrictions, and what is the spiritual root of the sacredness of this day? And why does *Yom Kippur* begin with *Kol Nidrai*, the most famous prayer service in Judaism, which ostensibly, *Kol Nidrai* seems to have no direct connection to the concept of *Yom Kippur* and atonement?

The ten days between *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur* (including *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur*) are known as the *Aseret Y'may T'shuva* – the Ten Days of Repentance, which culminate in *Yom Kippur*. Why are there specifically 10 days? An anomaly that has not received its due explanation is that on the third day of the Ten Days following *Rosh HaShana* is one of the four fast days (not including *Yom Kippur*) – the Fast of *Gedalya ben Ahikam* – that has no apparent connection to *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur*, aside from a short Talmudic historical note (with later commentaries) exhorting us to do *teshuva*. What is a fast day doing in the middle of "the sign and the seal"?

Four days after *Yom Kippur* the festival of *Sukkot* begins, on the 15th day of *Tishrey*. *Sukkot* is characterized by the unique commandment of dwelling in *Sukkot* - temporary, hut-like dwellings, as the Torah says in *Vayikra* (23: 42-43) "In booths you are to dwell for seven days ...so that your generations will know that I caused the children of Israel to dwell in booths when I took them from the land of Egypt...."

A glaring anomaly is why does *Sukkot* come immediately after *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur*? It is well known that the historical first *Sukkot* – the canopy (*sukkot*) of the Clouds of Glory surrounding the Israelites while traveling in the desert - occurred not in the fall of *Tishrey* but in the spring month of *Nissan* following the Exodus from Egypt. Although homiletic explanations are given for this incongruency we must still apply the rule that "No verse (or statement) can be divorced from its literal meaning." Fundamentally, why is *Sukkot* attached to *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur*?

There is another commandment also unique to *Sukkot* - the commandment to take the Four Species. In *Vayikra* (23:40) the verse says, "And you shall take for yourself on the first day the fruit of a goodly tree, branches of palm trees, the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before HaShem your G-d for seven days." The Talmud [1] explains the verse as follows: the "fruit of a goodly tree is an *Etrog* (citron); the branch of the palm tree is the *Lulav*; the "boughs of thick trees"

are *Hadasim* (myrtle); and, the "willows of the brook" are *Aravot* (willow branches). No logical explanation is given in the Talmud and *Midrash* for this ritual of waving of the *Lulav* and the other three plant species, which is performed on all seven days of *Sukkot*. A singular reason is given in the Talmud – "To ward off bad rain and ill winds" – which is insufficient and mysterious at best.

Throughout the works of our Sages, we find that the festival of *Sukkot* is referred to as *Zman Simchateinu* - The time of our happiness. Many wonderful reasons are given for this mode of joy that is unique to *Sukkot*, but what is the source of this unique mode of joy and its connection to the mitzvah of *Sukkah* and the Four Species [2]?

Everyday during the morning *minyan*, in addition to the ritual of the shaking of the *Lulav*, a circuit is made around the *bima* where the *Sefer Torah* is held upright by an individual. This "dance" around the *Sefer Torah* while each person holds the *Lulav* and *Etrog* is known as a *Hakafah* (circuit). The only explanation accessible is that it represents a similar ritual that took place in the Temple of Jerusalem when it stood. But, this begs the question: what is the purpose of the *Hakafah*? On the seventh day of *Sukkot* known as *Hoshanah Rabba* seven *Hakafot* are made culminating in the beating of five *Aravot* (separate willows from the two that are part of the *Lulav* and *Etrog* set) on the floor. The strange custom of the beating of the *Aravot* (willows) on the ground during *Hoshanah Rabba* explicitly has no explanation other than it being "an ancient tradition from the prophets which meaning is only known to the kabbalists."

Hoshanah Rabba has a number of unique rituals associated with it that many, especially the kabbalists, are very careful to observe. It is considered a "miniature" *Yom Kippur* when our souls receive the second and final "seal" in the "Book of Life (or Death)" that was signed on *Rosh HaShana* and initially sealed on *Yom Kippur*. There is still time to change the decree even until the next day. Even though one's destiny is calculated for the new year the signed and sealed "letter" is not "delivered" into the hands of judgment and retribution until the 8th day. Because of this there is an ancient custom to wear all white, stay up all night, recite *selichot* (special supplications said early morning prior to *Rosh HaShana* and up until the morning of *Yom Kippur*) and study sections of the Kabbalah.

That night begins another *Yom Tov* called *Shemini Atzeret* – literally meaning the Eighth Concluding [Day]. What is taking place on the eighth day of *Sukkot*, the 22nd day of this whole sequence? It is a separate *Chag* (holiday) by itself, yet there is no longer the mitzvah of the *Sukkah*, nor of the four species. There is no ritualistic "prop" such as a *shofar* or *matza* nor any special activity such as learning Torah or doing anything other than observing the *Yom Tov* and having the regular festive meals. The only thing that is unique about *Shemini Atzeret* is that in the Morning Prayer service we begin to insert the special prayer for rain. How does this tie into the first day of *Rosh HaShana*? There is something else going on and it is extremely well hidden along with the entire 22 day period.

What appears to be the 9th and last day of *Sukkot*, and what in the Diaspora is the "second" day of *Shemini Atzeret*, is also called *Simchat Torah*, literally "the joy of/over Torah." *Simchat Torah* is the day we complete the cycle of the 52 *parshiyot* (weekly portions) of the Torah by reading the final *parasha* known as "*V'zot HaBeracha*." Ostensibly, *Simchat Torah* simply marks the renewal of the cycle as we begin again with the first *parasha* in the Torah "Be'raishiet." We dance seven circuits around the *Bima* this time with individuals holding *all* the Torah scrolls. But, it may be asked, how is *Simchat Torah* directly connected to *Rosh HaShana*, *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkot* and why are we continuing the *hakafot* that we began on the first day of *Sukkot*?

Rosh HaShana thus begins a spiritual marathon that last 22 days [3]. (*Rosh HaShana* to *Yom Kippur* = 10 days + 4 days till *Sukkot* + 7 days of *Sukkot* + 1 day of *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah* = 22). Although hundreds of midrashim and later commentators up till this day have shown a psycho-spiritual progression between these two great festival periods an intrinsic cosmological connection is still not apparent. What is the missing link between the *Yamim Noraim* (Days of Awe) and *Sukkot*? Something has been signed, sealed and delivered, yet well concealed from public and even scholarly eyes. The sages, following suit of the Torah itself, have ingeniously camouflaged and protected the inner

story of *Rosh HaShana*. Hidden away in the *Zohar* and in the kabbalah of the Arizal the code to this story unfolds. It is a drama so mind boggling that it takes the Days of Awe to a new level of awesomeness. It will be obvious why the inside story of Signed, Sealed and Delivered has been concealed and “The one who understands will understand.” Even still, the sod of these 22 days wears the *pshat* and the *halacha* of the festivals like a perfectly fitting glove and it is these hands of God that embrace us.

“His left hand is beneath my head and his right hand embraces me”

Shaar HaKavanot (Gate of Mystical Intentions) of the Arizal has lengthy chapters on *Rosh HaShana*, *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkot* which, in turn, are all based on the voluminous *Eitz Chaim* (Tree of Life), the magnum opus of Lurianic Kabbalah. What follows is only a bare bones overview of the esoteric mechanics running through this 22 day period. A fundamental difference that strikes us in the teachings of the Ari zal is that the essence of these festivals is *not* primarily about teshuva and atonement. As we will see, teshuva and atonement are required but only as by-products and an incredible means towards an unbelievable end.

A verse from the Song of Songs encapsulates this entire period and process. “His left hand is beneath my head and his right hand embraces me”. The left hand is the left side of the *gevurot* and this represents the Ten Days. The right hand is the right side of the process and this is represented in the seven days of *Sukkot* culminating in the union on the eighth day. First the left side of the process will be outlined and then the right side will be presented..

Although it is common knowledge that *Rosh HaShana* is the birthday of the world this phenomenon is just one of the many points of interest that are lost in the kaleidoscope of the Days of Awe. Actually, it is Adam and Eve that are being created on *Rosh HaShana*, Genesis having begun five days before. *Rosh HaShana* is the sixth day of creation. Now, it is a fundamental tradition that every Chag is a microcosm of the original 24 hour period that it is replicating over again. Thus, *Rosh HaShana* is literally recreating over the entire creation process of Adam and Hava (Eve). This fact is the beginning, middle and end of virtually everything that is occurring not only on *Rosh HaShana* but also on *Yom Kippur*, *Sukkot*, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. The creation or rather the re-creation of Adam and Eve and their culmination in physical and spiritual union is the hidden key to the 22 days.

“God created Man in His image, in the image of God He created him: male and female He created *them* [4]. And HaShem cast a deep sleep (*tardayma*, cognate with the English dormant) upon the man and he slept; and He took one of his sides and He filled in flesh in its place. Then HaShem God fashioned the [left] side that He had taken from the man into a woman, and He brought her to the man [5].”

Although all these events are literal we must keep in mind that they are occurring in a higher dimension totally transcendent from our present reality that is long after the “Fall” or dimensional collapse of Adam and Hava. Adam and Hava, the masculine and feminine aspects of Divinity, were originally manifested “back to back”. (This was for reasons that cannot be spelled out here). They had to go through a process of separation known as the *n’sirah* – “division”, turned around and then, face to face, engage in divine union. The union, just as it occurs with earthly man and woman, is preceded by a period of arousal and stimulation *hibuk* and *nishuk*- hugging and kissing. This was the purpose of their creation and is included in the mitzvah of “be fruitful and multiply”.

Now, Adam and Hava should have waited until Friday night – the first Shabbat -- to perform this great mitzvah of unification and crucial act of tikkun. Their grave miscalculation (for reasons that cannot be spelled out here) is actually part of the sin of the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, i.e., “Biblical knowing”. Because it was attempted prematurely their union and all of its consequences became contaminated. The only rectification is that over a period of some 6,000 years every New Year beginning with *Rosh HaShana* the *tardayma*, the *n’sirah* and the reconstruction of Eve –the feminine aspect of the

Adam – are literally repeated over again. Only now the process, instead of occurring within an hour (of Adamic time) is now “stretched” out over a period of 22 days.

“From my flesh I will behold God” [6] i.e., human reality is a mirror and metaphor for the divine realm. The human form is a sefirotic structure reflecting the ten emanations within the ten sections of the body. The original *n’sirah*/division between Adam, the masculine and Adam, the feminine took place in ten stages as each stage was a distinct sefira being separated from itself. What took place almost instantly in Gan Eden before the fall must now take place over a period of ten days. Each of the ten days is the division of the singular masculine/feminine soul into a separate male and female. The feminine aspect of Keter from the masculine aspect of Keter, the feminine aspect of Chochma from the masculine aspect of Chochma and so on. This is the literal meaning of “*tzaila*” (mistranslated for millennia as “rib”) -- it is actually an “edge” or “side” i.e., the feminine edge of Adam (known in Kabbalah as the *gevurot*) that runs the length of the body from the head/keter to the reproductive center/*malchut* and the feet.

The nesira is actually an operation and a very dangerous and volatile one at that. Not only does the masculine aspect of Divinity go into a cosmic slumber thus temporally suspending its mitigating affect (known as the *Hasadim*) on the feminine elements in the world, but the feminine element is exposed. This creates a paradoxical situation: This powerful and potentially destructive primordial energy is released into the world and yet it is also simultaneously vulnerable to spiritual infection. This is where the shofar comes in. Its affect is two fold: One, the sound of the shofar causes the slumbering masculine Adam (the *Hasadim*) who has gone into a temporary state of *tardayma*/sleep to reawaken and secondly, the harsh, constricting sound (“din” --both in Hebrew and in English!) of the ram’s horn helps mitigate and sweeten the feminine energies (the *gevurot*) that have been released during the “operation”. This last process is based on the principle that “dinim and *gevurot* are only sweetened in their root”, i.e. din with din, tempered with temper, fire with fire.

The final *n’sirah* and “re-constructive surgery” to create her reproductive organs takes place in the *malchut*, the 10th day which is *Yom Kippur*. In order to do this the feminine aspect of Adam (Eve as the embodiment of the Shechina) must be elevated to the realm of the Divine Mother. The “lower” feminine is absorbed into the “higher” feminine in order to receive the essence of her true femininity. The two females are alluded to in the Torah name for *Yom Kippur* – *Yom HaKippurim*, i.e. *two kippurim*. Her *malchut* is cosmically “stamped”, “fashioned” and “imprinted” in the mystery of the Divine Female. This imprint is the *chotem*, the sealing that takes place on *Yom Kippur* and is reflected in the expression we greet each other with “*G’mar Chatima Tova*” – May you have a good “sealing [in the Book of Life]”.

We can also begin to appreciate that the Books of Life and Death that are “opened” during the Ten Days are none other than the Sefirot that make up the cosmic body of the supernal Adam and Eve. It is well known that Sefirot are also referred to as sefarim (books). “Life” and “Death” are simply the two sides of the *Hasadim* and *gevurot* that are opened and exposed during this period for the ultimate purpose of making the *tikkun* for the “fall” of Adam. Our teshuva is required because the forces of din and the *gevurot* are temporally released and they react “measure for measure” (uncompromising “karma”). You don’t want to get in their way but it is unavoidable and the entire world is “judged”. Paradoxically, it is also our very teshuva that helps fuel the process of the *dormita*, *n’sirah* and reawaking of Adam as well as the reconstruction and fashioning of the divine female. Every utterance of “*al hait...*” – “For the sin we have committed by...” adds another log onto the cosmic fire of the divine Flames of Love.

By the end of *n’iela* (“closing” [of the gates of her *malchut*]), the fifth and final service of *Yom Kippur* the lower female has received all her “parts” and her structure from top to bottom is complete. Now, during the four intermediate days until *Sukkot* Adam and Eve are “turned around” to face each other and the second stage begins – the arousal that culminates in the cosmic union of man and woman, heaven and earth, Creator with creation.

The Female Surrounds the Male

Once we reveal some of the code language what is going on during these final 8 days will become self evident. In the Kabbalah there are two modes of divine energy that appear and reappear on many levels. They are known as “straight”, “linear” or “erect” light and “round”, “curved” or “returning” light, light being a metaphor for these two potencies within the Ain Sof. Linear light (*ohr yashar*) is masculine-like Divinity and curved light (*ohr chozer*) is feminine-like Divinity. (They are also associated with the *Hasadim* and *gevurot*).

A verse in Scripture “The female surrounds the male” reflects this spiritual law of creation. Any reference to surrounding, enclosing, encircling is reflecting feminine-like energy. That which is encircled in the middle is the male aspect. Similarly, wherever a Scriptural reference is made to standing (as opposed to sitting), arising and linear direction, e.g. “*Arise, O Lord and disperse Your enemies*”, is reflecting masculine-like energy.

When the *Lulav* structure is superimposed upon the symmetry of the sefirot a pattern is revealed. The four plants that are taken are 7 in number together. The 3 *hadasim* (myrtle branches) are *hesed*, *gevurah* and *tifferet*. The 2 *Aravot* (willow branches) are *netzach* and *hod*. The *Lulav* is the *yesod*, the foundation backbone that extends from the base reproduction center below *netzach* and *hod* up to the base of the brain – the *da’at* middle brain. The *Etrug* is the *malchut* always attached to the *yesod*. For this reason in order to perform the *tikkun* properly the *Etrug* must be held together at the base with the other species. Additionally, according to the Ari zal the 3 *hadasim*, positioned above the *Aravot*, are bound one to the right, one to the left and one in the middle leaning slightly to the right which is the paradigm for these 3 sefirot of *hesed*, *gevurah* and *tifferet*.

Together these are the 7 lower sefirot that constitute the masculine aspect of the spiritual “body” of Adam. The sefirotic “seven branched” *Lulav* structure is used as a vessel or vehicle during the seven days to contain the adamic energy which is reenacting its role in the original creation/unification of Adam/Eve. The “waving” of the *Lulav* correctly done is not actual waving or shaking. The “*na’anuyim*” (lit. “vibrations” or “movements”) is a linear movement of slow thrusting back and forth from the sternum outward with the arms becoming fully extended and erect and then back again. This is done in 6 directions, each direction also being one of the sefirotic directions with the individual himself being the *malchut*. Specifically the ritual is to penetrate into the *da’at*/middle brain of Adamic man and then to draw down via the spinal column (the *Lulav*) the spiritual radiance and sacred arousal into your heart area which is now the *malchut*/portal for the feminine element, the Eve of creation. Additionally, the *na’anuyim* are performed 3 times in each direction which is equal to 18 a value consistently associated with the 18 vertebrae in the backbone. During the Hallel prayer four sets of *na’anuyim* are performed giving a total of 72 (18 x 4=72) the value of *Chesed* the technical name for the stream of energy that is flowing down from the masculine into the female.

The canopy of the *sukka* is the surrounding light of the Divine Mother. This is the “supernal female” -- from whom the “lower female” continues to receive from as she had on *Yom Kippur* in the mystery of *Kol Nidrei* (“All Vows” which are rooted in the sefira of *bina*, the Divine Mother) and the five physical deprivations (the five *gevurot* which are also rooted in “*Imma*”). This is the significance of the Talmud’s statement that the *Sukkot* we dwell in today are reflecting the actual Clouds of Glory the Nation of Israel were surrounded by in the desert for 40 years. Our physical *Sukkot* are a concretized microcosm of those “clouds” – an actual temporal gateway into a higher dimension, the dimension of the *Shechina*, the Supernal Mother. When we enter and dwell within the *sukka*, once again we become a container and vehicle for the feminine mode of divinity to affect its *tikkun* of completion upon the feminine aspect of creation which resides within the collective soul of Israel.

The inner mechanism behind the hakafot/circuits is now also evident. A *Sefer Torah* is held in the middle while encircled by the participants holding the *Lulav* structure. The *Sefer Torah* is the straight, upright light of Divinity – the masculine aspect that is radiating out to the feminine in the mystery of “The female surrounds the male”. The energy is traveling through the conduit of the numerous *Lulavs* into the feminine circular energy in order to generate a state of spiritual arousal that is a prerequisite to prepare the supernal Eve for the union with Adam that will take place on Shemini Atzeret.

The modus operandi of both the ritual of the *na'anuyim* (taking the *Lulav*) and the *hakafot* (procession around the Torah) are based on the principle that “There is no arousal (or stimulation) above without [initial] arousal from below”. Specifically, this is the period of the *hibuk* and *nishuk* – the embracing and kissing that precedes the union. As the supernal Adam and Eve are brought closer and closer together the process reaches a pinnacle on the morning of Hoshana Rabba. After circling the bima where all the scrolls of the Torah are now being held five different *Aravot* are taken. At the end of a long recitation of verses and mystical poetry they are beaten five times on the ground. This ritual has no *pshat* explanation what so ever.

Yet, recently some explanation and a translation of the kabbalistic meditation that follows this act is available in the Art Scroll commentary on the Hoshanas.

May it be favorable before You, HaShem, our God and God of our fathers, He Who opts for good prophets and their good customs [7], that You accept with mercy and favor our prayers and our hakafah-circuits. Remember for our sake the merit of Your seven perfect ones [8]. Remove the iron partition [9] separating us from You. Hearken to our pleas and grant us the good seal [10] - He Who suspends the earth upon silence. Seal us in the Book of Good Life.- Today may You place, with the manifestation of Your strength, five strict powers [11] which have been sweetened through the beating of willows, the custom ordained by Your holy prophets. May You awaken love among them and kiss us with the kisses of Your mouth [12], which sweeten all the strict powers and all the harsh judgments. May You illuminate the manifestation of Your strength with the Name Yud-Kei-Vav- which corresponds to the dew - Your dew is the dew of lights.- From there endow Your servant, who prostrates himself before You, with forgiveness, that my days may be lengthened. Forgive me my sins, my iniquities, and my transgressions. Spread wide Your right arm and Your hand to accept me, with my whole-hearted repentance before You. Open Your goodly treasure trove to satisfy with water a thirsty soul- as it is written: May HaShem open for you His goodly treasure trove, the heavens, to give your land rain in its season and to bless all of your handiwork.' Amen.

The reason why the intention behind this brief mitzvah has been so hidden will now be evident. There is a well-known midrash that corresponds, based upon their shape, the four species to four parts of the body. The *Lulav* as explained above is the spine. The *hadasim* are shaped like eyes, the *Etrog* has a form akin to the heart and the *Aravot* are shaped like human lips. The anatomical correspondence of the *Aravot*, however, take on additional significance when we decode the mitzvah of the beating of the *Aravot*.

Even with this translation and explanation there is much more going on. The Ari zal explains that there are three distinct intentions converging in this act. As explained, *Hoshanah Rabba* is a miniature *Yom Kippur*. This moment recapitulates the very essence of *N'ieia* – the final closing of the gates. Just as during *n'ieia* with this act we are putting the true final “touches” on the *malchut* of Eve, the divine female, as she reaches sublime completion. This is the “seal” within the “seal” (“*hotem b'toch hotem*”) the gate within the gate. Secondly, the beating is also sweetening her five *gevurot*, mitigating the otherwise harsh fires of the feminine to prepare her for the union and thirdly, as the *Aravot* are raised upwards five times this act is directing her potent energy to her male counterpart – the supernal Adam – to arouse and draw him to begin the union.

The only thing unique to the Eight Day/Shemini Atzeret is the request for rain in the morning musaf prayer. This rain is the culmination of the divine union. The original Adam of Genesis has united

once again with original Eve. Each year another level of the tikkun is being made all leading to the great and final tikkun for the fall of Adam. It is this union with its initial acts of embracing and kissing that is the source for the unique joy the “*zman simchatainu*” that permeates the period of *Sukkot* and Shemini Atzeret. This dimension of reality, our access to it and our ability to participate in it occurs at not other time of the year. This joy is also the secret behind the juxtaposition of Simchas Torah aside from the simple logistics of completing and beginning the reading of the Torah over again. As explained the *Sefer Torah* reflects the masculine aspect of Divinity. “Torah”, the Ari zal explains, is another appellation for *tifferet* or *z'air anpin*, the male counterpart to the Shechina. It is the joy of *his* union that he is sharing with us and that we share with him that is also being celebrated. It is *Simchas Torah* –the joy of Torah, literally the Torah’s personal joy. And when it rains it pours.

Notes:

[1] Sukkah 35a

[2] The Vilna Gaon does offer a homelitic explanation. Talmud (Sukkah 11b) states that the Sukkah we build also represents the Clouds of Glory, *Ananei HaKavod*. These clouds surrounded the entire nation of Israel, and acted as a protective barrier. (See vol. I: 46 for further information.) The nation of Israel first became protected by the *Ananai HaKavod*, in the month of Nissan. Why then, the Gaon asks, do we commemorate this gift of protection in the month of *Tishrey*? He answers that when the nation of Israel sinned by constructing the *Egel HaZahav*, the Golden Calf, the protective clouds were removed. The clouds did not return until after Moshe had secured the complete atonement of the nation of Israel, and the nation began to construct the Mishkan, the Tabernacle. The date Moshe returned to the camp of Israel was *Yom Kippur*, the 10th of *Tishrey*, and the nation began the construction of the Mishkan on the 15th of *Tishrey*. For this reason, the Gaon writes, we celebrate *Sukkot* on the 15th of *Tishrey*.

[3] In the Diaspora it is 23 days because 2 days of Yom Tov are always kept instead of just one in Israel. In Israel both Simchas Torah and Shemini Atzeret coincide on the same 22nd day.

[4] Genesis 1-27

[5] Genesis 2-21,22

[6] Iyov (Job)

[7] *And their good customs*. The beating of the willow is a custom ordained by the prophets

[8] *Your seven perfect ones*. This is an allusion to the seven patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph, and David.

[9] *The iron partition*. Sinful acts build and maintains partitions between the sinner and the spark of holiness which is his source of spiritual life. As one gets deeper and deeper into the ways of evil the partition built by his actions is strengthened until it has the strength of iron, while the prison in which his spark of holiness is confined becomes more and more impermeable. Only repentance can breach the partition and extricate that spark of holiness (see *Tanya* 1:17).

[10] *The ... seal*. On Hoshana Rabbah the final seal is placed on the verdict issued on *Rosh HaShana* and tentatively sealed on *Yom Kippur*.

[11] *Five strict powers*. Five of the twenty-two letters of the *aleph-beis* have two forms: bent, and - . *straight*. They are the letters . Their straight forms are usually called, *concluding* [letters], because they are used at the end of a word. Since these letters are in a sense restraining forces which force a halt in speaking they are called *strict powers*. These letters are the within which are contained that minute

portion of God's infinite being which can be conceived by finite people (Tanya 2:4). The five-time beating of the *aravah* branches symbolizes the breaking of the five vessels which restrain the revelation of the full force of holiness. The beating of the branches thus causes a 'sweetening' of the strict powers.

[12] *The kisses of Your mouth.* God's love for Israel is expressed in terms of embrace (*Song of Songs* 2:6) and kisses (*ibid.* 1:2). Embrace is an action and refers to the coupling of acts of man with acts of God through the performance of *mitzvos* and deeds of kindness. Such action brings God to embrace Israel. Kissing brings mouth to mouth - the word of man unites with the word of God through the study of the holy Torah (*Tanya* 1:45). Torah study is the superior method by which the vessels containing the contracted Divine manifestation may be broken, that the full glory of the *Shechinah* may be revealed.



Shoeless on Yom Kippur: The Sole of the Matter

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Yom Kippur is universally known as the Day of Atonement when Jews the world over fast for a period of 25 hours. This observance is based upon the verse, “You will afflict your souls on the tenth of the month of *Tishrey*” (*Rosh HaShana* is the first of *Tishrey*, which is also the first month of the New Year, and is followed ten days later by *Yom Kippur*). What is not as well known is that this ancient Jewish tradition includes four other modes of deprivation along with the prohibition on eating and drinking in the commandment of “soul affliction.”

Throughout the 24-hour-plus night and day of *Yom Kippur* there are five prohibitions as the Five Afflictions or Deprivations: 1) No solid food or liquids, 2) No Bathing, 3) No Anointing, 4) No Cohabitation, and 5) No wearing of leather shoes.

On the surface, there appears among these five acts of abstention a dominant theme: the diminishment of pleasure and the removal of comfort. The prohibition of wearing leather shoes is explained that leather shoes are more comfortable than non-leather and only a very poor person cannot afford shoes made from leather. Not wearing leather shoes is a sign of physical deprivation and self-mortification, as are the other four restrictions.

In today's world, however, the explanation regarding the prohibition of wearing leather shoes on *Yom Kippur* falls short. High quality shoes made from 100% artificial materials are readily available and they can even cost more than inexpensive shoes made of leather. One hundred dollar running shoes are the epitome of comfort and hardly the sign of a poor person today. In fact, the prohibition of wearing leather shoes on *Yom Kippur* – one-fifth of the day's observance – is essentially no longer practiced except in observant and halachically aware circles. Even among traditional and modern orthodox congregations a percentage of worshipers show up in leather shoes.

There really is no way out of this problem other than agreeing that this act no longer is relevant. At best, one could support its observance on the merit that it gives a “feeling” of nostalgia for tradition. This could be true, however, as long as we remain limited to the *pshat* level of this ritual. Unbeknownst, we have fallen into the trap of the “trichinosis fallacy.”

The trichinosis fallacy is the term I use to describe the sorrowful relationship many unsuspecting people – Jews and non-Jews – have to the multitude of *mitzvot*. This example is from pig, but it can easily apply to virtually every *mitzvah*, including the matter of leather shoes, as we will see. It has long been known that Jews as a people did not suffer from the trichinosis parasite, whereas non-Jews did. This parasite was found mainly in pig and, of course, for Jews to eat pig is prohibited by the Torah. More recently however, it was discovered that by cooking the pig meat very well the heat would kill off the parasites. It was thus reasoned by some that the original purpose of this prohibition—whether Divinely revealed or man originated—was to protect Jews from being infected. But, now that we know the solution, the purpose of the original prohibition is no longer necessary. And, voila... ham, bacon and pork are permitted to eat -- even with God's blessing (because the Holy One would not want us to be denied any of the pleasures of His creation, right?)

Health reasons, however, are not the basis of the *mitzvot*. These aspects may be “fringe benefits” of the observance of the *mitzvot*, but they – like our knowledge of pig diseases – may change with the continuous social, medicinal and scientific transformation that occur in every generation. Rather, the origins of *all* the *mitzvot*, bar none, are cosmological. They are rooted in the divine fabric of creation and thus share creation’s transcendent eternal design along with their corporeal and very human application. “The *mitzvot* were not given to benefit from.” “Benefiting” in this context includes any philosophical or psychological explanations, as well. It is not that the *mitzvot* are beyond human understanding, it is only that they require a very different mode of understanding, a different geography and a higher dimensional data-base of information.

So, what is the soul of the matter regarding leather shoes on *Yom Kippur*? To make the next move we are going to require a paradigm shift in our thinking about the five prohibitions of *Yom Kippur*. Till now they were about self-mortification and deprivation, that is, until we take a closer look at the fifth one of not wearing leather shoes. (The explanation of affliction continues to remain true on the *pshat* level, only now we will be looking at the explanatory “outer layer” from the “inside-out”). In fact, instead of the matter of leather shoes being the odd-man out we are going to show that a pair of old brown shoes actually contain the key to understanding the other four from a very different perspective. Hidden in the sole of leather is the soul of *Yom Kippur*.

As is known in the in Talmud and Kabbalah, prior to the dimensional collapse of Adam, his body and that of Hava (Eve) were not constructed from the present material world. Rather, their physicality was more transcendent than our present spirituality! Adam’s “bodily” form was made of divine “light.” Light, in Hebrew, is spelled *Ohr*, *aleph-vav-resh*. Only after the cosmic fall did his body become corporeal in the form we are familiar with called “skin,” in Hebrew spelled *O’r*, *ayin-vav-resh*.

Etymologically these two letters, the *aleph* and the *ayin*, often interchange. They are both guttural letters and sound essentially identical. The sound of the *aleph* by itself is a soft “ah” and is silent in a word. The original sound of the *ayin*, however, is a coarse guttural stop produced deep in the throat. Exchanging the *aleph* for the *ayin*, Adam contaminated his translucent body of light, and it degenerated into a course body of skin. The *aleph* body has become the *ayin* body.

Further, the mathematical value of *aleph* is one and the mathematical value of *ayin* is 70. The pure, unified white light as it passes through a prism fractures into seven hues. Each of those seven colors, in turn, contains ten aspects or gradations of each major color. Thus, the number *ayin*/70 indicates multiplicity, along with its letter value indicating concretization.

Yet, just as the rays of denser light are emanating *out* of the unified white light, so also the “skin” of Adam was not external and separate from him. Rather, the *ohr*/skin, in the mystery of the Seventy, also emanated out of Adam. His new corporeal body of skin “grew” out from within his original divine body of light. Putting it another way, he has been turned “inside-out”! The light/*ohr* of our original, divine body, the body of Adam before the dimensional fall, has turned inside-out producing a corporeal body of skin/*ohr*.

In truth, the entire physical world is in a temporary “fallen” state, covered by a thick skin of corporeality. Higher spirituality – the original Light has gone into exile and become the very dimension of the material world, as we now perceive it. The “skin of life,” like a thick coating of opaque glue, has been poured out upon existence revealing only a faint shadow of its original glorious light. (This is known in the Kabbalah as *Mishcha D’Chivya* - the Skin of the Serpent). Ultimately our true consciousness is also concealed beneath a thick layer of skin.

What does this have to do with the prohibition of wearing leather shoes on *Yom Kippur*? We have been counting down ten days since *Rosh HaShana*. These ten days also parallel the Ten *Sefirot* with the tenth *sefira* being *Malchut*, the Kingdom. Although it is the last level of divine emanation, the lowest rung on the ladder, the soul of *Malchut* is rooted in the first *sefira*, *Keter*, the Crown. This is known

as the secret of "The Crown of the Kingdom" and is also alluded to in the formula, "The final manifestation rises first in (Divine) thought." On *Yom Kippur* we enter into this higher dimension of reality. More pointedly, we *return* (= *teshuva*, the Torah meaning of repentance) to a state of inner reality that closely approximates the state of Adam before the dimensional fall. The *malchut*, and all those participating in the essence of the day of *Yom Kippur*, are carried up with her as she ascends and reunites with our collective higher self in the Crown of Creation.

This then is the reason why the Torah prohibits the wearing of leather shoes on *Yom Kippur*. Leather, whether the skin on our own bodies or that of animals, is a phenomenon produced as a consequence of the primal miscalculations and transgressions of Adam. We are re-turning the contaminated and corporealized "garments of skin" with an *ayin* into "garments of Light" with an *aleph*. We cannot be wearing leather because we have shed our outer skins and now wear only garments of light. (The opening words of the *Kol Nidrai* service, the beginning of the 24 hours of *Yom Kippur* are "Light is sown for the *tzaddik* [righteous one]"). Spiritually, the power of the supernal Light has absorbed and transformed the external shells of our existence, the skin of occlusion, the leather on our feet. *Yom Kippur* is a time to quite literally turn inward, to turn the "outside in."

Because we are now in a transcendent state beyond the external, leathered world there is no need to partake of the other worldly pleasures as well: no eating and drinking, no bathing, no anointing and no cohabitation. From the perspective of the prohibition of wearing leather shoes these four other rituals are also doors to enter the higher dimensional realm. Bodies of light eat and drink divine light, bathe in divine light, are anointed with divine light and are eternally merged in union with the Divine Light. To engage in any of these external acts on *Yom Kippur* is to turn the inside – outward. It is to "weigh down" the *malchut*, the inner soul of *Yom Kippur* and hold her back from her true reunion with the Ineffable Oneness.

"When HaShem will purify the entire earth and extinguish all evil and all of its manifestations in their entirety, then corporeality and physicality will be distilled and all of it will be transformed into supernal luminescence. Then, the entire Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil will literally be reconstructed into the Tree of Life. Behold, the [present external] skin will become the [spiritual] flesh, all of it now "consecrated unto God (*Leshem Day'ah* section 2, page 100)."



Chanukah and Purim A Spiritual-Spatial Perspective

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The historical account of *Chanukah* is well known. The Talmud tells us that beginning with the 25th of Kislev, eight days of *Chanukah* are observed, during which no eulogies are delivered, nor is fasting permitted. For when the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they defiled all the oils, and when the Hasmoneans (the Maccabees) defeated them, they searched and found only one remaining jar of oil with the seal of the *Kohen Gadol* (the High Priest). Although it contained only enough oil to burn for one day, a miracle occurred, and the oil burned for eight days. A year later the Rabbis designated these days as *Yomim Tovim* (Festivals) on which praise and thanksgiving were to be said (Tractate Shabbat 21).

It was during this Second Temple period that the Greek kings outlawed the Jewish religion, forbade them to engage in the study of Torah and the practice of *mitzvot*, and ravaged and defiled all that had been ritually pure. The Hasmoneans were finally able to subdue the enemy, whereby they designated a king to rule over Israel, and the Hasmonean reign lasted for more than 200 years. The Sages of that generation therefore decreed: that the eight days beginning with the 25th of Kislev should be days of rejoicing; that *Hallel* (praise) be recited; and that lights be lit in the entrance to their homes each of the eight nights, in order to publicize the miracle. These days were called *Chanukah*, that is to say *chanu kaf-hay* (they rested on the 25th), for on the 25th, they rested from their enemies. The above expression of the Talmud: "They made it a *Yom Tov* for praise and thanksgiving" refers to the literal recitation of *Hallel* (praise) and therefore, the complete *Hallel* is said during *Shacharit* (morning prayers) all eight days of *Chanukah*. The term "thanksgiving" refers to *al hanisim*, which is included in each *Shmoneh Esreh* (silent meditation or *amidah*) during these days, as well as in *birkat hamazon* (grace after meals).

The event of *Chanukah* in time is well known, but the event of *Chanukah* in space is not. The time in history when *Chanukah* took place is only one facet of *Chanukah*. There is another aspect of *Chanukah* that occurs in space. In fact, the spatial aspect of *Chanukah* relates to an even deeper level, as the *Chanukah* of space is the soul to the *Chanukah* of time. As the body is the outer garment to the soul so too the spiritual spatial coordinates of *Chanukah* animate the historical occurrence of *Chanukah* and actually cause it to manifest at that specific chronological point in world history. In a contemporary worldview this is quite natural. Since Einstein it is a scientific truth that time and space are not separate phenomena. Rather they constitute one reality -- the space-time continuum.

What are the spatial coordinates of *Chanukah*? Here we are not referring to the geographical location of the historical events of *Chanukah* that took place in ancient Israel. Israel is a vortex of cosmic energies and the physical location of the story of *Chanukah* has a profound meaning, as do all the events that have occurred in the Land of Israel throughout Jewish history. However, the aspect of *Chanukah* that occurs in space refers to its spiritual cosmological coordinates. When the historical events of *Chanukah* took place they were manifesting upon a hidden landscape that was preexistent before time itself. The military, cultural and spiritual battles of *Chanukah* were embedded in the cosmic fabric of creation. It is precisely due to this concealed inner design of creation that we observe the eight days of *Chanukah*. Moreover, a great *tikkun* (rectification) was affected in the cosmic fabric of creation 2,300 years ago. At that time, the Hasmonaim and the sage-kabbalists permanently and eternally altered the structure of reality. This collective *tikkun* has helped pave humanity's path towards final salvation and messianic redemption.

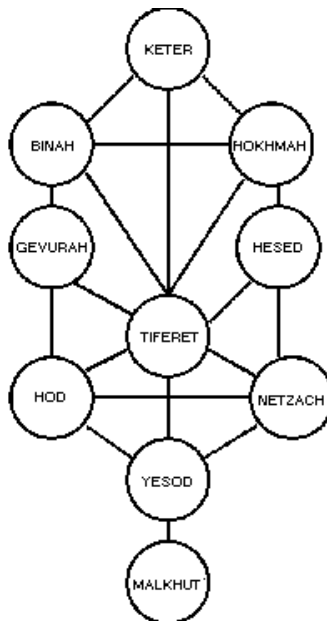
When we view *Chanukah* from a space-time perspective we can begin to resolve a number of insufficiently answered questions about this festival. One puzzle that has drawn the attention of many a rabbi and commentator throughout the centuries is why the eight days? According to the natural understanding *Chanukah* should be observed for only seven days corresponding to the seven miraculous days. If there was enough oil found for one day then the miracle was that it lasted for seven days. An eighth day itself is not part of the miracle. There is even one contemporary rabbinical work that collects 101 different explanations! This may not seem like a monumental problem, but the sages instituted *Chanukah* as a cosmological tikkun and there must be an intrinsic significance to the value of eight in its relationship to *Chanukah*. Its observance is more than a collection of customs, a political statement or a social commemoration. As we will see, from a cosmological vantage point the answer is very clear and simple, yet wonderfully deep and uniquely spiritual.

There is also an important relationship that *Chanukah* shares with the festival of Purim that is generally overlooked. In fact, we will see that it is impossible to truly understand the total picture of *Chanukah* without Purim and vice-versa. The similarities between the two are more than coincidental. Furthermore, there is confusion as to the halachic status or "seriousness" of these two events in the Hebrew calendar. Could there be a hidden significance that they both occurred more recently in time and therefore are "only" rabbinical in nature? In fact, there is a cosmic director who is orchestrating these two festive players with a sublime logic.

The Ten Sefirot

The spatial fabric upon which *Chanukah* occurs, along with virtually every Biblical and rabbinical festival is a template known as the Ten *Sefirot* or ten divine emanations. Although for some the term *Sefirot* conjures up something mystical or nebulous it is really simple and concrete. Torah teaches (Kabbalah, the inner teachings of Judaism, is simply the most advanced level of the Torah) that the natures of all temporal events are occurring upon a divine landscape, the hidden symmetries upon which time flows. There is an inner design to time as well as to space. The internal design of reality is patterned after the *Sefirotic* model. *Sefira* means a number, an amount, a value, a unit and a coordinate. The *Sefirot* are the emanations of the Ain Sof that constellate in recurring fractal-like patterns virtually everywhere throughout all creation.

Conventional Diagram of the *Sefirot*:



“Man/Adam is made in the image of God.” Notice that the form the *Sefirot* takes is in the likeness of an *adam*, i.e., “human-like” form i.e., a right side, a left side, a middle, a top, a bottom and so forth. When the *Sefirot* are viewed in this form they are also known as Adam Kadmon, Primordial Man, the archetypal pattern referenced in the verse, “Let us make man in our image”. According to the Kabbalah the one who is speaking this verse is the *Sefirot* themselves! Torah views everything in terms of this Adamic-like structure, i.e., comprised of a constellation of parts arranged in symmetrical form. Thus, everything has a “head,” “torso,” “feet” and left side, right side, front and back. From this perspective Adam Kadmon – the holistic form of the *Sefirot* -- cannot be separated from our concept of “God.” This is precisely so because, as is well known in the Kabbalah, the ten divine emanations or attributes can never be separated from the Ain Sof. *Together* they constitute what we refer to, for want of a better term, as “God”.

Although there are Ten Divine Emanations and the number ten is the underlying structure of the entirety of creation often it is only the lower seven that are revealed in the world. It is the lower “body” of divinity in the mystery of the seven that is revealed while the “head” of divinity remains concealed. Thus, for example, we see seven colors of the rainbow not ten, we experience seven musical notes and not ten and we have a week of seven days and not ten.

An entire volume would be necessary to develop an understanding of the Ten *Sefirot*. Here, a few words will suffice concerning the structure of *netzach* and *hod* as they are the “engines” that generate *Chanukah* and Purim. We will begin to see that there is a kabbalistic logic as to why each festival is located and aligned with each particular *sefira*. When superimposed upon the human form, *netzach* and *hod* represent the right and left legs and/or gonads with *yesod* being the organ of reproduction. *Netzach* and *hod* are known as the *trie palgie gufa* – the two halves of the body. Although separate they are considered as one entity, each “half” containing the essence of the other “half”. This is the basis for the inseparable and interpenetrating relationship between *Chanukah* and Purim.

Together with *yesod*, *Chanukah* and Purim form a triune structure. *Yesod* is the channel or conduit for the reproductive and creative energy. Although it has important feminine aspects, it is primarily associated with masculine-like qualities – defense, penetration and conquering, but also with

foundation, transmission and connection. The sefira of yesod has its full manifestation in the festivals of Tu B'Av and Tu B'Shevat and I have written about these phenomena in two other chapters. It is the *inner* aspect of yesod that connects the “two halves of the body” and empowers netzach and hod to act. This is the root of the military victories of both *Chanukah* and Purim. Netzach and hod are the two most difficult *Sefirotic* terms to translated into English. Hod is often translated as “glory” and netzach as “victory” although these two translations only reflect partial aspects of these *Sefirotic* complexes.

When the chagim, the Jewish festivals, are superimposed upon the adamic form of the seven, lower *Sefirot* an amazing symmetry forms before our eyes.

“Festival Man”—Sefirotic Map of the Festivals

(Three Concealed Higher Sefirot)

Keter (Crown)
Cranium

Binah (Understanding)
left brain

Chochmah (Wisdom)
right brain

[Da'at (Knowledge)]
[middle brain and spine]

Lower Seven Sefirot of “Festival Man”

Gevurah (Power)
left arm/hand
(2/5) Rosh HaShanah,
Yom Kippur, Succot

Chesed (Lovingkindness)
right arm/hand
(1/4) Passover

Tiferet (Harmony)
Torso
(3/6) Shavuot

Biblical in origin

Rabbinical in origin

Hod (Splendor)
left kidney/gonad/leg
(5/8) Chanukah

Netzach (Eternity)
right kidney/gonad/leg
(4/7) Purim

Yesod (Foundation-Channel)
reproductive organs
(6/9) Tu B'Av /Tu B'Shevat

Malchut (Kingdom)
Mouth of reproductive channel,
Microcosm revealing the sum total of the 6 *Sefirot* above
(7/10) To be revealed in the Messianic Era

The specific divine spatial coordinate where the tikkun of *Chanukah* and Purim takes place is in the sefira of *netzach* and *hod*. *Hod* is the eighth sefira counting down from *keter*/crown, the first of the ten emanations. The emanation of *hod* with its attributes is the essence of *Chanukah* and its intrinsic cosmological connection to the value of eight. From this perspective the events and details of the 25th of Kislev did not initially occur 2,300 years ago. Rather, they *first* occurred in the sefira of *hod*, which then manifested its content into the body of time and was born as the events -- both physical and spiritual -- of *Chanukah* that we know.

Tikkun

When we observe a festival we are entering into a vortex of cosmological energies that interpenetrate the essence of that day and we are affecting a tikkun. This is not simply "*tikkun olam*" (perfection of the world), giving positive energy to the world at large in some nebulous fashion. Rather, the tikkun is to a very specific *olam* -- an individual universe unto itself -- that is concealed within that day going back to its historical inception point. This is absolutely necessary because that historical day is also a limb in the cosmic body of creation. This body was severely damaged due to the collapse of reality (the "Fall") triggered by Adam and Eve eating from the higher dimensional fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Collectively it has been the mission of the Jewish People to methodically mend and heal each limb and organ in the divine body. Often "surgery" has to take place and we know what that can involve. In the beginning it is not a pretty picture and the death of the patient may appear imminent. This is the story of *Chanukah* and Purim.

This same principle -- that the inner design of creation's *Sefirot* fabric ultimately defines history -- applies as well as with all the Chagim. Turning history on its head, we now view all the chronological events -- the Exodus of Pesach, the Dwelling in Booths of Succot, the Hellenistic battles of *Chanukah*, Haman's attempted genocide of Purim and even the giving of the Torah during Shavuot -- are all occurring in their respective *Sefirotic* limb. Humanity is traveling through the body of time, quite literally. As the Jewish Nation passes through each spatial coordinate in the body of humanity -- the collapsed higher dimensional body of Adam and Eve -- a specific tikkun is made for that precise coordinate. There is no observance bound by time that is not first and foremost intended to rectify the catastrophic act and cosmic damage of Adam and Eve. This is the mission of the Jewish people; sometimes individually and sometimes collectively.

Regarding *Chanukah* the mystery of the eight days can now be understood as a tikkun taking place in the time-space coordinate of the eighth sephira *Hod*. Yet, *Chanukah* and Purim are male and female twins -- two different genders but halves of the same body. Each one contains a microcosm of the other as in the Oriental symbol of yin-yang where the dot in each half reflects the interpenetration of the opposite aspects. Therefore, they will show both similarities and differences. The differences, however, are not oppositional but rather they are *appositional* to each other, i.e., they exist side by side with each other not because they oppose each other but because they ultimately both emanate from an identical higher source that is dividing itself into two branches.

What is also apparent from the "Festival Man" *Sefirotic* map is that these identical spiritual twins only emerged to the surface in the river of time "below the belt". They are, after all, the two extensions or legs of the adamic form. Their essences could not have appeared any earlier ("higher up") on the body. This explains why there are no explicit mentions of *Chanukah* and Purim in the Five Books of Moses, which in the Adamic Timeline map corresponds to the "torso" of time. *Chanukah* and Purim are not biblical in their origin. To the contrary their roots *must* be rabbinical. This is precisely and cosmically so because of the spatial coordinates that they both occupy -- *netzach* and *hod* -- are outside of the biblical "torso" and in the rabbinical "legs" of time. With this we can now understand why the sages and their rabbinical traditions are metaphorically known as the "legs" and "feet" of the Torah.

Chanukah and Purim are referred to as “minor festivals” in contrast to the “major festivals” or the three Pilgrim Festivals, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. But it should be apparent that the term “minor” is deceptive. Just ask yourself, “how ‘minor’ are your legs and feet?” Likewise, contrary to common notion, a mitzvah or ruling that is rabbinical in origin does not fundamentally have any less spiritual depth or cosmological effect than one that is Biblical in origin. Just as the thighs enable the thrusting power to procreate, the legs the mobility of the body and the feet the direction you go, likewise are the two “minor,” “rabbinical” *Sefirot* of *netzach* and *hod* to the Biblical body. They are both the word of God only emanating from different parts of the divine body.

Here are some of the similarities: Both occurred relatively late in Jewish history and both are rabbinical in origin. The same “Al HaNissim” blessing is recited for both *Chanukah* and Purim at the same place in Berchat haMazon and in the silent Amida (after “Modim” which kabbalistically is the juncture for the *Sefirot* of *netzach* and *hod*). Both were orchestrated by a “*nes nestar*” (lit. a concealed miracle), a supra-natural event that manifested in natural phenomena, i.e., the military victories, etc.

Here are some of the appositional distinctions: *Chanukah*, when revealing its masculine-*netzach* aspect overflows with oil, specifically olive oil (which is always associated with the *sefira* of *chochma*/wisdom, which is the head of the right column of the ten *Sefirot*). It is this oil and its spiritual analogs that drip down from *chachma* through *chesed* into *netzach*. Thus, *netzach* is the application of Divine Wisdom in a lower, material realm. Oil is the essence of *netzach* and therefore of *Chanukah*. Purim, on the other hand, when revealing its feminine-*hod* aspect overflows with wine, which orchestrates the entire story of Megilat Ester from the beginning to the end. Wine is always associated with the *sefira* of *bina*/understanding that is the head of the left column of the ten *Sefirot*. Thus, *hod* is the application of Divine Understanding in a lower, material realm. It is this wine and its spiritual analogs that drip down from *bina* through *gevura* into *hod*.

Hod, although it is portrayed as being completely appositional with *netzach*, it actually resides a bit lower than does *netzach* and therefore begins to descend into the realm below it. This spiritual phenomenon, once again, has its analog in the human body. Many of the organs on the left side of the body actually reside lower than their double. Most people don’t know it but the left lung, left kidney, and left testicle descend more than their right counterparts. (Likewise, in the female the left fallopian tube is positioned asymmetric to the right one). Although we do not discern any difference physiologically there is a significant effect regarding the *sefira* of *hod*. Its descent brings it closer to the realm of the *qlipot*, the forces of material and potentially negative energy and make it vulnerable to infection and spiritual contamination. To this phenomenon is applied the verse “Her feet (of *hod*) descend into death”. Likewise the verse “*Hodi nepach alai l’mashheet*” – [“I was left alone and I saw this great vision...] and my glorious appearance (*hod*) was horribly transformed” (Daniel 1—8) alludes to this phenomenon.

In contrast to *netzach*/Purim the descending and additional material nature of *hod*/*Chanukah* will explain why the story of *Chanukah* was never canonized into the 24 books of Tanach. Purim has Megilat Ester but the events of *Chanukah* have no mention at all in Scripture! The Books of the Hashmonaim, although they have important spiritual value, were never a part of Torah. In fact, until only this last century they were lost for the most part and unknown to most Jewish scholars! Even more enigmatic is that the story and laws of Purim have an entire tractate of the Talmud devoted to it. Not only does *Chanukah* not have its own tractate, but also it is not even mentioned once in the whole of the Mishna – the original codex and digest of the oral tradition! (It is, however, dealt with in the Gemora portion of the Talmud and its laws are discussed there as well as its own section in the Jewish Code of Law).

The key to the enigma of *Chanukah*, now viewed from a cosmological perspective, is clear and simple yet refreshing deep. Just as *hod* descends “outside” of the Adamic body so does the Biblical and rabbinical nature of *Chanukah*. It is on the chronological periphery of time and spirituality precisely because it is on the spatial periphery of the *Sefirot*, the cosmic structure of creation! It couldn’t be any

other way. Moreover, another strange puzzle is resolved. As known, the victory of *Chanukah* ultimately ends in disaster. Some 150 years later the Hasmonean reign came to a tragic end and set the stage for the destruction of the Second Temple. This was due to family rivalry, Hellenistic assimilation and the singular episode in Jewish history of forced conversion by the late Hasmonean rulers that allowed the tyrant king Herod to gain control over the Jewish kingdom. This occurred because the ruling Hasmoneans were all kohanim – from the priestly class --, but according to Divine decree the kingdom of Israel needed to be governed only by the genealogical seed of King David. After the Hasmoneans regained autonomy and religious freedom their children and grandchildren refused to give up their power to the Davidic line [5].

With the kabbalistic perspective based on the *Sefirotic* model we can now also add an additional insight to an underlying reason for the tragic chronology of events to manifest. *Chanukah* with its roots in *hod* was extremely vulnerable to failure due to its intrinsic nature on a number of fronts as explained. This is in the mystery of “and my glorious appearance (*hod*) was horribly transformed”. This propensity, which the early Hasmonean leaders and sages did not sufficiently take into consideration, opened up a Pandora’s box of materialism, assimilation and unwise association with “external elements”. *Chanukah* did and continues to reveal the glory of *hod* and all of its divine qualities on both the physical and spiritual level. The shadow side of *Chanukah*, the backside of *hod* also did and continues to reveal its unpleasant qualities, as well. One only has to look at the usurping of *Chanukah* by secular Zionism as an exclusively inspirational military achievement on one hand and the “Christmasization” of *Chanukah* by modern society, on the other.

The hidden depths and complexity of *Chanukah* and Purim are apparent in an otherwise strange statement of the sages, “Even if all the other festivals [in the future world] will be annulled, *Chanukah* and Purim will not be annulled.” This esoteric formula, however, will be more fully explained when we come to Purim and that requires a whole other chapter.

Notes:

[1] See my various chapters explaining the Adamic Time Line. There are, however, many implicit references in the Chumash to *Chanukah* and Purim, as is well known. This is because “There is nothing that is not encoded in the Torah (*Zohar*).” The time for them to emerge along with all the rabbinical ordinances were had simply not yet come.

[2] Talmud and *Zohar*.

[3] Although the insertion of *Al HaNissim* for both days starts out at the same point the second paragraph is distinct for *Chanukah* and Purim. It is interesting to observe that in many siddurim, the second paragraphs are placed side by side which is precisely the appositional relationship between *netzach* and *hod*. Furthermore, the insertion for *Chanukah* is much longer than the insertion for Purim. Why would the sages have made this liturgical distinction? It is possible to say that they are alluding to the additional quality of *Chanukah/hod* that is “weightier” and descends lower into the material realm than does Purim/*netzach*, as I have explained above.

[4] Arizal Likutie Torah. The Ari also points this out in “Kol ha yom daveh” – The entire day was sorrow”, the verse from Lamentations depicting the destruction of the Temple on Tisha B’Av. *Daveh* is *hod* spelled backwards, i.e., when the glory of *hod* gets infected and becomes inverted upon itself it will, more readily than any other part of the *Sefirotic* body, reveal its dark, back side.

[5] Ramban (Nachmonides).



Tu B'Shvat The Secret of Male & Female Symmetry

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One of the least known of Jewish festivals is *Tu B'Shvat* – the 15th day of the month of *Shvat*. Since ancient times, *Tu B'Shvat* has been known as the New Year of the Trees. Through the ages the significance of this day has been expounded upon and observed especially by the Hassidim and the kabbalists. Outside traditional circles, however, it had been obscure until revitalized in the last century and reincarnated in modern day Israel as the secular Arbor Day – a day dedicated to the planting of trees.

The Talmud in tractate *Rosh HaShana* tells us that by this point in winter the majority of the rainfall to come during the year has already arrived and the trees have begun to grow. One of the customs is to increase the consumption of different types of fruits on this day," in honor of the significance of the day to trees and their fruits." This is a custom which many people keep nowadays, using fruits which the Torah mentions in conjunction with the land of Israel: grapes, figs, pomegranates, and dates [1]." What is strange is that *Tu B'Shvat* takes place in the dead of winter when there is really no fruit yet on the trees. To answer that "*Sof maaseh b'machshava techila*" - "The final act is in the initial intention" or that, therefore, we celebrate the inception of an act is not sufficient from a deeper perspective. What is the kabbalistic connection between *Tu B'Shvat* and trees [2]?

Ritualized observance of *Tu B'Shvat* goes back to the 17th century among Sephardic communities where Kabbalah was openly studied. A *Tu B'Shvat* Seder loosely modeled after the Passover Seder was composed [3]. The ritual involved amassing all the different species of fruit and grains, organizing them according to their kabbalistic hierarchy (ratio of *qlipa*/shell to *pril*/fruit in each of the four spiritual dimensions), meditating upon their different significance and then invoking the appropriate blessing and consuming them. Red and white wines were also used.

Recently the ancient *Tu B'Shvat* Seder has been embellished and made available to the English speaking public. Along with this there is also an ever-growing genre of writings and *drashes* (sermonettes) surrounding *Tu B'Shvat*, about the Torah's comparison of man to a tree [4], as well as the Torah's comparison of Torah to a tree [5]. Additionally, the mystical significance of fruit and vegetation and the spiritual mechanics of eating and blessings is expounded upon. However, despite the renewed custom of holding a "*Tu B'Shvat* Seder" and despite all the interesting and sweet ideas, we still don't have a sufficient explanation, which penetrates into the hidden light of *Tu B'Shvat*.

As "mystical" as *Tu B'Shvat* can appear to be on the outside there is an astounding secret that lies buried within the fruit. *Tu B'Shvat* contains the seeds of an unexpected fruit that holds a key to understanding the Torah's mystery of gender -- masculine and feminine energy.

Paradoxically, to understand the little known significance of *Tu B'Shvat* we need to understand its relationship to an even lesser known Jewish festival: *Tu B'Av* -- the 15th day of the month of *Av*. It is recorded in *Mishna Taanit* that in ancient times there were no holidays as joyous for the Jewish People as the fifteenth of *Av* and *Yom Kippur*. Only in the last few decades has this day also been resurrected from its ancient heritage and become popular among Jewish women's groups of all denominations. This day is even known in modern, secular Israel as the Festival of Love!

It is significant that in the last generations both these “minor” festival days have returned to Jewish consciousness and that they have similar names. On both the Fifteenth of *Shvat* and the Fifteenth of *Av* we observe a partial festival; we don't say *Tachanun*, a daily plea for Divine mercy, on the day itself, nor even in the Afternoon Service of the day preceding the fifteenth, similar to a full-scale festival. Bride and groom also do not fast, as they normally would, if the fifteenth is the day of their marriage.

These shared traditions, however, are just the beginning of the two “*Tu*” connections. Truthfully, they share a profound cosmological connection with each other. In this chapter some of the hidden symmetries between the two will be explored with an emphasis on *Tu B'Shvat*, the secret of the sacred masculine [6]. As we will see below from a *Torah-graphical* perspective the pivotal teaching is that each festival cannot be fully understood without juxtaposing and interfacing one with the other. When viewed from this perspective *Tu B'Shvat* and *Tu B'Av* are keys to an authentic Biblical understanding of the paradoxical nature of masculine and feminine energy.

“The Female Surrounds the Male”

In the Kabbalah there are two modes of divine energy that appear on many levels. They are known as “straight,” “linear” or “erect” light, and “round,” “curved” or “returning” light; light being a metaphor for two potencies within the *Ain Sof*. Linear light (*ohr yashar*), is masculine-like Divinity and curved light (*ohr chozer*), is feminine-like Divinity. (They are also manifestations of the divine forces known as the *Hasadim* and *gevurot*).

A verse in Scripture, “The female surrounds the male [7],” reflects this spiritual law of creation. Any reference to surrounding, enclosing, encircling is reflecting feminine-like energy. When *Tu B'Av* and the historical events that occurred on that day are analyzed, a recurring element of feminine energy is revealed at its core. “And the daughters of Jerusalem would go out [on *Tu B'Av*] and dance in the vineyards located on the outskirts of the city [i.e. “surrounding” the city]. And everyone who didn't have a wife would go there.” The dance that was performed was a *machol*, a circle dance. This is a dance of the surrounding divine feminine energy that encircles the masculine as reflected in the verse “The female surrounds the male.”

That which is encircled in the middle is the male aspect. Similarly, wherever a Scriptural reference is made to standing (as opposed to sitting), arising and linear movement this is reflecting masculine-like energy. An example of masculine spiritual energy is the *Sefer Torah* -- the physical scroll of the Five Books of Moses. When the *Sefer Torah* is wrapped up it reflects the straight, upright light of Divinity – the masculine aspect that radiates outward [8]. This quality is captured in the verse that is chanted when the ark is opened and the masculine light of the Written Torah (as opposed to the feminine light of the Oral Torah) is removed for public readings, “*Arise, O Lord and disperse Your enemies.*” When the Torah is returned another verse is recited, “*Torah is a tree of life for all that grasp it [9].*” The association of the “tree of life” with the *Sefer Torah* is more than a poetic metaphor. The tree, its structure and its growth process is specifically masculine energy.

As *Tu B'Av* is to the mystery of the curved and circular energy of the feminine, *Tu B'Shvat* is the rectilinear potency of the masculine. In the dead of the winter on the 15th of *Shvat*, although there is no fruit apparent, the sap deep within the trees begins to rise throughout their limbs. More than a metaphor for the blood of the tree a deeper teaching is that the sap is the *zerah*, the sacred masculine seed [10]. Once this key is supplied the secret of *Tu B'Shvat* and the Jewish men's movement becomes apparent.

A custom alluded to in the *Mishna* tells us about the New Year for Trees. The *Mishna* calls the New Year “*Rosh HaShana L'Ilan*,” - The New Year for the Tree. Why does the *Mishna* refer to “tree” in the singular rather than in the plural? Why wasn't the New Year called “*Rosh HaShana L'Ilanot*,” The New Year for Trees? The answer is related to a tradition that on *Tu B'Shvat*, we should pray that for next

Sukkot we should be able to acquire a beautiful and kosher *Etrog*, so we can fulfill the commandment of taking that one of the Four Species to the fullest. This is alluded to by the *Mishna's* use of the word "tree" in the singular: *The* tree that we need in order to fulfill a commandment begins its new year, and in order to assure that we can obtain the fruit of *that* tree, we should pray for it on that day [11].

In Leviticus 23:40, the *Etrog* is described as *pri aitz hadar* - "fruit of the majestic tree." The *Etrog* is the most spiritual of all trees, as its fruit and bark both have fine taste and smell. The *Mishna's* reference to the New Year of the Tree can also be seen as an allusion to the equation between the concept of the tree and the tree like qualities of the human structure. The Ten *Sefirot* are a tree like structure, which are also an adamic/human form with the ten emanations corresponding to the ten limbs of the body. It is this divine tree, the supernal image of man that is emerging on *Tu B'Shvat* in the mystery of the masculine [12].

Furthermore, the *Etrog* fruit, *pri aitz hadar*, is specifically associated with masculine energy. Although it is virtually impossible to picture the higher dimensional Tree of Knowledge, it is possible to understand some of the esoteric elements that are contained within it. "What fruit was the Tree of Knowledge?" ask the sages. They answer that "It was wheat" from one perspective, "It was grapes" from another and "It was figs" from still another [13]. From a fourth perspective, however, "It was an *Etrog* [14]". Are the sages in disagreement? No. Rather, the sages are alluding to a common spiritual pattern throughout the Kabbalah, the triune sefirotic structure of *chesed*, *gevura* and *tiferet*. The initial letters of these three substances "wheat," "grape," and "fig," in Hebrew, are *chet*, *gimmel* and *tav*— the same three initial letters for *chesed*, *gevurah* and *tiferet* — right, left, and middle. The *Etrog* is the fourth pillar in the constellation, the *yesod-malchut* continuum.

Now, there are two modes of *malchut*, when it is separate, in and of itself and when it is attached to the body of the other *sefirot*. When it is viewed as a separate entity it is totally feminine. When it is attached to the body it is called the *ateret hayesod*, the crown or corona of the male *yesod* and it is now part of the larger masculine structure. This is apparent in the *mitzvah* of taking the *Lulav*. In order for the entirety of the Four Species to be complete the *Etrog* must be held together with the *Lulav*, the *yesod*. The *Etrog* has a paradoxical nature: Although it is feminine in form it is part of a larger masculine structure. The Tree par excellence representing *Tu B'Shvat* is the *Etrog*.

What is in the essence of *Tu B'Av* that exudes so much feminine energy (based on the chapter detailing *Tu B'Av*) and what is in the essence of the day of *Tu B'Shvat* that exudes so much masculine energy?

"Male and Female He Created Them"

There is a cosmological principle that everything comes in pairs.

The *Midrash* states [15], "Said the Holy One to Yisrael, 'My children, all that I have created I created in paired units (*zugot*). Heaven and earth are a paired unit. The sun and the moon are a paired unit. Adam and Hava (Eve) are a paired unit. This world and the incoming world (*olam habah*) are a paired unit...." Likewise, the Talmud states [16], "All that the Holy One created in His world He created male and female, even the Leviathan...."

Kabbalah views everything in terms of an Adamic-like structure, i.e., comprised of a constellation of parts arranged in symmetrical form. Thus, everything has a "head," "torso," "feet," left side, right side, front and back. This is the meaning that "Man/Adam is made in the image of God." All spatial objects have this form. Time, that unmovable and mysterious river that runs through reality is no different. It also has a cosmic form and it too comes in pairs.

The Jewish months are 12 in number but in Torah reality they are viewed as a structure of six pairs that are back to back with each other:

<i>Nissan</i>	<i>Tishrey</i>
<i>Iyar</i>	<i>Cheshvan</i>
<i>Sivan</i>	<i>Kislev</i>
<i>Tammuz</i>	<i>Tevet</i>
<i>Av</i>	<i>Shvat</i>
<i>Elul</i>	<i>Adar</i>

The first of *Tishrey* is *Rosh HaShana* (lit. Head of the Year), it is the head of the right side that is aligned with the masculine principle. *Nissan*, in which occurs Passover, is the head of the left side which is aligned with the feminine principle. There is much to be explored here, but what is interesting to note is that the months of *Av* and *Shvat* come as a pair. The full moon (the 15th of the month) of *Tu B'Av* and *Tu B'Shvat*, are masculine and feminine twins with each other!

Furthermore, when the *chagim*, the Jewish festivals, are superimposed upon the adamic form of the seven, lower *sefirot* an amazing symmetry forms before our eyes.

Lower Seven Sefirot of “Festival Man”

Biblical in origin

<i>Gevurah</i> (Power) left arm/hand (2) <u>Rosh HaShana,</u> <u>Yom Kippur, Sukkot</u>	<i>Chesed</i> (Lovingkindness) right arm/hand (1) <u>Passover</u>
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Tiferet (Harmony)
Torso
(3) Shavuot

Rabbinical in origin

<i>Hod</i> (Splendor) left kidney/gonad/leg (5) <u>Chanuka</u>	<i>Netzach</i> (Eternity) right kidney/gonad/leg (4) <u>Purim</u>
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Yesod (Foundation-Channel)
reproductive organs
(6) Tu B'Av / Tu B'Shvat

Malchut (Kingdom)
Mouth of reproductive channel,
Microcosm revealing the sum total of the sefirot from above
(7) To be revealed in the Messianic Era

There is a kabbalistic logic as to why each festival is located and aligned with each particular *sefira*. Relevant to our investigation, however, is that the twins of *Tu B'Av* and *Tu B'Shvat* correspond to the reproductive center of the "Festival Man" keeping in mind that the "festival" structure of time is both male and female as that is the original divine form.

The field of embryology teaches us that up until seven weeks of gestation the embryo is asexual. It has no gender yet, rather its developing sexual organs are potentially both male and female. When the Y-chromosome instructs it to become male the rudimentary organs begin to protrude outward to become the male reproductive system. Conversely, when the X-chromosome instructs it to become female the rudimentary organs begin to invert inward to become the female reproductive system. Consequently the male and female organs are said to be homologous to each other, i.e. they are similar in structure and origin, though not necessarily in function, as the wings of a bird and the hands of a human being.

Using this model, it follows that *Tu B'Av* and *Tu B'Shvat* are spiritual homologues to each other in the yearly cycle of time. That they are both located in the reproductive center of the sefiratic, adamic structure is precisely so. Because of this, *Tu B'Av* exudes an aura of romance, reproduction and feminine energies both in its origins and even in its rebirth in our generation. As *Tu B'Av* is to the mystery of the curved and circular energy of the feminine, *Tu B'Shvat* is the rectilinear potency of the masculine. In the dead of the winter on the 15th of *Shvat* the sap of the trees begins to rise throughout their limbs. Penetrating into the mystery of time, passion, marriage and birth [17].

One of the classic talmudic "disputes" is the question as to when the world was created. One perspective maintains it occurred in *Tishrey* and the other maintains it occurred in *Nissan*. Both views are correct. *Tishrey* is when we observe *Rosh HaShana*, the New Year and the creation of the world. *Nissan*, however, is also a New Year and it is on the 15th of *Nissan* that we observe Pesach (the essence of Pesach actually begins on the 1st as per a passage in the *Haggadah*). Using the diagram above we can begin to understand that, once again, the sages are not arguing but rather one is reflecting the masculine side of the world's creation and the other the feminine side. Both are true and necessary.

Bear in mind that it is actually the masculine and feminine aspects of the world along with Adam and Eve that are being created on the *Rosh HaShana* new years of both *Tishrey* and *Nissan*. Both *Rosh HaShanas* are coinciding with the creation of Adam. The creation of the respective masculine and feminine worlds came into existence 5 days earlier. Looking at the relationship of the 6 months of the right side to the 6 months of the left side it will be observed that the world was actually created on the 25th of *Elul* and the 25th of *Adar* respectively. *Tu B'Shvat*, the 15th of *Shvat* appears exactly 40 days before the 25th of *Adar* when the "feminine" side of the world was created. *Tu B'Av*, the 15th of *Av* is exactly 40- days before the 25th of *Elul* when the "masculine" side of the world was created.

Forty is a special value throughout Torah but here it has an additional significance. The Talmud teaches that 40 days before physical conception takes place it is "announced in heaven" the basic characteristics of the soul that is about to come into the world. What the gender of the soul will be is also determined 40 days before [18]. Thus, 40 days before the female side of the world comes into existence (the process is always recurring as it states "He renews the creation everyday"), the erect, expanding energy of the masculine tree is releasing its sap and the seed essence of the tree begins rising. 40 days before the male side of the world comes into existence the containing, curved energy of the feminine dance is generating its circle. *Tu B'Shvat* and *Tu B'Av* are the vortex of the cosmic *yesod* of the world. 40 days before the birth of the world the divine hormones are released into the phenomenon of time to orchestrate the sacred Hebrew calendar [19].

The union of *Tu B'Shvat* and *Tu B'Av* in the future (i.e. on a higher dimension) is revealed in a formula of the sages: "In the future the Holy One will make a circle dance for the righteous *tzaddikim* and each one will point with his finger [to the middle] and declare, This is our God...!" The *tzaddik* here is the *yesod* of mankind as is known from the formula "The *tzaddik* is the *yesod*/channel of the world" (Psalms). The feminine energy of the circle dance is obvious. The pointed finger, however, is a code for masculine

energy. Both are now united forever in the cosmic dance of eternity. "And the one who understands will understand."

Notes:

[1] *Shulchan Aruch, Magen Avraham*.

[2] Additionally, it can be said that spiritually *Tu B'Shvat*, the New Year for Trees, comes during a "dead period" of the festivals. The high of the High Holidays is far behind, and the intense preparations for Pesach have not yet begun.

[3] *Pri Aitz Hadar* (Fruit of the Majestic Tree). This small work was originally part of a larger Kabbalistic work, *Chemdat Yamim*, which according to some was written by a follower of Shabbtai Zvi, although there is virtually nothing in the *sefer* that is questionable.

[4] "A person is like the tree of a field..." (Deut. 20:19); "For as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people" (Isaiah 65:22); "He will be like a tree planted near water..." (Jeremiah 17:8).

[5] "Torah is a tree of life for all who grasp it"(Proverbs 3:18).

[6] There were no holidays so joyous for the Jewish People as the Fifteenth of *Av* and *Yom HaKippurim*, for on those days, daughters of Yerushalayim would go out dressed in borrowed white clothing (so that they would all look the same). The King's daughters would borrow from those of the High Priest. Daughters of the High Priest would borrow from the Assistant High Priest's daughters; daughters of the Assistant would borrow from the daughters of the Priest designated to lead the People in times of War, the *Kohen* Anointed for War's daughters would borrow from the daughters of the Ordinary Priest. And the daughters of the rest of the Jewish People would borrow from each other, so as not to embarrass those who didn't have." "And the daughters of Jerusalem would go out and dance in the vineyards located on the outskirts of the city. And everyone who didn't have a wife would go there." "And what would they say?" "Young man, lift up your eyes and choose wisely. Don't look only at physical beauty - look rather at the family - "For charm is false, and beauty is vanity. A G-d - fearing woman is the one to be praised..." (Mishlei/Proverbs 31:30)."

[7] Jeremiah.

[8] This is even more apparent in the Sephardic *Sefer Torah* that is contained in a cylindrical case that opens vertically and sits upright both in the ark and on top of the reader's platform.

[9] Another connection between male energy and planting is from Yoma 38, "The Holy One, blessed be He, saw that the *Tzaddikim* [=upright=yesod] are few, therefore He planted them throughout all generations, as it is said: For the pillars of the earth are HaShem's, and He has set the world upon them.

[10] Another allusion to the connection with the masculine is that the month *Shvat* is spelled the same as *Shevet* - stick, rod, staff.

[11] *B'nai Yesaschar*, a classic Hassidic work.

[12] The magnum opus of Arizal's Kabbalah is also named *Eitz Chayim*, Tree of Life.

[13] Berachot.

[14] Midrash Rabba.

[15] Midrash Rabba VaEthanah - 31

[16] Baba Bathra 74b

[17] Fruit for thought: The Mishna tells us that the school of Shammai maintained that the new year for trees is not on the 15th day of Shevat, but rather on the first day of the month of Shevat. We currently follow the opinion of the school of Hillel, and observe the New Year for trees on the 15th of Shevat. In the messianic era, as known, the world will switch over to Shammai's perspective (which is kabbalistically on a higher level). What then is the Torographical homologue between the first of Av and the first of Shevat?

[18] "Rav Yehudah has said in the name of Rav: Forty days before the creation of a child, a Bat Kol issues forth and announces..." Sotah 2a

[19] There is an obvious question that requires more exploration: Why are masculine hormones stimulating the birth of the feminine and vice versa? One answer is the kabbalistic principle that going to the extreme of anything will produce its opposite.



AD D'LO YADA

The Esoteric Purpose Of Wine On Purim

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*"Not Every Head Can Handle This"
The Holy Zohar*

Concerning the observance of Purim the *Shulchan Aruch* (Jewish Code of Law), chapter 695, records an ancient tradition from the Talmud, "On Purim one is obligated to become inebriated (from the root *-BISUM*) until one no longer knows the difference (*ad d'lo yada*) between 'The blessing of Mordechai' and 'The curse of Haman [1]'. The Talmud then continues to tell of two 4th century sages Rabba [2] and Rav Zeira who once made the Purim Feast together. "After they had felt the effects of the wine (*BISUM*) Rabba arose and slayed Rav Zeira (*shahat* - literally meaning ritually slaughtered at the throat). The next day, after the effects of the wine had passed [3], Rabba performed prayers for Rav Zeira and brought him back to life. The following year Rabba said to Rav Zeira, 'Come and let us make the Purim Feast together'. 'Miracles', Rav Zeira replied, 'are not apt to regularly occur on the hour'".

This ancient tradition and its legal/halachic ramifications has been expounded upon by the great legal codifiers and kabbalists for well over the last one thousand years. Yet, for many of us the significance and inner meaning of this mitzvah remains hidden.

To begin, the key Hebrew term upon which the mitzvah of Ad D'lo Yada revolves is *-BISUM*. *BISUM* is a general category that includes three related, but distinct states of mind. The first state is the *BISUM* produced by wine intoxication. This *BISUM* is a state of exhilaration and can also refer to *shikur*, a state of drunkenness [4].

The second state of mind refers to a mode of expanded consciousness and increased awareness without the usage of wine or any external agent. In the Book of the Zohar [5] it is recorded that while three members of the group headed by Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai were deeply immersed in the study of the Torah many great things were revealed to them. So great was their comprehension and the transcendental rapture that their souls were actually drawn out of their bodies in a kiss of ecstasy and thus they "dropped their bodies" and left this world for good. The term used to describe their state of mind just before their death is *BISUM*. There is no indication that the three rabbis had drunk any wine [6].

The third state of *BISUM* is the *BISUM* of the *Ad D'lo Yada* of Purim. It is a synthesis of the first two modes of *BISUM*. Here, "*Libbisumay Ad D'lo Yada*" refers to the obligation to become inebriated until one no longer knows the difference between the archetypal roots of good and evil. It is a profound state of intoxication where normal discriminatory knowledge is ritually surrendered in transcendental rapture. The goal is to achieve the second state (which is without the use of wine) yet, using the wine of the first state as a stepping stone to achieve the desired results. *Libbisumay Ad D'lo Yada* is really independent of wine intoxication in itself. Rather, wine (and possibly other liqueurs as well [7]) is used as a springboard to get to that state of consciousness. It is not the alcoholic experience alone that is being sought. Thus, it is not handed down that we must become *shikkur* (drunk) but rather *Libbisumay Ad D'lo Yada* [8].

Wine is drunk at the festive meal of Purim day also because of its intrinsic connection with the events of Purim itself [9]. However, the esoteric reason for using wine in the performance of this Mitzvah is because

alcoholic intoxication has the ability to numb, make dormant and to temporarily "put to sleep" a specific aspect of human consciousness. From the perspective of the sages this is in order to stimulate and "wake up" a different aspect of consciousness which we are now attempting to harness.

The kabbalists explain [10] that, ultimately speaking, within all negative aspects of existence (the shell/*k'lipa*) there is concealed an element of divinity which radiates within it sustaining it and giving it life. Yet, from the perspective of our everyday reality evil is evil and a transgression is a transgression and both require rectification. However, the *k'lipa* of evil, since it is also a creation of G-d and serves the ultimate good of the Divine Will, it must also be given recognition and validity. Not only this, but it must even be accorded proper respect and honor. This is not to say that bad is good, G-d forbid, or even that evil itself produces good. Rather, it is the animating spark of divinity that is concealed within the evil that we are acknowledging and honoring. However, due to the divine spark's complete and utter concealment beneath the cloak of evil it is not perceivable to us. Therefore, we can not have any existential relationship with it, and in fact, it is forbidden to do so except in theory and even then only from a great distance [11].

The Creator has decreed that there is a unique time and place for everything because in the whole picture of growth and perfection this is a necessity. Therefore, on one day out of the yearly cycle, on the day of the Purim Feast we are obliged to perform this crucial mitzvah. We therefore give a place of honor to this normally forbidden element to also feast and receive pleasure right alongside of us at the *Seudat Mitzvah*, the central meal of Purim. But, if this is done, it must be done completely *Ad D'lo Yada*— when one transcends the mind's logical screening and sorting mechanisms and can no longer distinguish between the blessing of Mordechai and the curse of Haman, as explained above. Otherwise, if performed when one still perceives what bad is then the external evil itself will receive the blessing and sustenance, G-d forbid, and not the true good trapped within, which is the real aim [12]. This then is the meaning of BARUCH HAMAN. Haman, who was from the seed of Amalek, who in turn was the human carrier for the Primordial Serpent which is the epitome of evil and the antithesis of good, is now in our changed state of *Ad D'lo Yada* given a blessing.

Why does this state of *BISUM* apply and function only on Purim and not on any other occasion? In light of the above, the answer is that in order for all events of the story of Purim to take place, the element of bad was temporarily given full validity and permission to run rampant and take control in an honorable fashion with G-d's goodness apparently concealed. His goodness was dormant and not functioning [13]. Therefore, the Creator Himself was, so to speak, *Ad D'lo Yada*—without the normal discriminatory powers between Good and Evil. This of course, was done with intention and in the end the holiness within the evil produced the most wonderful and total good in that the whole Jewish Nation took upon itself the Torah anew with all the Oral Laws, with a love and commitment that even exceeded that of the original revelation at Mount Sinai [14]. This 'heavenly' *Ad D'lo Yada* is hinted at in the fact that the Scroll of Esther is the only one of the twenty-four books of the Bible that does not mention G-d's name. Furthermore, the name Esther means concealment. In this historical episode is found the greatest revelation of this hidden and profound principle of G-d's creation [15]. Thus, even in the future the Sages state "the days of Purim will never cease" [16]. Our Sages therefore extracted and crystallized this essential point and encoded it within the formula "on Purim one is required *Libbisumay Ad D'lo Yada*".

If performed properly, this mitzvah produces a great act of rectification (*Tikun*) for the world. Likewise, we can understand this mitzvah to be an exercise in learning how to handle everything in life including one's own personal "Haman" or shadow self. A proper place and due respect must be given to all the aspects of one's self as well as to others in order to make the changes necessary to facilitate growth. This is required even though these aspects of life and personality may feel foreign and forbidding.

With this understanding, let us now explain Rabba and Rav Zeira's Purim Feast. This drama is brought after the Halacha to show support for it [17]. It actually sets an example for us to follow and gives us precise directions on how to perform this mitzvah.

The two sages were both immersed in the sod/mystery of *Ad D'lo Yada* as explained above. Rabba was revealing to Rav Zeira the most profound secrets about the cosmic drama of Purim and the paradoxical

nature of good and evil [18]. They had used the wine to induce the expanded state of consciousness of *Bisum*, and through the intense happiness and joy of coming so close to HaShem they transcended the normal physical realm, similar to the Jews who had left their bodies when receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai, and entered into the blissful state of *Ad D'lo Yada*. At this point, as they were both guiding and directing each other through the subtle emotional and esoteric channels from one dimension to another, Rabba, so to speak, "overcame" Rav Zeira and took him one step too far. His soul was completely drawn out of his body in a state of ecstatic *Bisum*. This is the intended meaning of "Rabba AROSE and SHACHAT Rav Zeira". Here the dictionary definition of *SHACHAT* is "to stretch" or "to draw out" [19]. Even in its common usage of "to slaughter" the act is intended to imply that Rabba actually did kill Rav Zeira, because this is literally what occurred. When his soul left his body he was quite dead [20]. The "accident" involving Rav Zeira's death was not due to the fact that he was spiritually weak and could not maintain such a state of consciousness [21] but rather, it was because the physical body of Rav Zeira could not withstand the explosive pressure of what his soul was experiencing [22]. Thus, the next year we see that Rav Zeira exempted himself from the Mitzvah, all quite legally because he now knew that the vessel of his body could not withstand this particular level of spiritual intensity. From this we learn that if the performance of this Mitzvah could become injurious in any way to a person that one is exempt from it [23]. From the fact that the Gemora concludes that the next year Rav Zeira did not answer "Yes, but this time let's just limit the amount of wine", it is clear that they really were doing the Mitzvah properly, and it could not be properly done with a lesser amount of wine [24]. It was only due to the technicality of his physical health that he replied "miracles are not apt to regularly occur on the hour".

Surely this is a Mitzvah only for those in search of great spirituality! What an honor and privilege it is to be blessed to experience a glimpse of the other side of G-d's infinite creation. But who can ascend the mountains of the Lord and maintain such the delicate balance between the physical and the spiritual? If one slips on the rocky slopes, G-d forbid, more will be lost than gained. Still, this is a Mitzvat D'Rabbanan - a positive commandment of the Sages and one is required to perform it like every other Mitzvah. One cannot exempt oneself without due cause. However, because of the condition of the generations after the close of the Gemora, and all the more so in our present generation, many of the leading Rabbis sought out legitimate means for an alternative approach while still keeping within the spirit of the Halacha -- this helps to explain the wide variance of views on the subject.

In the same chapter quoted above from the Shulchan Aruch, the Rama adds "one doesn't need to get so intoxicated, but rather just to drink more than his normal consumption and then sleep [25]". Thus, in his sleep he won't know the difference between the curse of Haman and the blessing of Mordechai [26]; this is also the final conclusion of the Mishna Berura (the "Chofetz Chayim" a leading ethical and legal authority of the previous generation of European Jewry).

In opposition to one who might think that it is better not to drink at all, the *Mishna Berura* adds that one should drink a little more than one normally does for the purpose of remembering the great miracle of Purim. However, it is concluded that if one knows that if he drinks he won't be able to perform the required Mitzvahs of washing for bread, after blessings, praying the afternoon and evening [or next morning!] service or that he will act in an improper or frivolous manner then it is better he should not drink at all. Only, that one's intentions should be for the sake of Heaven.

Notes:

[1] For this translation as opposed to the traditional "cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai, see Chachmat Manoach at the end of Gemora Megilah and Nefesh HaChayim Gate II.

[2] The texts of many Rishonim read Rava instead of Rabba.

[3] This addition is found in the text of the Ayn Ya'akov

[4] See Shabbat 66b and Baba Batra 73b where in the latter it is used to describe a state of euphoria. However, see Sanhedrin 38a where a wine induced state of BISUM acts as a catalyst for prophesy.

[5] Idra Rabba page 144 at the end of Parsha Naso.

[6] Sefer Ben Yehoyada on the Ayn Ya'akov Megilah 76 by the Kabbalist R. Yosef Chayim (the "Ben Ish Chai"). In fact, the term Bisum is used throughout the Zohar as well as in the writings of the Ari ZAL and in chassidic teaching.

[7] Sefer Mikra'ay Kodesh by R. Zvi Pesach Frank who deals with this question.

[8] Ibid.

[9] End of exposition of R. Chayim Vital on Purim in Pri Etz Chayim.

[10] See Sha'ar haKavonos and Shulchan Aruch of the Ari ZAL also Tur Barakes by R. Chayim Cohen, a student of R. Chayim Vital, the Sidur Kol Ya'akov (Ari ZAL) and Kitsur Kavonos of the Ramchal.

[11] For similar related concepts concerning good and evil on Purim see Taz brought in Mishna Berura, Gra on Shulchan Aruch, Chachmas Manoach on Gemora loc. cit. and many others.

[12] Ari ZAL, Ramchal.

[13] Sha'ar haKavonos Derush al Purim of the Ari ZAL for similar explanation.

[14] Gemora Shabbos 88a.

[15] Ari ZaL.

[16] Yalkut Mishley 944.

[17] Pri Chadash at end of Shulchan Aruch and others as opposed to Rabbeinu Efraim. Ba'al haMeor, Ran, Meiri and others who hold that the Gemora rejected the Halacha, the Bach holds that the incident is brought only to limit the Halacha.

[18] Shnei Luchos haBris (Shalah) end of Parshas Tizaveh.

[19] Sefer Ben Y'Hoyada in the name of the Kabbalists.

[20] However, see Maharshaw who does not learn "kill" literally, but that Rabba "overcame" Rebbe Zeira with too much wine and he became sick, also Meiri learns *sachat* -- to squeeze or bruise. R. Ya'akov Emden on the Gemora also does not learn kill literally- but Ari ZAL, Shalah and others, learn he actually died.

[21] But, see Shalah that he died as in the case of Ben Zoma.

[22] See Sidur Beis Ya'akov of R. Ya'akov Emden who writes similarly that when his father, the great Chacham Zvi, was in his youth he performed the mitzvah literally, i.e., when he had a strong physical body.

[23] She'aray Teshuva in Shulchan Aruch 695.

[24] Pri Chadash, loc cit.

[25] Pri Chadash, loc cit.

[26] For possibility here, see above about G-d, so to speak, sleeping.



Passover And The Mystery of the Black Hole of Egypt

The Exodus story they never told you in Sunday school

Ten miles west of the city of Cairo lies an object that has intrigued and bewildered historians, philosophers and scientists for many centuries. The only remaining of the traditional Seven Wonders of the ancient world, the Great Pyramid of Giza is often described as the most sublime landmark in history. The base of this massive structure covers 13 acres or 7 midtown New York city blocks (a mile square). Leveled to within a fraction of an inch, more than two and a half million blocks of limestone and granite - weighing from two to seventy tons apiece - rise in 201 stepped tiers to the height of a modern 40 story building. As a feat in masonry it was not to be matched till the construction of Boulder Dam.

Modern engineers are astounded by both the enormity of the problems involved in the construction of the Pyramid and the opticians precision with which these problems were resolved. What the Great Pyramid looked like when it was completed, or even for the 1st or 2nd millennia thereafter is not recorded in history. Furthermore, it is not agreed upon when it was built or even by whom was it built and for what purpose it was constructed. Two things are certain, however, it was never used as a tomb (unlike the other smaller pyramids) and it was already ancient by the time of the Hebrew Exodus from Egypt (430 BCE or 3,300 years ago) [1].

The modern science of Egyptology has revealed much about this ancient and mysterious land, yet much of her story remains untold. This is especially true with regard to the larger cosmological role that Egypt played - and continues to play - in the divine scheme of creation. Once a year on Pesach we reenact the events of *Yitziat Mitzrayim* - the Exodus from the Egyptian empire. The centrality of the Exodus story in Torah cosmology is evident as it is mentioned 50 times throughout the Torah including in the first of the Ten Commandments. Furthermore, the Exodus is contained in the meditation of the Sh'ma' (in the 3rd paragraph) which is recited twice daily as well as in the Kiddush for every Shabbat and Yom Tov, morning and evening. There is also a separate *mitzva* to remember the Exodus any time during the day all year long. Thus, in actuality the night of the seder is only a magnified version of what exists in miniature all around the clock, all year long and within all Jews everywhere throughout all time.

The Great Pyramid and the many other monolithic structures that cover the land of Egypt even to this day are but a remnant of a vast metaphysical empire. As awesome as the geographical territory and the architecture of the Egyptian kingdom was to the eye, a massive underlying supernatural network paralleled it. Before Egypt was destroyed the initiates into the Egyptian priest class (the *hartumim* of the Bible) had direct access to the most profound wisdom in the world. The Talmud relates that when occult knowledge was given out to the world nine tenths of it when directly to Mitzrayim and only the remaining one tenth was distributed to the rest of the world. This is echoed throughout the western occult tradition of the Rosecrucians, Freemasons, Hermetic traditions and others that trace all occult and metaphysical knowledge directly to ancient Egypt.

Jewish tradition teaches that anyone coming within the supernatural dominion of Egypt was pulled in and held captive by a magnetic-like force never to leave. For the nation of Israel this was true both physically as well as spiritually. Originally they were only 70 souls but now, 210 years later (430

years from the time Avraham was initiated into the mystery of the destined Egyptian exile) they numbered in the millions. And the Hebrews were being pulled deeper and deeper into a dark alien vortex at the mercy of the master sorcerer and his apprentices. It is for this reason that we state on the Seder night, "If G-d had not taken our fathers out of Egypt, then even we, our children and our children's children would still be slaves in Egypt". This is not hyperbole. According to the laws of creation there was literally no way the ancient Hebrews could have been rescued. Upon this impossibility rests not only the theme of the entire Hagada and the story of the Exodus, but the continued existence of the Jewish people till this day. We must understand why. This leads us to the source of Pharaoh's dark powers. This is the mystery of the black hole of Egypt. This is the untold story of the Passover, the greatest story ever told in all time.

But wait. Before we explore that question there is an additional set of interesting clues left at the scene of this cosmic drama. As is well known in Torah tradition when we observe the seven days (eight in the Diaspora) of Pesach we are reentering into a microcosm of the original events that occurred over 3,300 years ago. The spiritual mechanics that orchestrated the original Exodus are ingeniously mapped and camouflaged not only into the format of the Seder and the Hagadah, but also into format of the liturgy used. If we observe anything unusual in the prayers we are probably just seeing the tip of the iceberg.

There are, in fact, two liturgical anomalies. One occurs at the beginning of Pesach during the first evening prayer and the other occurs at the end of Pesach during the morning service on the seventh (and eighth) day. The Hallel prayer is recited on every Chag/festival as part of the morning service. It is never recited at night because its function applies to the mystical rectifications that are only inherent at the time of the morning service of the respective Chag. It is, however, sung in the Synagogue by much of the observant world on Pesach night!

It is stated in the Shulchan Aruch – the Code of Jewish Law - by the great Sephardic codifier Rabbi Yosef Caro, "On the first night of Pesach [and second night in the Diaspora] we sing the complete Hallel in the public service with a blessing at the beginning and end." This is the tradition of Sephardic Jewry. This practice, however, is so illogical that the great Ashkenazi codifier Rabbi Moshe Isreles ruled against it in his glosses to the Shulchan Aruch. "None of this is our custom since we do not on any occasion recite the Hallel in the synagogue at night". In spite of the objection the accepted custom of all kabbalists, Hasidim as well as the Ashkenazi descendants in Jerusalem (following the customs of the disciples of the Gaon of Vilna who immigrated there in the beginning of the 19th century) is to recite the full Hallel in the evening service the first (and second) night of Pesach along with the Sephardic Jews. Yet, truthfully according to standard liturgical spiritual etiquette this nighttime ritual of an "additional" Hallel makes no sense.

Secondly, an even stranger liturgical anomaly occurs on Shevi'i Shel Pesach – the Seventh Day of Passover. The Hallel prayer consists of a section from the Book of Psalms. When Hallel is recited there are two versions – a "complete" Hallel and a "half" or partial Hallel. The half Hallel is actually only the omission of two of the Psalms. During the morning service on every Yom Tov the full Hallel is always recited. Only on the intermediate days of Yom Tov (the middle days of Pesach and *Sukkot*) and on Rosh Chodesh is the half Hallel recited. The one exception to this rule occurs on the seventh and last day of Pesach. Although it is a complete Yom Tov, just as the first day is, only a half Hallel is permitted [2]. Additionally, Shevi'i shel Pesach is the only Yom Tov when a Shechechyanu blessing is not recited!

Although there is no halachic disagreement regarding the unprecedented manner of the recital of Hallel on the seventh day Yom Tov of Pesach it still remains an anomaly! Why is this? Although there is a well-known midrash the sages used to explain away this phenomenon upon analysis the answer is far from sufficient. This is because the real story is too profound to be made public. Although on a subtle level the midrash alludes to the deeper truth it is overtly covering up the sod of Kriat Yam Suf which is the real reason why the diminished Hallel is recited. The key is the "additional" Hallel on the first night of Pesach and a "diminished" Hallel on the last day of Pesach. We will truly see that the "The end is rooted

in the beginning" [3]. The unique and utterly mind boggling reason for these two interdependent ritualistic anomalies only becomes apparent when we look into the mystery of Black Hole of Egypt.

Go Down Moses

In order to understand the phenomenon of the Black Hole of Egypt even in a general manner we must briefly review the event that set the stage for going down into Mitzrayim to begin with. This is the story of Adam, Hava (Eve) and the Nachash (serpent) in Gan Eden. This was, and continues to be, the most crucial event in cosmological history. The 'script' for this divine drama fills up many volumes of esoteric teachings and we will mention now only the most general aspects of the plot.

Adam and Hava are positively and negatively charged multidimensional consciousness clothed within etheric-like bodies. All reality before the fall is completely transcendent and hermetically sealed off from any impurity and 'evil' and for that matter, from even any corporeal duality as we experience it today. The external forces on the 'outside' of the Gan have no life force of their own and cannot even generate a facsimile of conscious awareness. They cannot even be said to truthfully 'exist' in an existential sense but rather only in potential. In any event, through a long and detailed process the 'alien' force penetrates into the divine abode and parasitically attaches itself to the minds of Adam and Hava. How, what and why this takes place is the most profound and closely guarded mystery that is a separate field of study by itself. What is necessary to understand for our purposes is that this viral-like infection immediately sets into motion the fall and collapse of all consciousness/reality.

It is a tradition that when Moshe Rabbeinu received the Torah on Har Sinai his consciousness transcended to the 49th level of divinity. The 50th level, however, he did not attain. The 50th dimension of G-d consciousness does not have a manifest reality during the present period of the 6 millennia. Rather it will be revealed to all creation in the next stage of cosmological events. In the meanwhile, the 49 levels of pure divinity have corresponding to them 49 levels of impurity. This is in accordance with the universal law that; "This parallel against this has G-d made " (Ecclesiastes). The realm of Tumah (the forces of impurity and evil) is an exact mirror image of the realm of Kedushah (the forces of purity and good).

In order to get a more vivid picture of the forces at play here we can use a model from modern astrophysics - 'black hole' phenomena - and then apply it to our subject. Although first theorized in 1783 only in the past few decades has this bizarre concept been redeemed from science fiction fantasy and relocated in the physics and astronomy books as almost certain hard scientific fact. Stars, which come in many sizes (ours being an average size sun), do not live for ever. When a star begins to die, its own gravity takes over and squashes nearly all of its atoms into a super dense state. If the star is about 1 1/2 times as massive as our Sun then gravity is strong enough to crush the material so much that we end up with what is called a neutron star which is millions times denser than lead. Theory tells us, however, that if the dying star is very massive then a runaway situation will develop. Gravity will take over completely and the already dense matter will be crushed down even further... into nothing! The collapsing gravity, which no known forces can prevent, will shrink a star twenty times the mass of the Sun to the size of Greater Los Angeles only to then slip through a self-generated crack in space and time and literally disappear from our universe. Not only does a black hole remove itself from our dimension but it pulls all neighboring light in with itself which then can never escape from it - eternally severed and 'plucked' off from this 'side' of reality. It is for this reason that this frightening phenomenon (and the astronomers are finding more and more of them) is called 'black' because no light or any other radiation can escape from it. It is also a 'hole' for an equally strange reason - it actually sucks in the physical 3 dimensional space around it and closes it off. It is just as if there was a hole in space, especially since any matter passing too close to it will fall in never to be seen again.

Pharaoh and the metaphysical roots of Egypt are the human and geographical 3-dimensional vortexes of the cosmic wasteland and virtual black hole sucking up all forms of life and godliness. Egypt

is the bowels of the primordial serpent and Pharaoh is its jaws. It is the same Serpent/Nachash of Gan Eden only now it has grown into the "Great Dragon of the Arcane Nile." It has at its disposal all the occult sciences and pyramid wisdom of mankind. It continues sucking in--eventually even the space-time continuum and all consciousness and thus, ironically, (as all true parasites do) sucks the life out of it's host and then with no life force it itself is extinguished. It doesn't care because it was never alive to begin with. Evil has no true life of it's own. No host, no Evil. No transgressions, no suffering.

One of the themes that runs through the story of the Exodus from Mitzrayim is the quality of *cheepazon*. *Cheepazone* is a state of intense hurriedness (or haste) and panic. It is mentioned twice regarding the final moments of departure from the ancient empire of Egypt. The nation of Israel, after being in this foreign land for 210 years, was commanded, "And thus shall you eat it; your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste - it is HaShem's Pesach offering (Shemot 12,11). Also it is written, " You shall eat no hametz with it (the Korban Pesach); seven days you shall eat Matzot with it, the bread of affliction; for in haste you went out from the lane of Egypt in order that you will remember the day of your going out from Egypt all the days of your life" (Devarim 16-4). Furthermore, another verse emphasizes the rushed state of affairs: " And they baked the dough which they brought out from Egypt cakes of Matzot, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and they could not tarry and they were not able to prepare any food for the way.

Now, the question is asked, "What's the big rush"? Were they so afraid of the Egyptians that they could not have stayed just a few hours longer and have prepared themselves proper food for travel? The traditional answer that the latter commentaries give for the great panic to get out of there was that if we had stayed in 'Egypt one moment longer then the entire nation of Israel would have entered into the 50th gate of spiritual impurity - from which there is no return.

Now, Ya'akov and the seventy souls are sent on "Mission Impossible" into the bowels of the black hole of existential filth and cosmological evil to redeem and extract the remainder of the lost fragments of true humanity which is none other than the fallen particles of Adam's own consciousness that the alien mind parasites had drained from him 26 generations earlier. But now, as the godliness of the life force had grown to maturity (26 = YHVH = value of tetragrammaton) Moshe begins brain surgery on the serpent brain with the each one of the ten plagues. A year has gone by and the hero has the archenemy flat on the ground taking his last gasp of human air. It is now twelve midnight. All the first-born of Egypt are lying dead. The black hole of reality's rotating whirlpool has come to almost a complete standstill. All evil and suffering is just about to become a non-entity and all reality will quantum jump into a multi-dimensional holographic wonderland of pure divinity and bliss. The cosmic drama is about to finish and then the "Director" commands --"Get out now! and Quick! Because if you don't then in one more moment) the black hole serpent and essence of evil will be destroyed forever!"

"And eat it in haste, it is the Pesach of HaShem" (Ex. 12:11).

In truth, the story of Pesach is a bizarre confrontation between the existential planes of light and the vacuous absence of light--absolute anti-life matter.

"...Because in haste you went out from the land of Egypt" (Deut. 13:3).

Get out before you blow up the parasitic Black Hole!!

Now, what is going on here?! Isn't the whole point to destroy the bad guy and now here we are going out of our way to keep him alive!.

Using the newly revealed example of the black hole phenomena is actually more realistic than metaphorical but we can use it now just to stretch the imagination.

The traditional explanation as to why our ancestors were '...expelled from Egypt and they could no longer tarry' is that their lives were in critical danger of being swallowed up by the serpentine black hole into another dimension forever cut off from reality. However, Rabbi Sh'lomo Eliyashuv writes,

'In my humble opinion it is impossible to say that the Jewish Nation was so afraid of the Egyptians that they could not remain just a little longer to prepare themselves proper food for their travels. Quite to the contrary it was the forces of evil - the Primordial Serpent itself - that was about to undergo complete existential annihilation through the revelation of the Shechina. Have not all their gods already been destroyed and their first born killed? If so where was there any place left for the control of the evil power? The fact that the body and soul of Am Yisrael were about to be sucked into the 50th level of no return is certainly correct, but this was only true a full 12 months earlier! We know that the actual redemption began with the initiation of the 10 plagues, which lasted a whole year. From that time and onward the Nachash was losing its grip stage by stage. This was especially true from *Rosh HaShana* 6 months before the actual departure when the forced slavery was stopped. All the more so 2 weeks before on Rosh Chodesh Nissan and the very night of the first Pesach when all the forces of the 'Other Side' were conquered and subdued to such an extent that they and not the forces of good were on the edge of oblivion”.

Following the spiritual law that “The end is rooted in the beginning”, the astounding resolution that the Leshem presents lies hidden in the seventh and last day of Pesach. In order to begin to fathom the strange events involved with the first day of Pesach we must now take a peak into the Splitting of the Sea.

The Mystery of *K'riat Yam Suf*

This is the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim and *K'riat Yam Suf* – the Exodus and the Splitting of the Sea. Although we retell the story every year at the Seder table the story behind the story - the 'Sod' - has seldom been discussed and then only by way of hint. The first Rabbinical scholar to break with this ancient tradition was the master Russian Kabbalist Rabbi Solomon Eliyashuv. Some 70 years ago he wrote:

"Behold, the chain of events that occurred here are, in truth, very awesome. It is the profound mystery of the splitting open of the Sea of Suf upon which the Holy Ari (over 400 years earlier) passionately warned against speaking about. Similarly, the Holy Zohar (1,500 years earlier) concealed and exceedingly hid this mystery to such an extent that Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai said to his son Rebbe Elazar, 'You can ask me anything you want but concerning this matter do not ask'. This is in spite of the fact the Zohar does speak about this matter in a number of places although only by way of hint and obvious concealment. Now, we will speak about it just a little according to that which the Holy One, blessed be He, has shown me. And He, may his Name be blessed, should help us and illuminate our eyes in the light of His holy Torah. This should be in order that His Name will be exalted and increased”.

It is known throughout the writings of the Holy Ari and from sources in the Zohar that from the time of the fall of Adam and Hava all consciousness, both earthy and divine, had collapsed and regressed. All reality, in any shape and form, had devolved into a primitive state of being as if a fully mature human being would instantaneously be returned back to his or her embryonic state within the mother's womb. This state, in the Kabbalah, is called *ibur* --pregnancy -- and it was thus in this state of regressed pregnancy that divinity as manifested and revealed through Adamic consciousness remained for the first 26 generations of mankind - 2,000 years - until the redemption from the land of Egypt.

Now, this process of reversed evolution was actually a type of fail safe mechanism that was triggered into operation at the onset of the fall of Adam and Hava to protect their divine essence from any further infection from the spiritual poison and constricting corporeality of the Primordial Serpent. Although the base serpentine powers had penetrated deep into the higher dimensionality of Gan Eden due to a serious fault of Adam and Hava - the ingestion of duality before the proper time - the real target

of the alien invasion was the very essence of mankind - their brains. If this ultimate goal would have been achieved, G-d forbid, then not only would the external garment of our reality have become infected and possessed but our very minds, and thus the divinity that it parallels as well, so to speak, would have been taken over and enslaved by these mind parasites. Therefore, just as an embryo inside the womb is sealed off and protected from negative influences on the outside so did Adamic consciousness miraculously revert back to its embryonic state and remains sealed off and protected from any further infection from the demonic brain parasites - alias the Nachash and its armies of darkness.

Divine evolutionary reversal to a state of *ibur* is actually a mechanism that the Creator had 'hard wired' into reality from the beginning and has been in continual operation throughout the history of the world at specific volatile junctions and continues to operate - on a microcosmic level - off and on even today on a daily and even hourly basis.

The state of *ibur* that we are speaking about here, however, was taking place on a macrocosmic scale of such profound and awesome proportions that nothing like it has ever occurred since that time. In the annals of Jewish and world history this event is known as the Egyptian bondage. The re birthing process of the cosmic embryo is *Yetziat Mitzrayim* - the deliverance from the Land of Egypt and the actual birth itself is known as *K'riat Yam Suf* - the splitting open of the Sea of Suf.

Now, although reverting back to embryonic consciousness has its protective advantages it also a serious disadvantage. It is powerless to affect its environment. Furthermore, in our case the comparison to a human embryo falls short because it will eventually mature and be born into the world where it can grow and then affect its surroundings. Here, as we shall see, there was no chance for a natural birth to take place. This was because the parasitic forces had gained so much control and contaminated the environment the birth would be a virtual suicide.

This fact - of the apparent total domination of the forces of evil - was indicated in the event of burning bush that appeared to Moshe Rabbeinu. The Zohar explains that the tongues of fire within the thorn bush represented, in miniature, alien forces that were clinging to, infesting and sucking sustenance from divinity. The pharaoh of Egypt himself was the very personification of the vortex of this 2,000 year old invasion and it was he - the very same Primordial Serpent who attacked and invaded Gan Eden - that now had his tentacles firmly around the neck of the now embryonic divine mind - personified as the Nation of Israel. The role of Pharaoh as the Nahash is also expressed by the Zohar in the verse where the *Ain Sof* addresses Moshe, "Behold, I am sending you onto Pharaoh, King of Egypt, the Great Serpent.

On the other hand, however, when the time comes for the embryo to be born into the world and it is prevented from doing so then it will perish as an enslaved captive of the womb. This was then the exact situation of the Nation of Israel - the embodiment of Adamic divinity. Their cry ascended deep into the Being of G-d and the covenant of the Patriarchs -*Brit Avot*- was triggered into its long awaited operation. But now the Divine Process within the *Ain Sof* was confronted with a existential dilemma of mind boggling proportions. To have mercy on the soul of the Nation of Israel with out their warranting such a response through their own actions and to remove and nullify the wrath of hell without exact reason was impossible because "the Holy One does not produce an act without just and due cause. On the other hand, however, to leave the situation as it was also impossible as not only was the destiny of the Jewish people at stake but the foundations of all reality as we know it were crumbling and about to collapse into the singularity point of the cosmic black hole - the final gulp of the Primordial Serpent. The scene was set and now the Master Mind of Reality unleashed and revealed the blueprints for the most hair-raising and awesome plan of action that has ever taken place since the very creation itself. And if that was not enough this history making event was going to even have the full consent and agreement of the very source of evil itself - the self same Primordial Serpent that was in the process of swallowing up the very set itself!

* This article is an excerpt (chapters 1 and 2) of a larger essay by same name.

Notes:

[1] Secrets of the Great Pyramid, Peter Tomkins 1971 p.1

[2] The partial Hallel, does not include verses 1-11 of Psalm 115, nor those verses from Psalm 116, is recited on the last six days of Pesach and on Rosh Chodesh. Pesach, like *Sukkot*, has the structure of main festival/Chag (two days, one in Israel), followed by intermediate days (four days, five in Israel), followed by Main Holiday (again, two days, one in Israel). The last two days of main festival/Chag (the Seventh day, in Israel) are specifically related to the Miracle of the Crossing of the Sea of Reeds, in which the entire Egyptian army was drowned. G-d Himself declared a limitation on our expression of His praise at that time, when He said "My creatures are drowning in the sea; it is not a time for the full expression of joy." Because the Intermediate Days should not be more joyous than the main festival/Chag, it was decided that only Partial Hallel would be recited on all of the last six days of Pesach.

[3] Sefer Yetzirah. This principle is also reflected in "Last in action, first in thought".



Waving the Omer: Arousing The Passion Of Redemption

Joel David Bakst © All rights reserved 2002, 2004

Kabbalah— the science of Torah cosmology – is the hidden landscape of all the traditional liturgy found in the prayer book (the Sidur), driving and directing its format, verses and even number of words. Even so the entirety of the liturgy is subtly clothed within meaningful and esthetic garments of praise, requests, supplications and thanks. Anything overtly kabbalistic is rarely seen in the daily and festival prayers.

Yet, the mystical intentions – the soul beneath the garments – on occasion do reveal themselves. Perhaps the most overtly kabbalistic ritual practiced by world Jewry today – Ashkenazim, Sephardim, Hasidim and Yeshiva *Misnagdim* – is the mystical intentions that are recited together *Sefirat HaOmer* - the ritual counting of the Omer. Here, the backbone of the Kabbalah, the Ten Sefirot – the divine emanations of the Ain Sof – is accessible to anyone who can count.

The ritual of the Omer is the sefirotic countdown from the day after Pesach until the night of Shavuot – 49 days in all. These 49 days are 7 weeks, each week being one of the 7 lower sefirot. Holographically, each one contains all 7 thus the 49-sefirotic aspects. The commonly accepted intention behind these sefirotic aspects is that we refer to the particular character trait that corresponds to a given day of the Omer - *chesed* (loving kindness), *gevura* (constraint), etc. and all their permutations and combinations [1]. Yet, the sefirotic matrix printed in the sidurim is only a small part of the story as detailed in the Zohar and in the Kabbalah teachings of the Ari and the Gra.

Furthermore, the counting and sefirotic tikun is prefaced by the "*L'Shem Yichud*", a meditation that the Kabbalists chant before the performance of all the mitzvot and specific sections of prayer. This formula is overtly kabbalistic. Apart from the kabbalists, some Sephardim and Hasidim, this meditation is generally not recited at any other time (and even discouraged in some traditional yeshivot). Yet, here during the period of the Omer it also again becomes common property!

There are many layers to the mystical intentions of mitzvot, none the least being Sefirat HaOmer. It should not surprise us then that there is another very profound sod, a mystical truth, still hidden within the mitzvah of the Omer Offering. Although essentially based on only one paragraph in the Zohar it requires introductions to numerous concepts upon which the Kabbalah is predicated [2]. However, only a few of these concepts will be presented here. The commentary and amplification is provided by the master kabbalist of the school of the Gaon of Vilna, Rabbi Shlomo Eliyashuv, known as the Leshem (named after his seven volume work of Kabbalah).

The Zohar writes:

"You shall wave the Omer...". "This korban offering is entirely [for the purpose of] unifying that which is above and below, that is, the Matrona [*malchut*] above with Her children [Yisrael] below which [together] are one and the same. This Omer, which is from barley, is offered by Israel in their purity. Its purpose is to generate love between a woman [*malchut/nukba/Shechina*] and her husband [*tiferet/zeir anpin/G-d*]. The "evil woman" [the *qlipa/backside* of the valiant woman] distances herself from between them [their union] because she cannot tolerate the [sacred power of] the *korban* Omer. The

eshet chayil, the valiant woman draws herself close to the Kohen Gadol [the supernal masculine rooted in *abba/chachmah*, the divine father who is the hidden root of the daughter/valiant woman] and certainly she is pure. [And similarly regarding the sota [3] it is written], "And if she is pure... she shall bear seed." And she will increase power and love to her husband. ... And Israel remains pure without any admixture in the mystery of *emunah* (faith). The secret of this mystery is When the valiant woman is scrutinized [the suspected sota is found pure] this in turn becomes the drug of death to the evil woman. This is the counsel that the Holy One gave to His children, to offer up this *korban* [of the barley offering] for the purpose of the valiant woman in order that the evil woman will remove herself and Israel will remain with out any contamination. Happy are they in this world and in the world to come.

In order to understand this cryptic passage from the holy Zohar there are four concepts that are necessary to understand. The first concept is that in the Kabbalah it is well known that all reality operates through two polarities of divine energy. Relative to each other they are masculine/positive polarity and feminine/negative polarity. The designation for masculine divinity is *Hasadim* – expanding divinity. The designation for feminine divinity is *gevurot* – contracting divinity. The *Hasadim* are associated with light and content and the *gevurot* are the vessels that contain, channel and/or reflect that light [4].

Hasadim and *gevurot* are equally necessary but they are not equivalent. They have two very different natures. Whereas the *Hasadim* are singular in their essence, the essence of the *gevurot* contain a dual nature. This is because the *gevurot* are the paradoxical two-sided surface of God's contracting divinity. All creation, in general and in particular, is comprised of virtually infinite divine sparks or holographic, fractal-like chips of God's divinity. These sparks are actually minute vessels comprised of a plethora of configurations of *gevurot*. The multifaceted building materials of life are the *gevurot*. The simpler *Hasadim*, on the other hand, are the cosmic glue that hold together and configure the *gevurot* of creation.

The paradoxical two-sided surface of the *gevurot* sparks can either appear convex, revealing its "face" or concave revealing its "backside". Although associated with negative polarity and negativity, the cosmic "backside" to the *gevurot* are not evil in and of themselves. To the contrary the *gevurot* vessels are needed to hold and reflect the light. But due to numerous factors this mode of divinity can "cave in" on itself. Then it is only capable of receiving for itself and not being able to give. Taking exclusively for itself, it can develop the semblance of a separate consciousness, a "thing-ness" apart from its singular source, the Emanator [5]. Under these circumstances the *sitra achara*, the "other side", the cosmological essence of evil takes root and grows into the evil *qlipot*.

The second concept is that in Kabbalah what we normally refer to as God is revealed through a process that ascends and descends through different stages. (This is actually the deeper reason why "prayers" are needed 3 times a day – to enable these processes to take effect). These spiritual growth stages actually mirror human development. Just as a human goes through conception, infancy, childhood, maturation and then adulthood, so do aspects of the divine process. This should not appear strange because this is simply the deeper meaning of the famous verse "Let us make man (*adam*, both male and female) in Our image". The "image" is not only the static "form" that is shared between the human and divine dimensions but also the growth process as well. Kabbalistically, the *Hasadim* fuel the divine process of masculine maturation and the *gevurot* stimulate the feminine. In the Zohar quoted barley grain is always associated with the feminine *gevurot* whereas wheat is associated with the masculine *Hasadim* [6].

The third concept is that Shavuot and Pesach are not separate entities. Shavuot is the culmination of what began on Pesach. In fact, one of the names for Shavuot is Atzeret meaning conclusion. The energy generated and released during Pesach and the following 49 days produces the very unification of the cosmic forces that come together on Shavuot. As is known in the Kabbalah both

the masculine and the feminine ascend from the Passover stage of *katnut* (immaturity) to the Shavuot stage of *gadlut* (maturation) [7].

The fourth concept is that the union of forces during the Omer is only a microcosmic precursor for the macro unification of the future. The Leshem writes, "The 49 day period of the Omer is the foundation and root for the future tikun. This follows the Talmudic statement of Rabbi Yehoshua, 'In Nisan they were redeemed and [again] in Nisan they will be redeemed in the future'. The future and final redemption will begin in the month of Nisan. This will begin the completion and tikun of the masculine and feminine aspects of divinity (*zeir anpin* and *nukba*). This process will continue until the festival of Shavuot when their completion will be finalized. The finalization of the redemption will be on Shavuot" [8].

As we now begin to unfold the words of the Zohar and decipher its code through the commentary of the Leshem remember what we just learned that the *gevurot* can always manifest in two directions. When the *gevurot* are directed outward towards the face their constricting nature manifests as passionate fire of righteous jealousy and flames of love. When the constricting nature of the *gevurot* are directed inward and potentially collapsing on themselves they will reveal *din* and the fiery judgment of retribution and punishment.

The Leshem writes, "The depth of the subject is the following. The matter of the *korban* Omer that is performed every year is for the purpose of reconstructing and completing the *malchut* [The feminine aspect of creation, the Shechina]. This begins the day following Pesach and concludes on the festival of Shavuot as is known is the writings of the Ari z"l. Behold, through this process Israel is rectified in this world to become sanctified to HaShem without any admixture of the *Sitra Achara* [The "Other Side" of spiritual contamination]. This is because the tikun of the [universal] *malchut* and the people of Israel comprise one entity. They are Her base construction and they are Her limbs. [This tikun] extends into each and every one from Israel and this [combined totality] is known as Klal Yisrael. All the rectifications of Israel and their actions are in Her as they are the extensions of Her soul. The Gra has explained all this in numerous places in his commentary on the Tikuney Zohar".

"This *korban* offering is entirely [for the purpose of] unifying that which is above and below". The Zohar's intention is that the purpose of the *korban* Omer is to unify the [Godly] dimension of Atzilut/emanation with the three [externalized] dimensions of bria/created, yitzira/formated and asiah/activated. That is, to prepare and purify all [created, etc.] existence in order that it may ascend into an elevated and sanctified state [of pure Atzilutic emanation]".

"Behold, the Omer sacrifice is performed in this world every year to rectify the Shechina and Israel. The essential purpose, however, is only for the future tikun at the time of the Final End, which will begin on Pesach and conclude on Shavuot, as explained. Then the Shechina will be revealed in all of Her totality. This is what the prophet Isaiah states (30-20), "Your Teacher will no longer be hidden from you, and your eyes will see your Teacher."

The Leshem explains that there are two modes of tikun actuated through Torah and mitzvot. There are those tikunim that are unlimited by time and are obligatory daily. There are those, however, that are limited by time and performed only at specific periods of the day, week, month or season. Examples of the later are Shabbat and the festivals. The secret of the matter is that every time-bound festival is a small porthole into a higher corresponding dimension. Although, for example, Shabbat appears as a passing of 24 hours of earth time it is also an actual quanta of reality from a higher dimension that extends itself into our earthly abode.

Although not apparent now, the fruits of our observance of each festival's halachic requirements will manifest itself in the future. The future is the Messianic Era, which is the precursor to Olam haBah (an entirely different spiritual universe). All the festivals are now for the purpose of constructing stage by stage the future messianic period, which will then lead into the even higher stage of global consciousness

and unified reality. In fact, the totality of that higher time structure already exists and extends ratios of itself into our present dimension. Each year's festivals are cosmic slices from a real pie in the cosmic sky!
[9]

Our annual observance of each festival is only the root of its concealed trunk and branches which protrude out of this dimension. The halachic minutiae of the mitzvot relevant to each festival are its "nourishment" for the future, the higher dimension. There is a limit, however, to the "time" allotted for this process (the 6,000 years that present reality is to exist). In order for the messianic process of the future to unfold, all its elements must get its requisite nourishment (tikun) from us now in this world. This will happen from us, through us and because of us willfully *or against our will*. Willfully is via the rituals of the respective mitzvot directed by our intentions and fueled by our fervor and passion.

Human passion, intention and detailed observance of the mitzvot are all aspects of the cosmic energy known as the holy *gevurot* – the divine constrictions or contracting feminine divinity. It is these energies that the human element releases that generate the necessary stimulation and spiritual nourishment (known in Kabbalah and Hasidic thought as the "arousal from below"). However, the clock is ticking and God's will must be done and the plan completed on time. What if we don't have the spiritual passion, the correct mental intentions or even the correct acts of the mitzvot (e.g., there is no Temple for the actual *korban* Omer and today the vast majority of Jews don't even count the Omer!) how will the roots of the future messianic redemption be stimulated and nurtured?

The answer is not pleasant. It is even terrifying and traumatic. There is no magic that the Divine Mind uses to achieve the completion of creation. There is no free slice of pie. The human element must be the source "from below". Rather, the stimulation and nourishment is supplied through the unholy *gevurot*, which are also divine constrictions, only these are in the mystery of dark, contracting feminine divinity – the back-side to the holy *gevurot*. This is known as the "evil woman" or the "adulterous woman". These powerful constricting forces are actuated by us yet against our will through trials and tribulations, apparently random misfortunes, sufferings in this world and in the afterlife (*gehinom* and the afflictions in the soul world). Constriction is constriction whether it is through the joy of doing the mitzvah or through the pain of retribution. As explained, they are simply two sides of the same surface – one convex, one concave [10]. It is a profound mystery but now within our grasp. Every retributive act of suffering is the exact inverse of its respective passion that was not used to perform a mitzvah or for a holy purpose! Rapture or rupture, the Divine Will must be fulfilled.

Flames of Divine Love

Now what does *korban* Omer have to do with Sota – the Adulterous Woman? Ostensibly, the parallel brought in our Zohar between the Wave Offering and the Adulterous Woman seems dissimilar and even forced. Yet, the enigmatic nature of the *gevurot* and their interface with the Nation of Israel during the Omer period operate via the exact same mechanism, as does the Sota!

The kohen will take the jealousy offering from the woman, and wave the offering in the prescribed motions before God... If she has been defiled and untrue to her husband the curse-bearing water will enter her body to poison her causing her belly to blow up and her sexual organs to rupture. ...However, if the woman is pure and has not been defiled to her husband she will remain unharmed and will become pregnant (*venektah venezre'ah zerah*).

A husband who suspects that his wife had been unfaithful brings her to the Beit HaMikdash. A *kohen* prepares a drink of water mixed with dust from the Temple floor and special ink that was used for inscribing Hashem's Name on a piece of parchment. If she is innocent, the potion does not harm her; rather it brings increased love and rapture between her and her husband and a blessing of children. If she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death – her body will literally explode and rupture [11]. This ritual is the only one of the 613 mitzvot of the Torah that requires supernatural intervention. Yet, the purpose is

to reconnect and re-ignite the husband's passion and love for his wife, as much as it is to prove her infidelity if that is the case.

We can now understand why the Sota is associated with and generates an abundance of *gevurot*. *Gevurot* are always at the root of passion – whether for holiness or for non-holiness. But what is the association of *gevurot* with the Omer?

Both rituals involve a wave offering (which alludes to an act of arousal [12]) and both mitzvot require barley grain. The Omer offering is one tenth of an *efah* (a biblical measurement) of barley. The spiritual essence of barley are *gevurot* – the contracting mode of God's divinity. Barley is primarily animal fodder. As is known in the Kabbalah anything associated with the animal world [13] relative to the human sphere is rooted in *gevurot* whereas the human sphere is rooted in *Hasadim*. Alluding to this is that the word *seorah* (barley) has its numerical value rooted in a constellation of *gevurot* energies [14]. Furthermore, the amount 1/10 parallels the tenth sefira of *malchut*, which consist exclusively of *gevurot*. Omer is a period of total *gevurot*. During each of the 49 days of the Omer offering the tikun is only for the tikun of the Shechina, to enable her process of divine maturation [15].

On the other hand the final tikun – the nourishment and stimulation of the requisite *gevurot* and *Hasadim* into the respective Valiant Woman and Kohen Gadol (the female and male aspects of the collective soul of Israel) are not completed until Shavuot. Then, instead of the Omer offering brought in the Temple there is the requisite offering of the Two Loaves of Bread, which are specifically from wheat. *Hitah* (wheat) is always associated with masculine *Hasadim* (*Abba/chochma/wisdom*) [16]. There are two loaves each of two measures of an *efah* of flour for the purpose now to mature the *Hasadim* within both the masculine and the feminine. These two aspects – above in divinity and below in the Jewish Nation – can now enter into the culminating union as the Torah is revealed on Mt Sinai [17]

The parallel between Klal Yisrael – referring to both the Shechina above and the Jewish people below – and the Sota is that both are inspected, verified and transformed via the procedure of the barley grain [18]. Barley, as explained, is a vehicle for the powerfully charged *gevurot*. Although in a concentrated form the *gevurot* of the barley are "neutral" in themselves. The *gevurot* of both the Sota and Klal Yisrael, however, are not "neutral". They are "exposed", heated up and are in a very stimulated state, which due to the paradoxical nature of the *gevurot* can erupt in one of two ways. The *gevurot* of the Sota are heated up by her adulterous lust and the *gevurot* of Klal Yisrael are heated up because she is going through her spiritual maturation. The stimulated *gevurot* can transform into a passionate form of arousal or inversely the stimulated *gevurot* can transform into degenerate *gevurot* that quickly become contaminated and a *hot-bed* for spiritual infection. The *gevurot* of the barley are fuel for the fire, exponentially increasing the volatility of the *gevurot* already present causing them to now manifest in one direction or the other -- rapture or rupture. Just as the barley causes the woman's female organ's to explode the barley causes the female soul of Klal Yisrael to explode upwards as it prepares for the union on Shavuot.

Each year the *Korban* Omer generated the tikun for the Shechina and Klal Yisrael and prepared them for the union of Shavuot. This annual tikun, however, was orchestrated in "secrecy", i.e., modestly and concealed from possible contamination from the "other side". Truthfully, currently in This World all *tikunim* and unifications are done silently and without their real and ultimate purpose being revealed. What we see is only the tip of the iceberg. The ultimate fruits of the *Korban* Omer as well as the separate mitzvah of the counting of the Omer that is still performed today will manifest itself in the future Messianic Era. This is the meaning of the conclusion of the Zohar, "Happy are Yisrael in this world (the tikun affected now) and in the Next World (the tikun affected in the future, higher realm). Then, as the prophet Zechariah proclaims, "HaShem will be one (the Divine realm/Atzilut) and his Name (the human realm/beriah) will be one [united together]".

Notes:

[1] The traditional understanding of this 49-day Omer ritual is that it is a continuation of the Exodus from Egypt on Pesach as well as a preparation for receiving the Torah on Shavuot. This dual nature is also expressed in the prayer traditionally said after counting the Omer. We pray ". . . to purify us from our shells and impurities . . . so that I can become pure and holy with elevated holiness." The first goal, removing our impurities, is a continuation of the Exodus, where G-d extracted us from ancient Egypt's immorality and idolatry. The second, elevating ourselves in holiness, culminates in being ready to receive the Torah on Shavuot. There is a crucial assumption behind the Pesach aspect of the Omer -- that the Exodus from Egypt is not a one-time event, but a fifty-step process that opens with the powerful event of Yetziat Mitzraim. The mystical works point out that the Exodus from Egypt is mentioned fifty times in the Torah because there are fifty aspects of leaving Egypt (Egypt the concept and culture, not only the place). We must leave Egypt with each aspect of our character.

[2] Parashat Emor pg 97a. The English translation of this section does not appear in the translated Soncino edition because it belongs to a different section or strata of the Zohar known as the Ra'aya Meheimna (the Faithful Shepard).

[3] As detailed in parashat Naso, under certain circumstances, a husband who suspects that his wife had been unfaithful brings her to the Beit HaMikdash. A *kohen* prepares a drink of water mixed with dust from the Temple floor and a special ink that was used for inscribing Hashem's Name on a piece of parchment. If she is innocent, the potion does not harm her; rather it brings a blessing of children. If she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death. "The kohen will take the jealousy offering from the woman, and wave the offering in the prescribed motions before God... If she has been defiled and untrue to her husband the curse-bearing water will enter her body to poison her causing her belly to blow up and her sexual organs to rupture. ...However, if the woman is pure and has not been defiled to her husband she will remain unharmed and will become pregnant (*venektah vNezre'ah zerah*).

[4] For a detailed explanation see the chapters on The Dance of the *Hasadim* and *Gevurot*.

[5] The key to the "other side" of this story is the verse in Psalms "You have formed me behind (back) and before (front)". This is in accordance with the cosmological Law of Parallelism. "God has set the one parallel to the other" (Ecclesiastes 7:14), i.e., God has constructed all existence upon an apposition relationship. This is known as the "sod of opposites." However, such terms -- opposites, mirroring, parallel -- are insufficient for the Torah's conception of the relationship between these "parallel" forces. The law of parallelism is not simply "two sides of the same coin." A coin -- representing a single reality -- has two distinct surfaces or geometrical planes. If these two planes were infinitely extended, they would exist as two parallels, yet "never the twain shall meet". The surface of a Mobius strip, for example, is very different; even though all that is involved is a simple "twist" -- both in the topology of the strip and in the topology of the mind. The paradox is that a Mobius strip has two surfaces but only one "side," i.e., a single reality that only branches into two modes of its own essence. Using the Mobius strip model, we can now understand that the designations of "front" and "back" do not necessarily refer to opposing or even mirroring realities. They can refer to two realities that exist in an inverse relationship with each other. There is only one singular "side" that, depending on how it is designated, is being turned "inside-out" or "outside-in" as it oscillates between its concave or convex surfaces. The "inside" is equivalent to the face or front, and the "outside" is equivalent to the back or behind.

[6] From a divine hormonal perspective the *Hasadim* can be viewed as cosmic testosterone and the *gevurot* as cosmic estrogen. Masculine divinity goes through puberty as it is infused with hormones and feminine divinity also enters puberty as its hormones are released.

[7] Rabbi Moshe Eliakim Bria zt'l of Koznitz (in the Haggada Mateh Moshe) offers an analogy. On the first day of Pesach G-d shines a very bright light upon us, even though we are not necessarily ready to

integrate it yet. Afterwards this powerful illumination is removed and we must “gather the lights” little by little by ourselves. Eventually we get back to the place we suddenly found ourselves on the first day of Pesach. It takes us forty-nine more days to regain *Yetziat Mitzraim* step by step. There is first a general, all-encompassing Exodus and then forty-nine specific ones follow it.

[8] This is what the GRA explains on his commentary to the Tikunay Zohar page 62 column 3 beginning with the words, “And on Sucot”.

[9] Our Shabbat, for example, is said to be a “taste” of the Great Shabbat. From a kabbalistic perspective this is literally true. If you take all the Shabbats of the 6,000 years of creation together all at once you will have the ultimate Shabbat, “The day (or world) that will be entirely Shabbat”. (Even then the whole will be greater than the sum of individual parts).

[10] The paradoxical relationship between the two apparent opposites of pain and pleasure, exile and redemption and death and life is alluded to in the two Hebrew words *nega* and *oneg*. The same three Hebrew letters that spell *nega* – affliction -- are the same three letters when rearranged that spell *oneg* -- joy.

[11] Rightly so, there are many feminist related questions about the Sota. This is one of the mitzvot of the Torah that appears bizarre and even an affront to some of our contemporary senses. There is much here that the Kabbalah has to say, but that is a lengthy chapter onto itself.

[12] The word *tenufa* – the elevation of the grain upwards – can be read *tnu peh*, “give of the mouth. This mouth is *malchut*, the feminine aspect that is “kissing” *zair anpin/tifferet/G-d*. Zohar Balak 188b (with commentary of the Sulam).

[13] *Beheima* – animal – is gematria 52, the value always indicating feminine/*gevurot*/world of bria.

[14] The gematria of the five final form letters of the Hebrew *Aleph Bet* is PaR/280, a value strongly indicating *gevura* (*par* is also the word for cow, e.g. the golden calf and the bull on the left side of Ezekiel’s vision of the divine chariot). Double 280 is 560 (all doubling is from the *gevurot*). With the energy of the 10 double letters themselves is 570 plus five from the five root letters of barley itself (*seorah*) gives you 575, the gematria of *seorah*.

[15] It is for this reason that the Kabbalists and Sefardim (based upon the Kabbalah) do not permit women to recite the counting of the Omer. It is only the masculine aspect that stands outside of the process that can make the *tikun* on the feminine. Something is forbidden only because it cannot be accessed and thus the mechanism of *tikun* is not relevant. Moreover, in some cases (possibly here in with the *tikun* of the counting of the Omer) subtle damage is done instead of rectification.

[16] *Hitah* is gematria 22, i.e., the rest of the Hebrew letters excluding the five final letters, which are *gevurot*.

[17] The “girl” and “boy” that were redeemed from Egypt are now man and woman. Over their heads is the canopy of Mt. Sinai, the Torah is the wedding gift and the astounding, supernatural fires and thunderous sounds heard around the world are the flames of divine passion, impregnation and conception of the rebirth of the original Adam and Hava.

[18] “The Holy Land is under the control of the Holy One and no other power can enter there. How was the land tested to see whether it remained faithful and did not attach itself to any other power? By the bringing of an offering of barley, like the suspected wife.” Zohar Balak 189a



A Secret Tradition of the Omer:
Yom HaAztnaut and Yom Yerushalayim
According to the Gaon of Vilna

Translated and annotated by Joel David Bakst

A "missing" page from Kol HaTor by R. Hillel of Sholov published in "Nitzaney Aretz", a journal of Yeshivat Mercaz haRav who received the document from the Organization for the Dissemination of Kol HaTor (Bnai Brak). This page did not appear in either of the two editions published in 1968.

When we established our settlement in the Holy City of Jerusalem, may she be rebuilt and reestablished, in the year 5,572 (1812) [in the secret of], "and His dwelling place is in Zion" (Psalms 76-3), it was the commencement of the second command of the Beginning of a "time of singing" in the secret of "Kol haTor" (the Call of the Turtledove).

And it was on one of the days in the year 5,572 (1812) that we laid the foundation stone for the establishment of the *Beit Midrash Eliyahu* (the House of Study of Elijah) [Apparently next to the *Hurva* synagogue in the Jewish Quarter. This area later became the *Eitz Hayim* compound] in honor of the name of our Master the GRA. Together with this was a crucial preparation for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. It appeared to us - the disciples of our Master the GRA - with an unmistakable clarity, that in that very hour the first window was opened up in the "iron partition" in order for the unification of the merit of the Covenant of the Fathers, the *Yesod of Tifferet* via *Malchut* which had been interrupted from the time of the destruction of the Holy Temple. That day was the 20th day of the counting of the Omer, which is the *Yesod of Tifferet* as is known to those initiated into the hidden wisdom.*

* This event took place in the year 5,572 (1812) on the 5th of Iyar after the followers of the GRA by his command had just traveled for six months by caravan, by boat and by foot in order to initiate the "reawakening from below" in the heart of Jerusalem. It was on that specific day that they laid the foundation stone for the establishment of the *Beit Midrash Eliyahu* in honor of their master the GRA and planted the seeds of redemption that would finally bear fruit 136 years later on the very same day.

The 20th day of the Omer is always on the 5th of Iyar. 136 years later on the 5th of Iyar (the 20th day in the Omer) in the year 1948 the State of Israel received her political independence. It is a tradition from the GRA that two days in the Omer were of a unique nature - the 20th and the 42nd. The 43rd day of the Omer is *Yom Yerushalayim* - the Unification of Jerusalem following the Six Day War. The actual battle for Jerusalem itself was completed on the 5th day of the war - the 42nd day of the Omer (which is the *Malchut of Yesod*).



The 17th of Tammuz, The Golden Calf and The “Other Side” of Tomorrow

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The 17th of Tammuz is a day of Jewish mourning for the Temple's destruction. It was on this day that the walls surrounding Jerusalem were first breached by the enemy. It is observed as a fast day and begins the three-week period leading up to Tisha b'Av, the 9th of Av, the actual day on which the Sanctuary was set afire. This spelled the beginning of the captivity and exile of the Jewish people from their land. The prophet Zechariah, however, foretells that in the future the 17th of Tammuz will become a day of joy.

The 17th of Tammuz is considered a minor Jewish observance and outside of traditional circles it rarely registers a blip on the calendar. Yet, this day is also perhaps the most infamous day in Jewish – and world – history due to another event that occurred much earlier. This is the event of the Sin of the Golden Calf that occurred 3,300 years ago and it is really at the core of this day. As we will see below the secret of the Golden calf places the fast of the 17th of Tammuz in a unique cosmological framework.

We all know the story: In the book of Exodus Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments with the rest of the Torah to follow. The mixed multitude (*Erev Rav*) that left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe's descent seems delayed and force Aharon, Moshe's brother, to make a golden calf for them to worship and take the place of their apparently “dead” leader Moshe. Aharon stalls, trying to delay them. Hashem tells Moshe to return to the people immediately, threatening to destroy everyone and build a new nation from Moshe. When Moshe sees the orgy of idol-worship, he smashes the tablets and destroys the golden calf. The tribe of Levi volunteers to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men. Moshe ascends the mountain to pray for forgiveness for the people, and Hashem accepts his prayer.

An entire book would be required to begin to understand the complexity of the phenomenon of the sin of the Golden Calf or the *Chait haEigel*, as it is known. The construction of the Golden Calf and its consequences is the most catastrophic event in all of Jewish history. It set the stage for all the future calamities and sufferings that the Jewish people have endured for millennia up to the very present. Moreover, the ramifications of this pivotal event became “hardwired” into the collective soul of creation. Subsequently, the sin of the Golden Calf has and continues to affect the direction of the entirety of world history.

For 3,300 years the outstanding question that everyone has been asking --Jews and non-Jews, master scholars and the common person – is “How could they do that?!” After all that the Nation of Israel had experienced – the supernatural phenomena of the Ten Plagues and the supernal Splitting of the Sea culminating in a celestial face-to-face encounter with the Creator and receiving the Cosmic Code to unlock the secrets of the universe – how could they revert to blatant idolatrous worship of a metal object?

Many traditions, explanations, speculations and imaginations have been suggested, written and sermonized about this event. What we are going to do here, however, is to look from an “inner Torah” perspective at one small fragment, a “micro-event” within the macro-picture. Yet, the analysis of this one aspect will enable us to behold a panoramic view of one of the inner mechanisms of the event of the Golden Calf. It revolves around a puzzling expression of Moshe's brother, Aharon the Kohen.

But before we present Aharon's dilemma let's "beg the issue" or, in yeshiva parlance, built up the "qashe question". Let's bring a few more facts and clues to show evidence that for those Jews who stood at Mt Sinai the affair of the Golden Calf was a virtual *impossibility* to have occurred and that there is something very mysterious here at play. We are at the scene of the greatest cosmic crime committed since the fall of man and the facts just don't match up. From the perspective of the rabbinical/kabbalah mind-set how could this spiritual tragedy have occurred? What are the reality maps the sages are using to chart this enigmatic event in the history of the Nation of Israel?

Here is a quick overview primarily from the Kabbalah of some crucial, but little known facts surrounding the *Chait haEigel*.

1. Moshe and his generation are the 26th generation from the time of Adam. 26, as is known, is the value of Y-H-V-H, the Tetragrammaton, the essential code/name of God. The completion of this aspect of Divinity was about to be made and there would be no need for the rest of history as we have come to know it.
2. Moshe and the Generation of [Supernal] Knowledge (*Dor Day'ah*, as they are called by the sages) were also the final missing link in the mystery of the 974 Primordial Generations, alluded to throughout Scripture and expounded upon in the oral tradition. The 26th generation (from Adam) now brought the 974 primordial generations to 1,000 the number associated with the highest level of completion. The unification of the Thousand Generations designates the Sinaic event as the final tikkun for all reality even in the super-macro picture.
3. "Torah From Heaven" – the cosmic codes of creation -- descended from a higher dimension with the sole purpose of restoring reality to its state before its collapse. If not for the *Chait haEigel* all Jews would have gone straight into the land of Israel. Within a relatively short time, by applying the mitzvot formulated in the Torah in the Land of Israel, the Jews would have completed the tikkun for the sin of Adam, mankind and the world. All reality – history embedded within the space-time manifold – would have "quantum jumped" back into its original higher dimension [1].
4. Not only had the entire nation of Israel experienced the supra-natural phenomena of the Ten Plagues and vision of the Splitting of the Sea from a physical as well as cosmic perspective, but also at Mt Sinai all Israelites were fused into one entity with one mind and the one truth of the Absolute. The entire nation had become the virtual reconstituted Adam HaRishon *before* the Fall. The phenomenon of death was obliterated and everyone would have literally lived for eternity, as Adam and Eve were intended [2].
5. At the time of the Sinaic revelation the millions of Israelites who entered into union with the Divine Mind were not a rag tag band of primitive nomads. Rather, every individual had divested him and herself of the corporeality of the material world and the spiritual contamination from the Nachash (Primordial Serpent) and had achieved the original level of total God consciousness [3].

There is a plethora of more facts in the case that can be presented but even with only this much said we can now *really* ask the question, "A nation of transcendent priests fused into one Adamic being with total God consciousness about to enter the portal into another universe -- How could they do that?!" Worship a physical image and engage in an occult like orgy? In the rhetorical language of the Talmudic masters, "Are we dealing here with fools?!" And now, there is even a bigger problem with Aharon.

Some of the people [4] gathered about Aharon, asking him to make them a godly power or divine oracle to lead them, for "who knows what's happened to Moshe, Who brought us up from Egypt?" Aharon formed the gold in a mold, casting it into a calf... They said: "These, Israel, are your gods, who brought you out of Egypt (32:4)". After seeing it Aharon built an altar before it and proclaimed: "A festival to God tomorrow!" The Jews brought burnt and peace offerings early in the morning. The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to enjoy themselves (with idolatry).

Now, the plot only thickens because we must assume (and as the oral tradition tells us) that Aharon knew all the “cosmic background” facts mentioned above and more. In addition, Aharon was on a level in many ways equal to that of Moshe. He was the conduit for Moshe’s communication with pharaoh, every one of the ten plagues was facilitated by Moshe *and* Aharon together and Moshe *and* Aharon together comprise the *trey palgay gufa* – the two “legs” in the Adamic body of the Ten Sefirot. Aharon haKohen was a master talmudist, kabbalist and extremely God fearing man who would willingly martyr his life rather than being even indirectly involved with *avoda zara* -- idolatrous worship. He knew the big, cosmic picture; he had all the maps of inter-dimensional reality and he was on the same mission from God as was Moshe – to accelerate and complete the tikkun for the *chait* of Adam with the *Aitz haDaat* – the Tree of Knowledge. “A festival to God *tomorrow*”? How could Aharon possibly have uttered such an expression?

The Ari zal writes:

“Now, there is great astonishment concerning this expression. It has already been explained [5] that Aaron’s intention was “for the sake of Heaven” [e.g., he was trying to stall for time until Moshe returned]. However, what can be said for this word *chag* – a sacred festival? How is it possible that the Torah could write something that is fraudulent [it never happened] and how could such words come out of the mouth of Aaron? Surely there is a *sod* alluded to here. The Golden Calf was constructed on the 17th of Tammuz and it was on the 17th of Tammuz that the Ten Commandments were broken [6]. In the future the Holy One will transform this day into a [real] Yom Tov [another term for *chag*]. Consequently, the expression “a *chag* tomorrow for HaShem” is, in its essence, true. The term “tomorrow” (*machar*) refers to a later time (as well as to a higher dimension, i.e., beyond our present reference to time). This [concept] concurs with what the rabbis have taught “Sometimes “tomorrow” refers to a time in the future” [7].

To understand the words of the Holy Ari the question to ask is where in time is “tomorrow” taking place? More specifically, upon what type of surface is “tomorrow” occurring? The unusual resolution to this question can be found in the Möbius strip mode [8]. A very different paradigm for understanding the structure of time – and thus, history – can be viewed by looking through the eyes of a Möbius strip. “Which geometry or topological surface best describes the hidden landscape of time?” The Möbius strip offers a simple yet very penetrating model of one of the fundamental “shapes” that molds this invisible surface. From the perspective of a Möbius shaped time line, any given day or moment in time is but two surfaces of one continuous “side”. This “one side” can be manifested concavely or convexly, concealing the nature of its potential within the collapsed “cave” of time or revealing it’s expanded potential.

The 17th of Tammuz, like all moments in time, contains two surfaces of only one “side”. The same Divine energy that can manifest as joy and redemption (the crowning glory of the set and setting of original Ten Commandments) can turn in on itself to reveal its own descent and captivity – its “shadow self” or “backside” (the spiritual impurity of the set and setting of the Golden Calf). Aharon was well aware of this, and he also knew the stakes were very high. He knew that the essence of this day was a key time coordinate within the collective soul of the universe. He knew that the sacred moment of “tomorrow” – the “*Chag l’HaShem*” – was a complete potential reality right now. He knew that the entire nation had entered a space-time vortex that exited into two parallel universes, the two faces of the 17th of Tammuz. He was painfully watching and mapping the fabric of time as it was inverting on itself. He believed, and correctly so, that the process could be reversed and “popped back” or at least halted until Moshe returned and he was doing everything within his power to do so. The people, however, were caught in a great spiritual panic that was too powerful for Aharon to mitigate and slowdown. They generated a “time warp” and the divine essence of the 17th of Tammuz caved in on itself to reveal its catastrophic backside, the dark cave of the Sin of the Golden Calf.

It can appear from a limited perspective that it is God who is now angered against the Israelites and seeks their destruction. It is not God, however, who gets angry, punitive or vindictive. Rather, from the perspective that has been developed here it is the constricted nature of the day *itself* that, tragically, has been released into the world. (These are known as the harsh, unmitigated *gevurot*.) Once they have been released and let out of their box, it is exceedingly difficult to rectify them and put them back, to turn them “outside in”. Often, their only rectification is the travels and travails of its victims spread out over the length and breadth of time, i.e., the long-term historical consequences of the Golden Calf. But, when its “time is up” the soul of the day will again reveal its true face. The captive sparks within the Golden Calf of “today” will be redeemed “Tomorrow”. How could Aharon haKohen do what he did?! How could he *not*! When the cosmic “Tomorrow” arrives Aharon haKohen’s words eternalized in the Torah “A festival for God tomorrow” will become the singular reality. The whole world will then know the secret that the “yesterday” of our past is only the other side of the future and higher dimensional tomorrow”.

Notes:

[1] "Concerning the future it is written "And the Glory of G-d will be revealed and together all flesh will see that the mouth of G-d has spoken"(Isaiah/Yeshayahu 40-5). 'The meaning is that our consciousness will become so refined that we will merit to grasp and to see even with our corporeal vision the process of G-d's divine speech permeating every living thing in existence. *This will occur as it similarly already has at the time of the giving of the Torah* as it is written, 'And all the people saw the voices' ('they saw what they heard and they heard what they saw' - Rashi quoting Midrash Mechilta) (Nefesh HaChayim Gate 3 Chapter 11).

[2] "I said, You are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High...(Tehillim 132-6). 'This is what G-d said when Israel at Mt. Sinai said, ' We will do' before 'We will hear', but when they followed their Yezter HaRah He Said, '...yet like Adam you will die' (ibid.) (Zohar Shelach 162a) They were meant to literally live forever like the original Adam see Rashi and Mezudat David, also A.Z. 5b)

[3] "R' Yochanan said, 'At the time when the Nachash came upon Hava it impregnated her with spiritual corporeality (Zoohamah). Yisrael, who stood at Har Sinai had the Zoohamah removed. The Nations of the World who did not stand at Sinai did not have the Zoohamah removed" (Yevamot 103b, Shabbat 147a, Avodah Zara 22b).

[4] These “people” (*am*) are the leaders of the *erev rav*, the large contingency of Egyptians whom Moshe had brought with him against the “advice” of HaShem. They were all members of the Egyptian spiritual elite and masters of the occult sciences – including Pharaoh’s wise men and dream interpreters. They had “seen the light” and were in the process of conversion – returning their souls to Judaism. This was because their souls were an intrinsic part of the original collective soul of the Jewish nation – the “missing” half of the core genealogy of Yaakov and the tribes of Israel. (This actually began with Adam and is an additional consequence of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge. The details of this process are only known in esoteric Judaism). Their spiritual integration into the body of Israel, however, had not yet been completed and it was this vulnerability that led them to commit the sin of the Golden Calf. Even though it is well known in rabbinical literature that it was not the Jews from Yaakov’s genealogy that “sinned” the question still stands regarding the leaders of the *erev rav* who were spiritual masters in their own right and had sincerely embraced Moshe as their leader and “rabbi”. “How could even *they* do that, are we dealing here with dopes?!”

Here are a few examples of scriptural references to the *erev rav*: "**THIS PEOPLE** have committed a great sin and have made **FOR THEM** (the Jews) a god of gold" (32:31). "So **THE PEOPLE** demanded a god of Aharon (31:1-2)... and "**THEY** (the converting -- Jews) said: 'these are **YOUR** (the Jews') gods, Israel'..." (rather than **OUR** gods-- 32:4). God calls them "**YOUR** (Moshe's) people"; as Moshe, not God, was the one who brought them along (32:7).

[5] On the pshat level by all the classical commentaries including Rashi.

[6] The 17th of Tammuz would become a day of historical mourning for the Temple's destruction. It was on this day that the walls surrounding Jerusalem were first breached. It is observed as a fast day and begins the three week period leading up to Tisha b'Av, the 9th of Av, the actual day on which the Sanctuary was set afire and signifying the beginning of the captivity and exile of the Jewish people from their land.

[7] "And it shall be when your son asks you tomorrow saying, 'What is this about' [The Passover offering] and you will tell him..." (Exodus 13-14) Sometimes [in Scripture] "tomorrow" refers to the next day and sometimes "tomorrow" refers to a time in the future. (Midrash Mechilta, end of parashat Bo.)

[8] The Möbius strip was introduced by the German mathematician and astronomer Augustus Ferdinand Möbius (1790-1868). He described his remarkable paper surface as a strip which has no "other side". This one-sided strip, hard to imagine but easy to construct, has other numerous unexpected properties as well. It is easily made from an ordinary strip of paper that is simply twisted over once before the ends are joined. (If it were not twisted it would just remain a short cylinder). This Möbius strip exists in three dimensions but, astonishingly, has only one surface. If a line is traced on the surface of the strip without letting the pen leave the surface you will find that when you are half way round you will be writing on the back of the paper even though you are still on the same surface. If you continue you will end up where you started.



Tisha B'Av: The Secret of God's Tears

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"But if you will not hear it (the reproof), My soul will weep in secret...' [1]. R. Shemuel ben Inia said in the name of Rav, 'The Holy One has a place and its name is 'Secret'. ...But is there any weeping in the presence of the Holy One? Behold Rav Papa has said, 'There is no grief in the presence of (on the part of) the Holy One, for it is written, 'Glory and majesty are before Him; splendor and joy are in His sanctuary!' [2] There is no contradiction; the one case [of the grief and weeping refers to] the outer chambers (*Batay Berai*), the other case [of the endless joy and beauty refers to] the inner chambers (*Batay Gevai*) [3]."

This curious rabbinical tradition lies at the root of understanding and observing the day of Tisha B'Av. The Ninth of Av itself has its roots in another event. Next to the Sin of the Golden Calf, the event of the Twelve Spies is the greatest tragedy to occur in all Jewish history. In some respects, the consequences of this spiritual disaster are graver and farther-reaching than that of the Golden Calf. Here we are going to look at only one facet of this phenomenon, the nature of the day when the sin of the Twelve spies occurred. This requires unveiling the invisible structure of time itself.

After receiving the Torah at Mt Sinai the Nation of Israel immediately headed to enter the Promised Land. Moshe, at the command of HaShem, sent the 12 leaders of the Jewish Nation, one from each tribe, to explore the Land of Canaan that He had promised to give to the Israelites. At the end of 40 days the spies returned and all but Yehoshua bin Nun and Calev ben Yefuneh spoke badly about the land saying that it is a land that consumes its inhabitants and the men there were giants and too strong to conquer [4]. According to the annals of Jewish history, the day they returned was the eighth day of the Hebrew month Av.

"The entire community raised an uproar and began to shout. That night the people wept [5]."
"Rabbi Yochanon said, 'That night was Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of Av'. The Holy One said, 'You have wept in vain. I will establish it for you as a time of weeping for all generations'. It was also decreed that the entire nation would wander in the desert for 40 years; one year for each day the spies failed in their mission.

On Tisha B'Av, five events occurred:

1. It was decreed that Israel would not enter the Land.
2. The First Temple was destroyed.
3. The Second Temple was destroyed.
4. The city of Betar, the last stronghold of the Rabbi Akiva/Bar Kochba rebellion, was conquered by the Romans. It was as great a tragedy as the Destruction of the Temple.
5. The area of the Temple and its surroundings were plowed up by another Roman oppressor and made desolate in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy, "Zion will be plowed like a field [6]".

Additionally, throughout history many great calamities occurred to the Jews on Tisha B'Av, including the infamous Spanish expulsion in 1492 and expulsions from other countries. World War I, planting the historical seeds for the Holocaust of World War II, broke out on Tisha B'Av.

The Divine response, however, sounds like an angry mother or father reprimanding a child for *kvetching* about something relatively minor, "You want something to cry about, I'll give you something to cry about!" Do we want a God who gets angry, is punitive and vindictive? These are primitive anthropomorphisms, and they do not belong in a sophisticated cosmological worldview.

Additionally, if the nature of the day of Tisha B'Av is set for all generations, then what has happened to our free will? Were all the historical tragedies surrounding Tisha B'Av throughout history predetermined simply because our ancestors made a miscalculation 3,300 years ago? Conversely, and this is the essential question -- what would have happened to the nature of Tisha B'Av if the people had not cried out on "that night"?

Another irregularity to observe is that, according to Midrash and the Kabbalah, the Mashiach will be born on Tisha B'Av [7]. Is this simply an emotionally laden metaphor meant to console generations of persecuted and suffering Jews? Or is it a formula describing the internal mechanism of the essence of the day of Tisha B'Av?

In the scroll of Eicha (The Book of Lamentations) Tisha B'Av is referred to as a *moed*, a festival. The same term, *moed*, is used for the Three Pilgrim Festivals: Pesach, *Sukkot* and Shavuot. How can the same term be used for the saddest day in the year and the most joyous day in the year at the same time?

The word *moed* means a meeting, a juncture in time, a vortex in space. The Hebrew term for "holiday" or "festival" is *moed* because it is there, within that recurring cyclical moment, where cosmic forces come together in an interchange between the human and the Divine. A calendar-bound *moed* is a grand meeting between the soul of man and the soul of time.

Moed is also the same word found in *Ohel*- the Tent of Meeting, the mobile inner sanctum of the Mishkan (Tabernacle) that was the prototype and precursor for the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. A spatially bound *moed* is also a grand meeting between the soul of man and the soul of space. Both time and space have sparks of divinity buried within them waiting to be redeemed.

Now, the question is where in time is this meeting taking place? More specifically, upon what type of surface is the *moed* of Tisha B'Av occurring? The resolution to the strange irregularities surrounding Tisha B'Av can be found in the Möbius strip model. A very different paradigm will now emerge for understanding the structure of time and history.

Let us ask, "Which geometry or topological surface best describes the hidden landscape of time?" The Möbius strip offers a simple yet very penetrating model of one of the fundamental "shapes" that molds this invisible surface. From the perspective of a Möbius shaped time line, any given day or moment in time is but two surfaces of one continuous "side". This "one side" can be manifested concavely or convexly, concealing the nature of its potential within the collapsed "cave" of time or revealing its expanded potential.

The 9th of Av, like all moments in time, contains two surfaces of one "side". The same Divine energy that can manifest as joy and redemption turned in on itself to reveal its own state of sorrow and captivity. Moshe Rabbainu and the 12 leaders of Israel, the spies, were well aware of this, and they knew the stakes were very high. They knew that the soul of Mashiach on all levels lives within the essence of this day, this coordinate in time within the collective soul of the universe. The question was always about how and when do we redeem and release the soul of the Messiah? The spies miscalculated, the people were caught in a great spiritual panic and the divine essence of the 9th of Av caved in on itself to reveal its catastrophic backside, the dark, dry cave of Tisha B'Av.

It is not God who gets angry, punitive or vindictive. Rather, it is the constricted nature of the day that, tragically, has been released into the world. (These are known as the harsh, unmitigated *Gevurot*.) Once they have been released and let out of their box, it is exceedingly difficult to mitigate them and put

them back, to turn them "outside in". Often, their only tikkun is the travels and travails of its victims spread out over the length and breadth of time. But, when its "time is up" the soul of the day will reveal again its true face, the light of Mashiach, the joys of the final redemption.

With this foundation of the concept of the two faces of Tisha B'Av we are prepared to look at another enigma concerning this phenomenon. Throughout the 25 hours night and day of Tisha B'Av there are five prohibitions. They are known as the Five Sufferings:

- No solid food or liquids
- No bathing
- No anointing,
- No sexual cohabitation
- No wearing of leather shoes.

The light/Ohr of our original, divine body, the body of Adam before the dimensional fall has turned inside out producing a corporeal body of Skin/Or. The *Aleph* body has become the skin/Ayin body. This is the reason we do not wear leather shoes on this day. It is a time to turn inward, to turn "outside in".

The Zohar [8] analyses a well-known verse from Psalms 31: "How great is Your good that You have hidden for those who fear You..." "What does it mean", rhetorically asks the Zohar, "that God has 'hidden' [this ultimate goodness]? Is it possible that anyone could steal and take from His hands that what He desires to give [or not to give] and therefore the verse states 'hidden?' [i.e., what does He have to hide?]. "Rather", answers the Zohar, "come and see the acts of divine mercy which the Holy One performs. With that which He afflicts from it, itself, He gives the healing. With what does he afflict? With the Left Side. [As is known] with the Right Side He draws close and with the Left Side He afflicts. [Behold,] with that which He afflicts, always from it, itself, He gives the healing. It is written (Jeremiah 1:14), 'Out of the north will the evil break forth' [north is always an aspect of the Left Side] and with the 'north' He afflicts as it is from there that emanates all judgments (*dinim*) and evil decrees. And [precisely] in there dwells all the good reward and all the love that, in the future, the Holy One is to bestow ...and thus it is stated, 'How great is Your good that You have hidden [*Ztafon/Ztafoon* = the ultimate good is 'hidden' in the 'north' which is the aspect of the *Gevurot*] for those who fear You..."

The Vilna Gaon explains [9],

"There are two modes of *din* (Gevura). One is [known metaphorically as] the 'Evil Whip', the powers of judgment from the side of impurity, [in the context of the verse], "On the head of the wicked it will fall". The other is the *Din* (Gevura) of holiness, the awesomeness of God (*Yirat HaShem*). It is the Flame of [Divine] Love. All arousal, joy, reward of the World to Come, it is all from there as it is written, 'How great is Your good that You have hidden...', [meaning] in the north (*Ztafoon=Ztafon* which is *Gevura*). [Similarity,] 'Prepare the table for me...' (the table in the Temple was stationed in the north). This [selfsame source of the two modes of *Gevurot*] is the 'Guarded Wine', the [spiritual] vehicle of ultimate intoxication (*Yayin HaMeshumar*) which, 'No eye has beheld...'

Referring to this passage the Rabbi Shlomo Elyashuv continues [10] by explaining that,

"And this [principle of the two-pronged nature of the *Gevurot*] is also alluded to in the Midrash Letters of Rabbi Akiva, letter *samech* that also the reward of the righteous in the Garden of Eden is also in the north since the Garden in Eden is located in the north of Eden. This is the Sod of the greater value and worth that gold has over silver even though silver is from the aspect of the *Hasadim* and gold is from the aspect of the *Gevurot* which are *dinin* [forces of constriction]. However, [the explanation of this apparent reversal of values], is that when the *Gevurot* are mitigated and sweetened they have a greater value than the *Hasadim* as it is through them all [existence of] arousal and joy. Likewise, all the Flames of Love come from them and all the goodness of the *Hasadim* - their light, their revelation and their activity - is only via the sweetened *Gevurot*". The root of all the *Gevurot* 'above' are all 'holy of holies' and they are

mitigated and sweetened to the extremity of sweetness. This is the Sod of the statement of the sages in Talmud Hagiga 5b.”

We are now prepared to return to the initial teaching to understand Tisha B'Av and the secret of God's tears.

“But if you will not hear it (the reproof), My soul will weep in secret...” [11]. R. Shemuel ben Inia said in the name of Rav, 'The Holy One has a place and its name is 'Secret'. ...But is there any weeping in the presence of the Holy One? Behold Rav Papa has said, 'There is no grief in the presence of (on the part of) the Holy One, for it is written, 'Glory and majesty are before Him; splendor and joy are in His sanctuary!' [12]. There is no contradiction; the one case [of the grief and weeping refers to] the outer chambers (*Batay Berai*), the other case [of the endless joy and beauty refers to] the inner chambers (*Batay Gevai*).’

The intention that within the inner chambers there is no weeping is that there [returned and reintegrated into their roots] the *Gevurot* are sweetened. Likewise, [a similar dialectic is presented also in Chagiga 12b], 'And darkness and cloud and thick darkness surround Him, as it is written, 'He made darkness His hiding place...[13]' But is there any darkness before Heaven (on the part of God)? Behold it is written, '...He knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with Him [14]' - There is no contradiction: the one verse refers to the outer chambers and the other verse refers to the inner chambers'. It is within the inner chambers that 'the light dwells with Him' because there the holy *Gevurot* are sweetened and illuminate with Flames of Love. There it is totally light, majesty and joy in His place [15].

Notes:

[1] Jeremiah 13:17.

[2] Psalms 96:6.

[3] Talmud Bavli Chagigah 5b.

[4] See Sefer Bamidbar Parashat Shelach.

[5] Numbers 14:1.

[6] Talmud Bavli Ta'anit 28b.

[7] Jerusalem Talmud Berachot 4:6.

[8] Parashat Shelach Lecha 173b.

[9] Commentary on the Tikuney Zohar, Tikun 21, pg.47a.

[10] Hakdamot VeSha'arim, pg. 47.

[11] Jeremiah 13:17.

[12] Psalms 96:6.

[13] Psalms 18:12.

[14] Daniel 2:22.

[15] For a fuller treatment of the *Hasadim* and the *Gevurot* see *my 7 Keys to the Kabbalah Lesson I*.