



Kabbalah in the Bible

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Introduction: Adam

G-d said, “Let us make man with our image and likeness...

G-d created man with His image. In the image of G-d,

He created him, male and female He created them.”

(Genesis 1:26-27)

One of the more fascinating subjects Kabbalah deals with, is the way it explains the Creation of Adam and Eve on the 6th day of the Creation of the world. In fact, many of the Biblical stories about Adam and Eve happened on the same day they were created. In this section, we'll enjoy learning the Kabbalistic explanations to the stories of Genesis about Adam and Eve. The words of wisdom presented here are taken from the book 'Discovering Jewish Mysticism' By Rabbi Nissan David Dubov from London, with the permission of the author. rabbi@dubov.org

Making man in G-d's image

Maimonides states in his third principle of faith that G-d does not have a body and physical concepts do not apply to Him. There is nothing whatsoever that resembles Him at all. What then is the meaning of the words, “Let us make man with our image?” Of which “image” does the scripture speak?

The classical commentaries explain that man alone is endowed—like his Creator—with reason, a sense of morality, and free will. It is in this vein that man is described as having been created in G-d's image. The Kabbalistic interpretation of the “image” is different and profoundly deep. The image of G-d referred to here is not G-d Himself, Who is beyond comprehension, but rather to the creative process. The human being in soul and body reflects the spiritual infrastructure of the supernal realms and the chain order of creation.

In the words of Job: “From my flesh I perceive G-d” (Job 19:26). This means that an inspection of human psychology and physiology leads one to understand their parallel spiritual source in the higher realms. In order to understand the different stages of creation, the Kabbalists refer to the human model and extrapolate to the Divine. This process requires great caution, for as previously stated, no human qualities may be ascribed to the essence of G-d.

Adam, the “first man,” was acutely aware of this process of creation. To use the computer analogy, his hard drive was programmed with this knowledge. His operating system spoke the Hebrew language, which is a holy tongue and the language of creation.

G-d speaks (?)

“And G-d said: Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3).

G-d has no physical mouth or vocal cords. What is the meaning of the words “And G-d said”? Kabbalah explains that contraction of infinite Light and power and its channeling into finite

Vessels is comparable to the speech process. In the spoken word, thousands of thoughts are distilled into a few words. In the ten utterances of Genesis, G-d contracted massive energies into creative packets and configured them in the letters of the Aleph Bet (Hebrew alphabet).

Every letter of the Aleph Bet represents a Divine Power. Combinations of letters represent combinations of Divine Powers that result in the diversity of creation. One may draw an analogy from chemistry, which is the study of the formation of different materials through the

combination of elements. The mixing of sodium hydroxide with hydrochloric acid results in salt and water. Sodium is a volatile metal and chlorine a poisonous gas, yet when combined they create both salt, which lasts forever, and water, which sustains life. In the analogue, each letter of the Aleph Bet contains a certain configuration of Divine creative energy. When letters are combined, this represents a complex combination of Divine energies which results in the diversity of physical creation. There are 22 letters of the Aleph Bet with five final letters which the Sefer Yetzirah compares to building blocks. Combinations of these bricks can build an enormous number of "houses." We shall discuss this in detail in a further chapter. Adam was well aware of this knowledge which we shall henceforth call the mystical tradition.

Adam named the animals

"G-d had formed every wild beast and every bird of heaven out of the ground. He brought them to man to see what he would name each one. Whatever the man called each living thing would remain its name" (Genesis 2:19).

Why did G-d ask Adam to name the animals? Shouldn't their names be decided by consensus? The answer is that Adam perceived the spiritual components of the creative spirit that brought every animal into being, and named each animal in conjunction with its spiritual configuration. Adam had the unique ability to peer through the external veneer of the animal's body and focus on the Divine energies flowing into it. The combination of Divine creative energy as represented in the letters of the Aleph Bet then became the name of the animal. Thus, all created things are directly affected by their Hebrew names, as well as by the component letters of their names. This is why we are always particular to say a prayer for

someone's recovery using their Hebrew name. Sometimes we may even add a name to a sick person and that additional name carries additional life flow (which is why we usually add the name Chaim for a man or Chaya for a woman, both of which mean life.)

The Shechinah, or "Divine Presence", was totally manifest in the Garden of Eden. To Adam, every facet of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms were superb manifestations of Divine creativity; and as the maestro of this cosmic orchestra, Adam directed the creation to prostrate itself to His majesty

The soul and body of Adam

“G-d formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils a breath of life. Man thus became a living creature” (Genesis 2:7).

Adam stood at the crossroads of creation. His body was formed from the earth—“min ha’adamah”; hence, the name Adam. Yet his soul originated from the innermost aspect of

G-dliness when G-d blew into his nostrils. The Zohar quotes, “It is of his inward and innermost vitality that a man emits through blowing with force.” So too when G-d “blew” man’s soul into his nostrils, G-d blew from deep within Him. Job describes man’s soul as “a part of G-d above” (Job 31:2). This Divine spark is encloded within an earthly shell. It is interesting to note that in Hebrew, the word Adam is made of three letters; Aleph, Dalet, Mem. The letter Aleph always refers to G-d who is the Aluf – the Commander in Chief of the world. The letters Dalet and Mem combined read the word “Dam” which is the Hebrew for the word blood. Adam is the juxtaposition of Aleph – the Divine, and Dam – blood the most corporeal element. Man can either rise to great spiritual heights or plummet into the depths of the material. He may oscillate

between crass hedonism and spiritual ecstasy. The purpose of creation, as we shall explain clearly in a further chapter is not that man should escape into the spiritual, nor should he wallow in the material, rather, man embodies the perfect synthesis between the two realms. His purpose is to fuse spirituality with the world, to permeate the physical world with the Divine and bring heaven down to earth.

The mistakes of Adam and Enosh

Before his sin, Adam’s soul radiated through his body and all his bodily functions. All his limbs fulfilled their Divine purpose.

“G-d gave the man a commandment, saying, ‘You may definitely eat from every tree of the Garden. But from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, do not eat, for on the day you eat from it, you will definitely die’” (Genesis 2:16).

It is beyond the scope of this work to explain kabbalistically why Adam ate the forbidden fruit; however the following observation will be made: Before eating the forbidden fruit evil was external, encloded within the Tree of Knowledge and the snake. Upon eating the forbidden fruit man internalized the struggle to determine between good and evil. Adam’s sin effectively caused a departure of the Shechinah from the world, and started the age-old war to refine the human condition and resensitize the world to its Creator. He was cast out of the Garden of Eden and it was decreed that his descendents would have to seek G-d through the travails of making a living.

Nonetheless, the mystical tradition programmed into Adam was transmitted to his children. It was in the days of Enosh, the son of Seth and the grandson of Adam, that idolatry began to surface and spread in the world. Though the philosophers of his day agreed that G-d was a Superbeing, they erred when they assumed He must have delegated the various cosmic departments to underlings; such as the constellations, sun, moon, and stars. Eventually they worshipped these underlings until such a point that the generally ignorant populace became so engaged with star-gazing and the worship of the constellations that they forgot G-d. The

result of their actions was that the Shechinah, already moved from our world one degree because of the sin of Adam, was repeatedly moved further due to the failings of Mankind. The Midrash, along with the Talmud, which talks of the existence of seven heavens or firmaments, describes this process in the commentary on Song of Songs:

Through the sin of Adam, the Shechinah moved from the earth to the first firmament. Upon the sin of Cain and Abel, the Shechinah moved from the first to the second firmament.

Through the sin of Enosh, the Shechinah moved from the second to the third, etc.

Eventually, through the sins of successive generations the Shechinah was removed until the seventh firmament. It was Abraham who started the process of return, by bringing the Shechinah from the seventh firmament back to the sixth, and thereafter Isaac from the sixth to the fifth etc., until Moses in the seventh generation returned the Shechinah to this earth where the Shechinah rested in the Tabernacle.

It must be noted that the concept of "removal of the Shechinah" does not suggest that G-d actually removed Himself from the world, for the world is totally dependent on ongoing Divine creative energy for existence, as shall be explained in a later chapter. Rather, the removal of the Shechinah refers to the insensitivity of the world population to G-dliness. The pattern is clear: sin creates insensitivity. However, the righteous resensitize the world to its true reality. In the Kabbalistic lexicon, this is generally referred to as Tikkun Olam, or the "rectification of the world." The purpose is to return the world to its perfect state as before the primordial sin.

Only a handful of righteous people were aware of the truth in the ten generations between Adam and Noah. Eventually the world was so filled with violence that G-d flooded the world to purify it, rather like the immersion of an impure Vessel in a mikvah. One righteous man, Noah, along with his three sons Shem, Cham, and Yafet saved through the Ark and remained. Noah transmitted the mystical tradition to his son Shem, who subsequently transmitted it to his great-grandson Eber.