

The Secret of the Jewish New Year

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Rosh HaShanah, the two day Jewish New Year of 5,764, will be observed this year by Jews worldwide as they have been doing for over the last 3,300 years on Sept. 27 and 28. Ten days later on October 6, Yom Kippur the most sacred day in the Hebrew calendar, is observed. These two events have deep spiritual and national meaning to the Jewish people, but Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur also have profound spiritual significance to Gentiles the world over. During these ten days according to the ancient Hebrew sages the Book of Life and the Book of Death are “opened” and the whole world is “judged.” The Kabbalists – the Jewish mystics – explain the inner significance of this concept. There is a cosmic process occurring *within* the Divine Mind affecting all creation and by which all humanity is now ascending into the *rosh*, the “head” of the “*shanah*,” the year that is beginning another cycle of time. As this process unfolds again within the GodHead the “judgments” are not being made judgmentally (which in any event is a non-starter anthropomorphism), but rather the act of judgments are the calculations the Divine Mind must formulate as to what is necessary in order to bring the creation to perfection -- every individual, every community, every nation and the entirety of life itself. Just like Jews, Gentiles and their nations are also being examined and re-calibrated as to what they need to experience over the coming new year to achieve their tikkun (spiritual rectification).

Now, it appears on the surface that the theme running from Rosh HaShanah through Yom Kippur is about repentance and atonement. From the perspective of the Kabbalah, however, the essence of these holy days is *not* primarily about *teshuva* (repentance) and kappara (from the word kippur – atonement). As we will see, from a unique esoteric perspective teshuva and atonement are required but only as prerequisites and by-products and as part of an incredible means towards an unbelievable end. The “ending” of The Ten Days of Teshuva are intrinsically linked into another Jewish festival lasting 8 days almost immediately following Yom Kippur called Sukkot – the Feast of Tabernacles. In ancient Temple times righteous Gentiles also participated in this joyous festival in the holy city of Jerusalem. In the last several decades Gentile participation during the week of Sukkot has returned to the Land of Israel with thousands of loving Gentiles from around the world marching round the walls of Jerusalem.

Altogether from Rosh HaShanah until the end of Sukkot there are 22 sacred days. The Kabbalists quote a verse from the Song of Songs that encapsulates this entire period and the hidden process taking place. The feminine essence of the 22 days themselves is personified as exclaiming to her Divine masculine counterpart, “His left hand is beneath my head and his right hand embraces me.”¹ The left hand is the left side of God -- the Divine contracting energies that represent the implosive and introspective period of the Ten Days. The right hand is the right side of God -- the Divine expanding energies that represent the explosive and openly intense outflow of joy of the period of the seven days of Sukkot culminating in the union of the Divine masculine and Divine feminine on the eight day.

Although it is common knowledge that Rosh HaShanah is the birthday of the world this phenomenon is just one of the many motifs in the kaleidoscope of the Days of Awe. Actually, it is Adam and Eve that are being created on Rosh HaShanah, the creation of the world having begun five days before. Rosh HaShanah is actually the sixth day of creation. Now, it is a fundamental tradition that every holy day is a microcosm of the original 24-hour period (or in this case 48 hours) that it is replicating over again. Thus, Rosh HaShanah is literally recreating the entire creation process of Adam and Hava (Eve). The manifestation of man *and* woman is the beginning, middle and end of virtually every ritual, custom and prayer that is occurring during this 22-day period. Kabbalistically, the actions and words performed during these Holy Days parallel

¹ Song of Songs 2-6.

the creation or rather the *re-creation* of Adam and Eve and their culmination in physical and spiritual union.

“God created Man in His image, in the image of God He created him: male and female He created *them*.² And the Divine Mind cast a deep sleep (*tardayma*, cognate with the English dormant) upon the man and he slept; and He took one of his sides [the feminine side] and He filled in flesh in its place. Then the Lord God cloned the [feminine] side that He had taken from the man into a woman, and He brought her to the man.”³

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, which is long after the “Fall” or dimensional collapse of Adam and Eve. The higher dimensional Adam and Eve, the masculine and feminine aspects of Divinity, were originally manifested as a “back to back” hermaphrodite-like entity (for reasons elaborated in the Kabbalah). They then had to go through a process of separation known as the *n’sirah* – “division,” each one “turned around” and then, face to face, engage in physically divine union. The union, just as it occurs with earthly man and woman, is preceded by a period of arousal and stimulation of *hibuk* and *nishuk* – hugging and kissing. The passion of Adam and Eve for each other and their transforming orgasmic union is also included in the commandment to “be fruitful and multiply.”⁴

Now, Adam and Eve should have waited until Friday night – the beginning of the first Shabbat – to perform this great act of unification and spiritual tikkun (rectification). Their untimely and grave miscalculation as to when to reunite with each other (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 HaShanah the *tardayma*, the *n’sirah* and the reconstruction of Eve – the feminine aspect of Divinity – are literally repeated over again. Only now the process, instead of occurring within an hour (of “Adamic time”) is “stretched” out over a period of 22 days.

“From my flesh I will behold God”⁵ 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/emanation being separated from itself. What took place almost instantly in the Garden of 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/Crown from the masculine aspect of Keter/Crown, the feminine aspect of Chochma/Wisdom from the masculine aspect of Chochma/Wisdom and so on. This is the literal meaning of the “*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 powerful contracting “*gevurot*”) that runs the length of the body from the head/keter to the reproductive center/malchut and down into the feet.

The *nesira*/division is actually a ten-stepped 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 in the Kabbalah as the mitigating and expanding *hasadim*) on the feminine elements in the world, but the feminine element is exposed. This creates a paradoxical situation: This extremely 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, the sounding of the ram’s horn, comes in. Its affect is two fold: One, the sound of the shofar causes the slumbering masculine Adam (the *hasadim*) who has

² Genesis 1-27.

³ Genesis 2-21,22.

⁴ Genesis 1-28.

⁵ Job 19-26.

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*, the Divine unmitigated constricting energies are only sweetened in their root”, i.e. din with din, tempered with temper, fire with fire, the “lower feminine” (Eve) with the “higher feminine” (the Shechina).

The final *n’sirah*/division 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 newly fashioned daughter and all the feminine energies rooted in her must be elevated to the realm of the Divine Mother, the Shechina. For this reason the kabbalists instituted the otherwise anomaly of wearing a large tallit/prayer shawl at night as well as during the day of Yom Kippur. The tallit is the Shechina spreading her wings around her children who embody her daughter Eve and raises her upward into another dimension. The “lower” feminine is absorbed into the “higher” feminine in order to receive the secret essence of her cosmic genetic-like code. These two female aspects are alluded to in the Biblical name for Yom Kippur – *Yom HaKippurim*, i.e. *two kippurim*, the one below and the one above. The lower *malchut*/kingdom is cosmically “stamped”, “fashioned” and “imprinted” in the mystery of the now fully developed Divine Female. This imprint is known as 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]”.

From the perspective of the Kabbalah 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 Ten 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; from the same root). “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 harsh *din* and over constricting *gevurot* are temporarily 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 thus “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, the cosmic fuel that activates and directs the entirety of the Ten Days and then into the second half of this cosmic drama of this 22 day period.

By the end of *n’eila* (“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 with the beginning of Sukkot and the waving of the lulav and etrog – the arousal and passion that culminates in the cosmic union of man and woman, heaven and earth, Creator with creation.