



LILITH

A RE-READING OF FEMININE SHADOW

BY OHAD EZRAHI AND MARC GAFNI

Lilith Poem

An Offering of Words in Honor of Lilith:

Throw away

All your begging bowls at God's door,

For I have heard the beloved

Prefers sweet threatening shouts,

Something of the order of:

"Hey Beloved,

My heart is a raging volcano

Of love for you!

You better start kissing me-

Or Else!"

-Hafiz

The First Gate: Why Lilith?

The following is a translation of the Hebrew Book, *Lilith; A Re-Reading of Feminine Shadow*, by Ohad Ezrahi and Marc Gafni, published in 2005. In regard to the nature of this partnership, see the note below. Ohad has written a note about this on his website, and it requires a response, which I offer below.

Two caveats are in order. Within the book, the authors refer to two works that at the time the authors intended to complete together. At this point, it is likely that each of the authors may publish an independent version of these works. The two works are *Personal Myth Essays* and *The Journey of Abraham*. In the latter, very little work was done.

In the former, 12 essays were developed in collaboration between the authors which began in 1999-2000, and continued off and on until 2005. The final communication regarding this book was in 2006 and the project awaits appropriate completion.

In that book are short essays on Laughter, Eros, The Masculine and the Feminine, Masculinity, Loneliness, Failure, Extremism, Nakedness, Dance, Nature, and more. The essays resulted from the collaborative Torah of Gafni and Ezrahi in the earlier period of their association.

The Hebrew version of *Lilith* refers to these works and to the authors intentions in this regard in several places. As noted above it is highly probable that this work will be revised, updated and published independently by each of the authors.

The book *Lilith* also contains references to several works of Marc Gafni which are not yet published, including a work on *The Dance of Tears*, *The Dance of Laughter*, a three-volume work on *Unique Self*, *Non-Dual Humanism*, and the *Religious Theology of Mordechai Lainer of Izbica*.

This latter three-volume work has just been submitted for publication in June 2008. *The Dance of Tears*, which has been completed, is now undergoing revision and editing. A version of the *The Dance of Laughter* was written by Marc Gafni in 2001 and is currently being revised.

The English version of *Lilith* will be published at the appropriate time. Marc Gafni supervised three English translations of *Lilith*, none of which in his view were fully adequate even as each of them made a valuable contribution to the process.

This process took place simply because of time constraints. Marc Gafni is currently retranslating the book himself, and at some point, it will find its way into print in one or two editions.

This book represents an integration of ideas from Marc Gafni and Ohad Ezrahi. At his request the first writer during the physical writing was Ohad.

It was co-authored by them and published with intention as a shared book reflecting their partnership at the time and the shared intellectual content in the core of the book.

This is reflected in the joint publishing of the book, the shared content, and the signed contracts with the publishers and dozens of extant letters between the authors during the process.

For more info: www.marcgafni.com/authorship-lilith

Chapter 1: Adam, Lilith, Eve and The Problem of Male Domination

The voice of revelation in our time is the voice of women. Emerging from centuries of silence and being silenced, women's voices are profoundly altering the landscape in every field of human endeavor. For all religious traditions that are encrusted with the legacy of patriarchy, there is a need on the part of women and men who support them to cut away the crust and find within each tradition a useable past that can support the feminist project of renewal from within. This book, like other recent works, is part of a large cultural endeavor to bring to light Jewish sources for valuing sexuality and for liberating women and men to relationships of equality with one another.¹ Having found a deep, but buried vein of truth within the Jewish textual tradition that supports this goal, in both a profound and provocative fashion, we feel privileged to share it in this book with an audience of both scholars and seekers.

The specific terrain that we will be mining is the issue of sexual desire and the problem of male domination of women, which come together as the twin consequences of sin in the Garden of Eden story. After confronting Adam and Eve with their trespass, God's pronouncement to Eve is usually interpreted as a curse on all her female descendants. It can also be seen as etiology, explanations of how things came to be the way they are. It gives an origin for the pain of childbearing, an unavoidable biological fact. Yet it also offers an etiology for an altogether avoidable sociological fact, a husband's domination of his wife, and in particular, of their sexual relations: "Yet your urge shall be for your husband/ And he shall rule over you" (Gen. 3:16).² One way traditional interpreters have dealt with this verse is to see it as time-bound – that it is a curse not to be undone until the messianic era. There is "ample precedent," however, as Rachel Adler has noted, "for reading Genesis 2 and 3 as an etiological tale about the hardships of human life rather than as a normative statement. The rabbinic tradition does not use the story as a source of legal proof-texts, nor is there any prohibition on alleviating its conditions.... However unhappy the world of patriarchy may be, it is unnecessary to conclude that it is God's will that we inhabit it...The redemptive truth offered by this grim depiction is that patriarchal social relations construct a world that cries out to be mended. Yet mending is contingent upon the healing of gender relations."⁴

Shifting the ground of the argument from narrative to law and ritual, we hear a similar cry from the leading exponent of feminism within the world of Jewish orthodoxy, Blu Greenberg: "Must we say that God's eternal plan for the sexes was a hierarchy, one dominant and one subordinate sex as law and ritual define us?... Or can we say perhaps that the inequity is reflective of an undisputed socio-religious stance of ancient times?... Does the fact that long-standing sociological truth has been codified into halakhah oblige us to make an eternal principle out of an accident of history?"⁵

Ultimately, in order to heal gender relations within Judaism, changes need to take place in the areas of law and ritual — matters pertaining to women chained in marriage, women as interpreters of law, women as leaders of prayer communities — which will not be settled within the pages of a book, but only in communities of practice and belief. This book is based on a firm conviction that the stories we choose to tell and the holiness that we learn to find within them indeed have a powerful claim upon law-creating and law-maintaining communities. The stories that we tell create the world of meaning that we inhabit, what legal theorist Robert Cover has called a "*nomos*." This nomic universe of meanings, values and rules, which is embedded in stories, is where we turn when we make or revise laws and choose to live them out in practice.⁶ It is no accident that Cover's legal theories cite examples and precedents from Torah. Torah's blend of stories and laws is indeed its unique form and contribution to Western discourse,

unlike any other law code or narrative from the ancient world.⁶ Torah continues to be held sacred, precisely because within its laws are contained stories that hold compelling meaning for communities of contemporary Jews, whether or not they believe in the divine origin of Torah. The most powerful and oft-repeated examples are laws that demand social justice and relate this imperative to the experience of the Exodus: “You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of a stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt” (Ex. 23:9).

The great Hebrew poet, Chaim Nachman Bialik, put the relation between stories and law in this memorable way: “Halakah and aggadah are simply two that are one, two aspects of a single creation. The relationship between the two is like the relationship between action and physical form on the one hand and words on the other.” Bialik goes on to evoke more poetic nuances of the relationship: “Dreams are drawn to their interpretation, the will is drawn to action, thoughts to words, the flower to the fruit — and Aggadah to Halakhah. And yet, even the fruit contains within it the seed from which a new flower will emerge.”⁸ If we extend Bialik’s metaphor that aggadah is the flower and halakhah, the fruit, then this book can be regarded as the work of two pollinating bees, who travel from flower to flower — from Bible to midrash to Talmud to Zohar to Lurianic Kabbalah and Hasidut — and then deposit the nectar of each in the soil of our communal garden, out of which will grow, from these authentic seeds of Torah, a new fruit: that is, a new orientation to relations between the sexes.

The Problem of Domination

“Domination... is a twisting of the *bonds of love*,”⁹ writes Jessica Benjamin in *The Bonds of Love*, a book that can help us think clearly about the psychodynamics of domination. Domination, she argues, goes hand in hand with dualistic thinking of all kinds. Based on Simone de Beauvoir’s insight that in the Western tradition “woman functions as man’s primary other, his opposite — playing nature to his reason, immanence to his transcendence, primordial oneness to his individuated separateness, and object to his subject,” Benjamin attempts to show that “gender polarity underlies such familiar dualisms as autonomy and dependency, and thus establishes the coordinates for the positions of master and slave” (7). Domination is, in other words, what she calls a “reversible relationship:” now one term in a dualism, then the other dominates.

Domination could not exist without fantasies of omnipotence, Benjamin claims, which are themselves rooted in a sense of lacking or absence at a person’s core. “This void is filled with fantasy material in which the other appears so dangerous or so weak — or both — that he [she] threatens the self and must be controlled. A vicious cycle begins: the more the other is subjugated, the less he [she] is experienced as a human subject and the more distance or violence the self must deploy against him [her]... By the same token, “the subjugated, whose acts and integrity are granted no recognition, may, even in the very act of emancipation, remain in love with the ideal of power that has been denied to them. Though they may reject the master’s right to dominion over them, they nevertheless do reject his personification of power. They simply reverse the terms and claim his rights as theirs.” The dominated, in these terms, is someone who nurses fantasies of turning the tables and becoming the dominator. The master and the slave, to use Hegel’s famous example, cannot exist without each other.

Love, however, cannot coexist with domination. Love and domination are not a reversible, dualistic pair. Love emerges only in an “intersubjective realm — that space in which the mutual recognition of subjects can compete with the reversible relationship of domination” (220). Mutual recognition between men and women has at long last been made possible by feminism, Benjamin claims, despite a widespread perception that it imposes barriers and antagonisms. Feminism “has allowed men and women to begin

confronting the difficulties of recognizing an other, and to explore the painful longing for what lies on the other side of these difficulties” (224).

Benjamin’s perspective on domination and dualism offers a considerable challenge to our work and reminds us that while we are exploring the often dualist, hierarchical thought structures of kabbalah, we do not need to follow the path of essentialism, positing separate spheres for the ‘masculine’ and the ‘feminine.’ We are also challenged by Tania Modleski’s observation that frequently “male subjectivity works to appropriate ‘femininity’ while oppressing women.”¹⁰ This critique has a great deal of relevance to what we might call the patriarchal shell of Judaism. The goal of our project is to show the unrealized possibilities for both men and women within traditional Jewish thinking and to provide a framework for men and women’s mutual recognition of one another in the fullness of their shared humanity.

Lilith, the Shadow of Eve

This analysis of domination allows us to bring the mythic figure of Lilith into play, for Lilith’s story emerges precisely out of a struggle over domination in marriage. The story of Lilith has been bubbling up in Jewish circles for perhaps four thousand years. We will deal with her story at length in Ch. 4, but our discussion will benefit from a brief introduction here.

Her roots are in Sumerian mythology, where she is a powerful goddess — pictured as a naked woman, winged and taloned, mounting a lion, flanked by owls — thought to be a harlot and vampire, never releasing her lovers or satisfying them either, a reflex of the Great Mother goddess who ruled early in human consciousness.¹¹ In the largely demythologized atmosphere of the Bible, she puts in a cameo appearance as possibly an owl among waste places (Isa. 34:14). In the rabbinic mind, she takes further shape as the first Eve, a figure that helps the rabbis to explain why there are two creation stories in Genesis. In the first is written, “Male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27), while in the second, more fleshed-out story, “the LORD God fashioned the rib that He had taken from the man into a woman” (Gen. 2:22). By the time that this second woman Eve, was created. the first woman, who was to become Lilith, had disappeared.

That disappearance is first explained in full in the 10th century C.E. text, “The Alphabet of (Pseudo) Ben Sirah.” In this telling, Adam and Lilith were created at the same time, presumably with the possibility of equality between them. We first encounter them, however, locked in a marital struggle, emblematically represented as a quarrel over sexual positions. Adam insists that he is to be on top, signifying domination, but Lilith refuses and instead pronounces the secret name of God, which allows her to flee the garden. She ends up on the shores of the Red Sea, where she mates with the resident demons, producing legions of demon offspring. Adam, meanwhile, has complained to God of his loneliness, so God dispatches three angels to bring Lilith back to him. The angels extract from her the promise that she will not destroy the babies of women who, during child-birth, wear an amulet containing the names of the three angels. In effect, this story is an etiology for the magical practice of wearing this particular amulet to ward off the dangers inherent in child-birth and to the newborn.¹²

In later aggadah and folklore, Lilith, the demon is both a seducer of unwitting men, entering their nocturnal dreams to copulate with them and produce legions of demon-children and, at the same time, an evil witch, devouring their human offspring. In the Zohar, she is a highly charged sexual figure: within the human world, she is thought to be the Queen of Sheba and one of the two prostitutes who come to Solomon for judgment, and within the cosmic world of angels, demons and God, she functions as Queen of the Demons and, in the fallen world symbolized by the destruction of the Temple, she is “the slave woman,” consort to God, until the time of the Messiah, when God can reunite with the exiled feminine

part of him. This lurid history, buried in kabbalistic books and unearthed by Gershom Scholem's scholarship,¹³ was made popularly known in Raphael Patai's book, *The Hebrew Goddess*, which told her story up to the Zohar and no further.¹⁴

As a mythic figure, Lilith satisfies an important need for both men and women. Jo Milgrom has offered a comprehensive analysis of Lilith's powers and appeal: "She personifies the dark side of feminine creative and sexual powers. She is not a wife, but a seducer; she is not faithful, but promiscuous. Even though she produces life, she is a baby and mother killer. Thus, she personifies the fear that resides in all of us. For women, it is the fear that in bearing new life, they, the bearers may not survive, and/or, that the new life itself may not survive. The Siren, or Greek version of Lilith, is a threat to men, representing their fears: loss of potency, loss of the nurture and devotion of a wife, loss of progeny (hence, immortality...)." Milgrom adds that men fear her autonomy and assertive sexuality. As a projection screen, then, for the fears of both men and women, and their fears about each other's sexuality, Lilith serves as a release valve for emotions that need to find concrete expression.

A generation of Jewish women who came of age with the second wave of twentieth-century feminism, have seen in her tragic story a reflection of their own disempowerment within Judaism and their desire to reclaim that power.¹⁵ What contemporary feminists have seized upon in Lilith is her powerful rebelliousness and autonomy, her wildness and sexual appetite. Lilith is the woman who says NO! to patriarchal domination and YES! to self-empowerment. There are limits to how far this view of Lilith can take contemporary feminists, however. It is helpful to apply our analysis of the psychodynamics of domination: as long as the dominator and dominated are both caught up in dualistic thinking, their relationship will be a continual see-saw of who's on top, of master and slave. The dominator will objectify and depersonalize the dominated, in order to carry out the subjugation. In this spirit, Adam's descendants demonize Lilith and exclude her from human company. And, as the subjugated partner; Lilith seeks out new ways of gaining power over the other. As a demon, she lives out her own fantasies of omnipotence, primarily through unbridled sexuality and blood-lust. The myth, so construed, simply reproduces the problem of domination out of which it grew. Lilith chose autonomy and separation over wifely dependence, but her supposed gain was another form of subjugation — a life of loneliness and alienation, on the margins, consigned to the shadowy, dream-laden night.

It is a mistake to look at Lilith in isolation, for as a personification of assertive sexuality and autonomy, she represents only one pole of female experience. She is inexorably tied to Eve, her domestic sister and antagonist in the myth, who suffers patriarchal domination directly, even as she is man's helper, doing all the hard work of keeping house, bringing up children and maintaining relationship under those conditions. Howard Schwartz has compared Eve and Lilith to the mermaid and the siren, two kinds of mythological creatures of the sea, the one helping sailors through the rocky shoals, the other luring them, entranced, to their deaths. To identify with the one at the expense of the other poses a danger for contemporary Jewish feminism, he claims. "The myths of Lilith and Eve cry out for recognition of their polar nature within a single woman, as do the myths of Jacob and Esau in every man.... To deny one side or the other is to deny the wholeness of the self."¹⁶

One of the first feminist midrashim on Lilith sought to heal the rift between Lilith and Eve engendered by patriarchy. Judith Plaskow imagines Lilith coming back to the garden and finding Eve, who had not been created when she fled. Delighted with her new companion, Lilith helps Eve over the garden wall, so that they can head out into the world — hand in hand, to make friends with one another, as they leave Adam behind.¹⁷ This parable points toward a reunion of that which patriarchal man has driven apart, rather

than his conquering and reincorporating the female into his realm.¹⁸ Jakov Lind, a Holocaust survivor, writes a parallel, but heterosexual story that focuses on Lilith's and Eve's integration in a single body and consciousness. With Eve gone on errands, Lilith returns to find Adam home alone. As she pledges to him her eternal love, Adam falls into her arms and takes her to bed. During this betrayal, Eve comes in, and seeing what is afoot, projects her soul into Lilith's body. In the act of love-making, she speaks to Adam from the body of this new, unified Lilith-Eve consciousness and informs him that henceforth Lilith and Eve are one.¹⁹ These parables of integration, each from their different perspectives, point to the seeds of a new Lilith-Eve myth, which can move beyond the old dualities and demonization.

FREUDIAN AND JUNGIAN PERSPECTIVES

Freud's way of looking at the polarity of Lilith-Eve stems from his anthropological speculations in *Totem and Taboo*. There, he posits that the defining moment in shifting from biological to cultural life was when a man took a particular woman as his personal property. Freud sees that shift as giving rise to a split between the loved and pure woman and the sexual and desired woman, a dynamic he relates to both the incest taboo and the Oedipus complex.²⁰ The woman that man can have is beloved, wise, wifely — namely, Eve, but man's sexual feelings for the woman that he cannot have also seek an outlet — namely, Lilith.²¹ This split between Eve and Lilith is a consequence, then, of the broken world of patriarchy, which is founded in the very idea of one sex possessing the other.

From the Jungian perspective, archetypes are pre-existent entities within human consciousness. The archetype of the Great Mother is represented in a variety of archetypal images, including Lilith and Eve. In Jung's thought, the forces of the unconscious are always arrayed in polar configurations, presenting a positive side and a shadow side, figures compounded equally of fascination and fear. As the devouring, terrifying mother, Lilith, the baby-killer, confronts women with the shadow side of her archetype, while as the seductive, enticing beauty, she confronts men with her positive side or anima, the symbol of the opposite sex in the man's psyche. (Eve, too, is associated with a polarity: the fecund mother of all living is the one through whom death and suffering come to the world.) When the shadow side of the archetype is suppressed culturally — expelled from the garden, as it were — it gets clothed in ever more destructive garb. But some part of the archetype will return and seek to be acknowledged and integrated. And in order to be integrated by human beings, it will clothe itself in positive human forms. As the terrifying shadow, it can never be integrated, but as the alluring anima, it participates in healing the human. This is how one Jungian analyst describes the process for Lilith: "In psychological terms, this purely natural, instinctive anima attempts over and over again to approach a man i.e. to force her way into a consciousness that she feels should absorb her. Like numerous other anima figures which appear to us in myths, fairy tales and legends, such as the melusines, nymphs, sirens and ondines, Lilith also tries to associate with humans. Only in this way — that is, psychologically speaking, accepted by a receptive, steadfast consciousness, can she be 'released,' i.e. transformed."²²

Getting sucked into a power struggle with this image will cut a man off from eros and his emotions. In this struggle, he risks getting lost in this realm — that is, losing his ego and being completely enslaved to the image. But there also exists the possibility that in a confrontation with the unconscious, the anima can be absorbed into the male consciousness and integrated with it — in Emma Jung's words, "binding a man in the chains of love, that they may live in his world with him."²³ In this way "the dark feminine" itself begins to change its character.

In the Zohar's developments of the Lilith myth, the scale is tipped to the side of fear and loathing rather than to the side of fascination, which could lead to integrating the archetype back into human consciousness. The Zohar never escapes the downward dynamic of domination. But in Isaac Luria's development of the myth, the scale tips notably in the other direction. Picking up on hints in the Zohar, Luria taught that after Lilith was banished from the garden, her soul was reincarnated in a long chain of notable women from Genesis onward. Her reincarnated soul is involved in two of the most horrific incidents narrated in the Torah – the rape of Dinah (Genesis 34) and the murder of Cozbi and Zimri, while engaged in the act of intercourse (Numbers 25). These incidents cry out for explanation, and the Ari finds clues in the peregrinations of the soul of Lilith. It was the task of the men that these women married to reintegrate the banished feminine archetype into their consciousness. This working out of Lilith's human destiny has been almost completely unavailable as a spiritual resource for contemporary men and women, as it has been buried in the untranslated arcana of Lurianic myth. We believe that it can contribute to the contemporary feminist project within Judaism. It is this book's happy task to bring this long-buried ore to light.

CHAPTER 2: THE ARI'S MYTH

Isaac Luria (1534-72) is known in Jewish tradition as Ha-Ari, the Lion of Safed, an acronym for Ha-Elohi Rabbi Yitzhak, the "Divine" Rabbi Isaac, based on a reputation for saintliness that he gained during his lifetime. After a long period of secluded kabbalistic study in Egypt (which we might regard as his period of confrontation with myth and the unconscious), the Ari arrived in Safed, which was a flourishing center of Jewish mystical speculation, with such luminaries as Joseph Karo, Solomon Alkabetz, and Moses Cordovero in residence. The Ari's period of teaching there was very brief: two to three years at most. But his impact has lasted for centuries. His reinterpretation of the doctrine of creation in the Zohar through the concepts of divine self-contraction (tzimtzum), the breaking of the vessels (shevirat ha-kelim) and restoration (tikkun) continues to dominate most popular thinking about Jewish mysticism. Both the messianism of Shabbetai Tzevi in the 17th century and the spreading of spiritual inwardness through Hasidism since the 18th century are impossible to imagine without the background of these Lurianic concepts. Likewise, when Jews today see their actions as contributing to tikkun olam, or think of themselves as gathering sparks of holiness, they are living out concepts which were brought to life by the teachings of the Ari.²⁴

What are often called "the writings of the Ari" were actually written by his chief disciples, Rabbi Hayyim Vital and others. These writings are intricately detailed descriptions of the workings of the supernal worlds, written in a language that appears technical and extremely impersonal. There was, however, a deeply personal dimension to these speculations, stemming from the curiosity that the Ari and R. Hayyim Vital felt about the sources of their own souls. It follows therefore that a psychological reading is essential to understanding his meaning, and we will return to this line of thought after sketching the Ari's essential doctrines.

First, a few caveats. For someone accustomed to viewing Judaism as a radical monotheistic faith, like Maimonides, who rejects any anthropomorphic image of God, it is not easy to accept the mythological orientation of Kabbalistic thought. The Kabbalah shifts without difficulty between the stories of the forefathers and those of the divine pantheon in the upper worlds. This does not entail any movement away from the monotheistic belief in divine unity. In fact, the Kabbalists allow themselves to use words which seem to imply change, form, and plurality in the Godhead, without feeling its unity in the least undermined.²⁵

It is easy for a reader new to Kabbalah to be put off by the terminology and the details of its cosmogony. It may be helpful to filter the material through the twin lenses of myth and symbol. Myth is a direct presentation of events in the divine world through narrative, while symbolic discourse presents unseen divine processes through mediating comparisons: natural images, human personalities etc. According to the mythic view, the Ari speaks of the divine realm directly, and aspires to an unequivocal, direct correspondence between his discourse and the reality he describes. Unlike the Zohar, which revels in an exfoliating symbolic language to illuminate the divine, the Ari erects a comprehensive edifice, defining concepts and connections that are only implicit in symbolic form in the Zohar.²⁶ According to the symbolic view, there is a continuity of method between the Zohar and the Ari, both of them describing divine processes through the medium of images and personification.²⁷

In the kabbalah that preceded the Ari, creation is understood as a progressive unfolding from the infinitude of Eyn-Sof ("the Endless One/the Never-Ending") through a continuous process of emanation

that ultimately leads to the world we know, in which divinity is clothed in material form. This emanation took place through ten sefirot, ten divine forces by which the Infinite One creates and maintains the four worlds that exist between Ein-Sof and us. These worlds are known as Atzilut (Emanation), Beriah (Creation), Yetzirah (Formation) and Assiyah (Action). Each of these worlds is composed of ten sefirot, with many dynamic connections between them. As a vertical map replicated in each world between Ein Sof and us, they appear as follows:

Keter (Crown)

Hokhma (Wisdom)

Binah (Discernment)

Hesed (Love)

Gevurah/Din (Strength/Judgment) Tiferet/Rahamim (Beauty/Compassion)

Netzah (Enduringness)

Hod (Majesty)

Yesod (Foundation/Generativity)

Malkhut (Sovereignty)

Where the Zohar saw continuity between the Eyn Sof and the emanated worlds, the Ari posited an enormous gulf between them. The Eyn Sof so filled creation that there was no room for anything but God. Creation could only take place through an act of divine self-contraction or self-limitation, which he called tzimtzum. Before tzimtzum, all the forces within God were in equilibrium, without any separation between them. But in the act of self-limitation, confusion occurred that required these forces to be reshuffled. In this process, Judgment (Din) and Love (Hesed), previously in balance, separated; this separation is seen as responsible for the origins of evil in our world.

God's withdrawal left room for creative processes to emerge in the space left (mostly) vacant of divinity.²⁸ The first letter of the divine name descended into this space, creating "vessels" (kelim), which gradually assumed clearer and clearer shape as the "primordial human" (Adam Kadmon). Tremendous lights shone forth from the head of Adam Kadmon, creating further vessels. Each of the sefirot got a vessel of its own. While the vessels assigned to the upper three sefirot managed to contain the light that flowed into them, the light that struck the seven lower sefirot shattered them. This "breaking of the vessels" (shevirat ha-kelim) was a cosmic catastrophe. Some of the light went back to its source, but the rest was hurled down and became concentrated in the vessels' shells (kelippot), these being the substance of the dark forces in the universe, known as the Other Side (Sitra Ahra). Since that time, the kelippot, the world to which Lilith belongs, have challenged the hierarchy of the divine worlds.

At the same moment that the vessels broke, restoration, tikkun, began. The light that now issued from Adam Kadmon's forehead began to reorganize the confusion, with the goal of creating structures more stable than the ten sefirot, in order to adequately contain the divine light. These new structures belonging to the world of Atzilut are called "countenances" (partzufim), which we can understand as archetypal personae. Each partzuf is a spiritual- divine figure, with an internal structure parallel to that of a human being, complete with head, torso, and arms. This corporeality expresses a crucial aspect of tikkun: "When light is given to the sefirot without any participation on their part, they shatter. It is only

when they are rebuilt in the image of the human, which includes male and female... that they can endure.”²⁹ The partzufim not only receive divine light, but now give it as well, influencing each of the worlds below Adam Kadmon and helping to raise them from the places to which they had fallen during the breaking of the vessels.

This bold anthropomorphic language has roots in midrash and Zohar, like everything else in the Ari’s teachings. The Rabbis commented that, at the crossing of the Red Sea, God revealed Himself as a hero and a warrior. However, at the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, He appeared to be an old, hoary, white-haired sage:

“He said to them: “Do not see Me as these different forms, but I am the One from the sea, and I am the One from Sinai – ‘I am God your Lord.’”³⁰ We can think of the partzufim as a “divine comedy,” in which the One ineffable God chooses different personae, in order to communicate with humans. Towards every person, at each moment of his or her life, God’s essence and spiritual immanence is radiated through one of a number of figures with such human characteristics as age, color, sex etc. At the same time, The One is not really in any of them, but is infinite, formless, beyond thought, and beyond any verbal expression.

Each of these partzufim bears a relationship to the sefirot of Adam Kadmon, channeling the sefirotic light and using it in the drama of tikkun. Sefirah Keter is reformed as both Atik Yomin (“Ancient of Days”) and Arikh Anpin (“Long-faced One”), representing two faces of the least accessible Sefirah. The Sefirot Hokhmah and Binah become the partzufim of Abba (“Father”) and Imma (“Mother”). They help all the other emanated beings serve as givers and receivers of divine influx; their relationship is the archetype for intellectual and erotic union. From their coupling the partzuf of Ze’eir Anpin

(“Short-Faced One”) is born. As Ze’eir Anpin is suckled and grows, he comes to comprise six of the lower sefirot (from Hesed to Tiferet). Eventually, he mates with the partzuf Nukba de-Ze’eir (“the female of Ze’eir”), a reformulation of the Sefirah Malkhut, representing his complementary feminine side. Here we list their central characteristics:

1. Atik Yomin – “Ancient of Days” – the highest partzuf of Keter. The wise old man whose wisdom is wondrous, hidden, and concealed. Lacking in sexual differentiation, absolutely androgynous.
2. Arikh Anpin – “Long-faced One” i.e. the indulgent or forbearing one – the lower partzuf of Keter. The wise old man, the grandfather, another androgynous figure.
3. Abba – “Daddy” – the partzuf of chochma, father figure.
4. Imma – “Mommy” – the partzuf of Binah, mother figure.
5. Ze’eir Anpin – “Short-Faced One” i.e. – the impatient or unindulgent one – the partzuf of the six lower sefirot. The attributes of the heart. The partzuf of the young male, the emotional, hero figure.
6. Nukba de Ze’eir- the female partzuf. The Shekhina figure, the anima. Divided into: Leah – the upper female, and Rachel – the lower female.

In our discussion, we will focus primarily on the two lower partzufim, Ze’eir Anpin and Nukba, or, as they are called in the Zohar, “the Holy One, blessed be He, and his Shekhina (Kudsha brich hu u-shekhintai). Ze’eir Anpin is the most active in remediating the concentration of Judgment, which contributed to the original breaking of the vessels. The partzuf of Nukba, which represents the Shekhina, the female aspect of the Godhead, is the most dynamic partzuf in the divine world. The Shekhina ascends and descends, develops and decreases. She is divided into two secondary figures, Leah and Rachel, and also unites into

one figure composed of them both at once. Her state depends on the state of the relationship between God and humanity, which directly impacts on the relationship between Ze'eir Anpin and his soul-mate. In other words, the partzufim cannot do the work of tikkun alone. The Zohar, upon which the Ari based his teachings, often calls the Shekhina by the names Leah and Rachel. It thus views the Biblical narrative as a microcosmic reflection of the divine dynamic taking place in the macrocosmic world of Atzilut. So too, the Ari often calls Ze'eir Anpin by the two names, Jacob and Israel. The network of relationships between Jacob and his two wives is therefore understood as an archetypal matrix that is played out both below in the human world and above in the divine world. This dynamic of correspondences will be central to the investigation in this book.

Before Adam's sin, the relationship of Ze'eir Anpin and Nukba was "face-to-face," but afterwards, it was transformed into a relationship of looking "back-to-back." Adam's soul was designed to have mended the break in the cosmos, but because of his failure, the task of mending has fallen to other human beings. The primary task of religious and contemplative activity (including the intercourse of husbands and wives) is to return the relationship of Ze'eir and Nukba to one of "face-to-face." As one scholar has put it, "sexual intimacy within the life of god is the paradigmatic expression of divine wholeness."³¹ The coupling of Ze'eir Anpin and Nukba will facilitate the tikkun of the supernal lights that have been concealed in the upper partzufim, waiting to be revealed in the messianic age. Tikkun is both earthly and cosmic, the process by which Israel will be restored to its land and the Shekhinah to her partner, the Kadosh Barukh-hu.

REINCARNATION AND READING

One of God's tools in effecting this transition from history to meta-history is transmigration of souls, also called metempsychosis or reincarnation (*gilgul ha-neshamot*). For the souls of the Jewish people, transmigration offers a gradual process of refinement, a means of repentance and ultimate entry into the Garden of Eden.³² As such, it is a solution to the problem of theodicy, helping to defer the problem of punishment for evil and reward for good actions to future lifetimes.

Equally important, it is used as a key to understanding "sacred history and the hidden dynamics within Scripture."³³ The doctrine of *gilgul* has allowed kabbalistic interpreters to see in biblical and talmudic narrative patterns long chains of persons linked through the *gilgul* of one's soul into another. Reincarnation is a means of bringing together separate events and personalities and connecting them psychologically. Thus, Adam's soul migrated to David and ultimately to the Messiah, as is conveyed by his name, AD"AM, seen as an acronym of the three names. The soul that failed at the task of tikkun is the same soul that will ultimately achieve it.³⁴ Similarly, the ten brothers who sold Joseph into slavery become the ten rabbinic martyrs who died at the hands of the Romans, and thereby expiate the earlier sin, which is itself a replication on the human level of the cosmic disaster mentioned in the midrash of the destruction of ten primeval worlds, understood by the Ari as a reference to the breaking of the cosmic vessels. The Ari refined and extended this way of reading the Bible and Jewish texts by adding a layer relating to the souls of himself and his companions. "The myth of the shattered vessels and their ultimate restoration was for the Ari not merely a theory about distant times and transcendent worlds, but something very much alive, revealed in the faces of those around him."³⁵ In Lurianic kabbalah, no one has only one incarnation. He taught that each person was a conglomeration of different souls singularly united in any one individual. Hayyim Vital, for instance, listed tens of prior incarnations existing in his make-up, which were communicated to him by the Ari.³⁶

The Ari and his disciples were following in the tradition of Zoharic hermeneutics that regarded it as imperative for the interpreter of Bible to elevate the literal meaning (peshat) to the mystical level (sod) implicit within it. They were not reading their chosen meanings into the text; rather, they were finding in the text the meanings that had been hidden there and were waiting to be revealed. They understood that the esoteric meaning can be comprehended only through the literal and “the plain sense becomes comprehensible only when the mystical sense is revealed.” In Chaim Vital’s words, “the literal meaning of Scripture must be like the soul of Torah and its inwardness, for the body is the image of the soul.”³⁸ A grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, Moshe Chayyim Ephraim of Sudlikov called this “peshat ha-emet,” the true meaning of Scripture. In this book, through the insights of midrash, Zohar, the Ari and his disciples, we too will be seeking to elucidate the deep peshat of the biblical narratives. Our discourse will sometimes proceed on two separate planes, the cosmic and the human, but will more often examine the literal level from the perspective of the esoteric meanings that tradition has found in it. We use the Ari’s theories of reincarnation and reading to come a deep truth about the flexibility of gender, as envisioned in the Jewish textual tradition. Part of the Ari’s greatness is expressed in his refusal to let Lilith fall by the wayside. His writings open up Jewish history to the divided woman, so that she might eventually reclaim her repressed sister, Lilith. The bulk of our book will follow out the destiny of Lilith, through her various incarnations until her ultimate return to the Garden of Eden.

Building on an insight from the Zohar, the Ari saw Leah as Lilith’s reincarnation, just as he saw Rachel as Eve’s. In Jacob’s relationships to these two women and to his alter ego, Esau, who each signify aspects of the divine, we will follow an important thread of our story. We will also follow out from Leah, a chain of questing female souls bound together in their search for sexual fulfillment and equality with men, which includes Dinah, Tamar, Cozbi, Ruth, the mother of the messianic line, and the wife of the Roman consul, Turnus Rufus, who becomes the second wife of Rabbi Akiba. It is a story whose implications were not fully realized in the generation of the Ari, but, which we hope, can begin to be in our own.

CHAPTER 3: THE PROBLEMATICS OF EROS IN THE JEWISH TEXTUAL TRADITION

In this chapter, we take a look at two exemplary talmudic texts that problematize the issue of sexual desire and how it is expressed between men and women. The first is the voice of R. Shmuel bar Nahmani, a minority opinion in the Talmud, who gives voice to women's sexual desire, which the majority preferred to leave voiceless. The second is the story of R. Hiyya and his wife, who impersonated a prostitute, in order to seduce her husband to resume sexual relations with her. These two voices will serve to inform our discussion throughout these pages.

Twice in the Talmud, in discussions of permitted sexual practices within marriage, we hear the following cited:

"Rav Shmuel the son of Nahmani said in the name of Rabbi Yohanan: Any man whose wife asks for sex will have children such as were unknown even in the generation of Moses, for in the generation of Moses, it is written, 'Get yourself intelligent, wise and renowned men' (Deut. 1:16), and then it is written, 'And I took as the heads of the tribes renowned and intelligent men' (Deut 1:16), but he could not find :wise men" [for the word "wise" was omitted in the second citation], but with regard to Leah it says, "Leah went out to meet him and said, 'You are to sleep with me, for I have hired you'" (Gen. 30:16), and it says, "Of the children of Issachar [born from the union of Jacob and Leah] were acquainted with wisdom" (I Chron. 12:34).

Rabbi Shmuel Bar Nachmani's tradition praises women who openly ask for sex. There is no greater praise than being likened to the generation of Moses. Yet, even in that generation, Moses did not find the wisdom he sought in the people, as is evidenced from the lack of the term wisdom when he appoints "renowned and intelligent men." The inference from Leah's behavior is that it was her very open expression of desire that produced wisdom in her children, which is validated by the verse from Chronicles. Both times that this view is quoted, however, the Talmud goes on to water it down with the objection that the woman is limited in her repertoire of sexual approaches. She can arouse him, but cannot request sex verbally. Daniel Boyarin, quoting these passages, has said: "The gender asymmetry is not so much, then, in the rights to sex, as in the rights to speech, who has control over the situation and who is 'being taken care of.'" ³⁹ This gender asymmetry was codified in the halachah that prevents women from asking for sex, so as not to appear brazen.

The irony of what a woman must do so as not to appear brazen is not lost on the readers of the story of Rabbi Hiyya and his wife:

"Rabbi Hiyya bar Ashi was used to prostrating himself and uttering the following prayer: 'May the all-merciful One deliver us from the evil inclination.' One day his wife overheard him and she said to herself: 'What is he talking about? He has abstained from being with me sexually for the past few years. Why is he saying such things?'"

Soon after, when he was studying Torah in his garden, his wife disguised herself in costume and walked past him, back and forth. "Who are you" he asked her. "I am Haruta, and I have returned today," she replied. Then she propositioned him. She also requested of him, "Bring me that pomegranate, the one at the edge of the highest branch." He scrambled up the tree and brought it to her.

When he later returned home, he found his wife lighting the fire. He entered, and got into it. "What is this?" she asked him. "Such and such happened to me today," he answered her. "I was that woman," she

told him. He did not believe her, until she supplied evidence. He said to her, “At any rate, my intention was to sin.” For all his remaining days this righteous man suffered, until he finally died a peculiar death.⁴⁰

The woman, whose name is not known to us, appears in the story in two roles: one is her “real” identity, that of the Rabbi’s wife – chaste, pious and sexually abstinent. Her other identity is assumed – that of aruta, the prostitute. Two faces of R. Hiyya are also revealed in this short story. One is his everyday personality, that of the sage, the ascetic and the scholar. The other side, sensual, adulterous and wild, is repressed. Unlike his wife, however, R. Hiyya does not take on a different identity in order to discover the hidden side of his personality. R. Hiyya, according to his own judgment, falls into temptation and sin, but he always remains Rabbi Hiyya. It is his wife who reveals the unexpected in her personality by masquerading as somebody else. She chooses a role that presents her as the exact opposite of the person whom others around her have always assumed she must be. It is she, however, who, though split in two, is able to relate to the incident with perfect equanimity, even a little humor. She arrives home and, as if nothing has happened, lights the oven to bake bread, whereas R. Hiyya arrives home in a spiritual tempest, tortured by his mammoth moral failing. In fact, because R. Hiyya could not overcome his evil inclination, he is unable to forgive himself for the rest of his life. The story ends with the hellish image of R. Hiyya getting into the hot oven and torturing himself “until he dies a peculiar death.”

R. Hiyya bar Ashi is a man whose ambition in life is to become holy. There is a tradition that a man on the path of righteousness should do beyond that which the halacha demands of him, and so he should deny himself even those things permissible to an ordinary man. In keeping with this tradition, it seems that R. Hiyya decided to lead a life of celibacy and so separated himself sexually from his wife. Although the Torah commands a man to fulfill the obligation of having relations with his wife (onah, which, according to the rabbinic interpretation, means that he must have intercourse with her a minimum number of times depending on his profession),⁴¹ the Rabbis decreed that, after giving birth to a son and a daughter, a woman can voluntarily forego her right to sexual relations with her husband and commit to a life of celibacy.⁴² It is possible that R. Hiyya exacted permission from his wife to end their sexual relations. From the evidence of the story, however, it is clear that she could not have consented with her whole heart. When R. Hiyya’s wife catches her husband praying each day to be saved from the evil inclination, she realizes that struggling or praying for celibacy is already not celibacy.⁴³ It is obvious to her that her husband still remembers and passionately yearns for the pleasures of the senses.

If, as the end of the story suggests, R. Hiyya’s wife had intended all along to change the nature of her relationship with her husband, then why does she go about it by such a devious route? Why not approach him directly, or why not try to lure him back into her wifely arms? Apparently, within the spiritual context of their relationship, such an alternative was out of the question. R. Hiyya and his wife are trapped in the confines of their own life choices.

Within the gender asymmetry of the halachah, she refrains from any dialogue unacceptable to the value system which they have internalized.

We can assume that, even if R. Hiyya’s wife had broached the subject with her husband, R. Hiyya is unlikely to have listened. He may have confessed to a certain ongoing attraction for the sensual world, but he probably would have maintained that this attraction was the very obstacle needing to be overcome. The woman in the story therefore knows herself to have no meaningful voice in her marriage.

MASKS AND TRUTH

It is only when R. Hiyya prostrates himself in prayer that he reveals his true face, shedding his mask of piety. When R. Hiyya takes off his mask, his wife is able to witness, albeit fleetingly, her husband's face. And this is the very moment at which she chooses to wear a mask of her own. There can be no comparison between the woman's mask and that of her husband. He masquerades as what he would really like to be but is not, whereas she disguises herself as what she in fact already is – a sensual woman – but is prevented from externalizing. His mask is his lie, while her mask reveals the truth. She could not find a voice when playing her role as R. Hiyya's wife. Therefore, in order to disclose the other sides of themselves, this married couple need to deviate from their usual, prescribed modes of behavior. They need to masquerade.

R. Hiyya went to study Torah in his garden. He does not stay in his house, and he does not go to the study hall. An unusual setting is an invitation for unusual events. People often dream special dreams when not sleeping in their own beds. A change in physical location invites a change in the soul.

R. Hiyya's wife disguises herself as a whore, "a well-known prostitute that lived in the city"⁴⁴ – Charuta. In talmudic Aramaic, charuta means the branch of a palm tree, a tree with erotic associations.⁴⁵ We see this in R. Hiyya's youthful vigor in climbing the tree for the desired fruit, just as, in another story, R. Akiba climbs a palm tree toward Satan disguised as a beautiful girl.⁴⁶ The letters of Charuta's name in Hebrew spell out the word freedom, so subconsciously, these associations also cling to her actions. Note also that, through her actions, R. Hiyya's unnamed wife gets a name and identity; she is no longer simply *devaitu*, "(the woman) of his house,"⁴⁷ implying male possession and ownership. Ironically, she gains her freedom in the guise of a prostitute, a profession that toys with men's ownership of women as being at best temporary and non-exclusive.

R. Hiyya is incapable of perceiving his wife's erotic nature, but he is more than willing to recognize these features in Haruta the prostitute. What is more, the prostitute costume is so perfect that R. Hiyya bar Ashi does not recognize his own wife parading before him so seductively. Though there are places in the tradition that claim that not looking at one's wife is a mark of extreme piety,⁴⁸ his failure to recognize her strains credulity in a story drawn from domestic life. The only way to account for it is to acknowledge the degree to which R. Hiyya is estranged from intimacy with his wife.

For R. Hiyya, his fall is a total collapse. It is as if his whole life has been a failure, and he cannot forgive himself. He finds no way to fan the fires sweeping his soul, except by entering into the heat of the same hot oven that had been lit by his wife upon returning home to her everyday life (as if nothing spectacular had happened). After succumbing to Haruta, R. Hiyya finds his wife by the hearth, ready to bake bread, which is itself a figure for her housewifely devotion and, elsewhere in the Bible, for sexual relations.⁴⁹ When she begins to knead the dough and heat up the oven, it is as if she is humorously making a transference from the sexual act to a symbol for it.

In our story, R. Hiyya's wife has a far greater ability to integrate sexuality into her personality than her husband, for whom desire is unwholesome and deserving of severe punishment. While she is forced into a masquerade to satisfy her desires, she is not unduly distressed by the meaning of the sexual act itself. On the other hand, he chooses to repress his sexual desire so much that when he surrenders to it, he is inconsolable and unforgiving, especially towards himself.

The voice of R. Shmuel bar Nahmani and the story of R. Hiyya and his wife each in their own way define the problematic nature of eros in post-biblical Jewish thought. While women's sexual pleasure is aimed,

their desire is seen as threatening, and as a result they are deprived of a voice in their own sexuality. They are set up to be dominated. Some husbands can choose to take care of their wives' sexual needs, while others choose to evade this issue through avoiding sexual desire altogether, until the woman sees to it that it can be avoided no longer. These are the dynamics of desire in a fallen, patriarchal world that the Lurianic interpretation of Lilith and her destiny seek to overturn.

CHAPTER 4: LILITH INCARNATE

In this chapter we deal with the pre-Lurianic Lilith, the demon incarnate, whose story was briefly told in our first chapter. By looking at elements from the mythological and Jewish traditions that culminate in the (Pseudo) Ben Sira story and which are then elaborated further in early Jewish mysticism, we aim to present here a composite, though not exhaustive portrait of the demonic woman who comes to represent men's fears and anxieties about sexuality in the pre-modern period. The problematics of eros in Jewish men's consciousness are writ large, as we shall see, in this mythological depiction of Lilith.

ROOTS

In the Bible, Lilith is first mentioned in the book of Isaiah in a section prophesying how a settled city will become a desolate hill:

Thorns shall grow up in its palaces, Nettles and briers in its stronghold. It shall be a home of jackals,

An abode of ostriches. Wildcats shall meet hyenas,

Goat-demons shall greet each other; There too the Lilith shall repose

And find herself a resting place.

It is clear that the Lilith finds a place of rest amidst human ruins, but what exactly is the Lilith – beast, bird or demon? The classical Jewish commentaries are divided over this point. Targum Yonatan and Rashi maintain that we are dealing with a species of demon who likes to frequent ruins. Radak admits that Lilith may be a demon, but also raises the possibility that it may be a beast who “screams at night, or a bird who flies at night.” He notes that the root of the word Lilith can be found in two other words – one is *laylah* (night), with which it has a phonetic resemblance, another is the word *y’lala* (howl). Hence, he postulates that this animal is not only active at night-time, but also “screams at night.” Biblical scholar, S. R. Driver, argues that the Lilith is a bird of the night who flies in a circular fashion. Drawing a link to the root *lili* or *luli*, indicating the circular motion of a storm, he connects it to the Sumerian storm spirit.⁵¹ This circular motion is embodied in the biblical *lul*, signifying a spiral staircase.⁵²

Most contemporary scholars agree that the Lilith is a devil. Lilith already appears as a she-demon in the Epic of Gilgamesh (Sumeria, 1800-1700 B.C.), where the story is told of a mythological tree “by whose trunk the maiden Lilith built her house.”⁵³ She is the female counterpart to Lillu in the Sumerian “King List,” and is believed by scholars to be both a harlot and a vampire.⁵⁴ In ancient Sumerian, *lil* signifies a spirit or a storm, in both concrete and mythological contexts. According to Yehezkel Kaufmann, the Lilith is the spirit of ruins. Only at a later stage did the word *Lil* become associated with the Semitic word for night (*laylah*), so that the storm-demons were additionally identified with the demons of the night.⁵⁵ Another possible source for Lilith is the root *lalu* or *lulu*. In the extensive library of King Asurbanipal there are thousands of tablets, many of which are full of conjurations whose purpose is the exorcism of various demons. The Babylonian she-devil, Lilith, usually appears as a member of a demonic triad including Lilu, Lilitu, and Ardath-Lili.

The Akkadians, who adopted the Sumerian pantheon, often translated the names of gods into their own Semitic language. In Akkadian, *Lalu* implies plenty or excess, while *lulu* signifies lust and promiscuity.⁵⁶ This adds two additional character traits that might be ascribed to Lilith: a sense of ever-increasing abundance which can lead to greed, and the desire for this abundance, which may devolve into lust and promiscuity.⁵⁷

We like to link this dimension of Lilith to the Hebrew word *holalut*, meaning folly or madness, with an entire system of related associations.⁵⁸ Rashi claims that *holalut* implies something mixed up or muddled⁵⁹. This is also the sense in which it is used in the Mishna, where *holalut* indicates a state of consciousness characterized by chaos and confusion – possibly connected to the spiral movement we earlier linked to the Sumerian roots of *lil*, or *lilu*. The name Lilith associates these turbulent features with the rebellious woman who brings her inner turmoil into the lives of those who fall under her spell.

To summarize, then, we can list the following traits as ramifications of the name Lilith:

- night (*leila*)
- howling (*y'lala*)
- demonic spirit (*lil*)
- storm (*lil*)
- circular movement (*lil*, *lul*)
- spiral ascension (*luli*)
- abundance and excess (*lalu*)
- lust, promiscuity, and debauchery (*lulu*)

RABBINIC INTERPRETATION & FANTASY

When a rabbinic storyteller in 9th century Babylonia gave the name Lilith to the first woman on earth, he was building on this web of associations. Before that, she was called by the rabbis of the midrash, “the first Eve.” They came to this idea as an interpretation of the verse in Genesis: “male and female He created them” (1: 27).⁶⁰ The literal interpretation of this verse indicates that male and female were created simultaneously, both receiving the name “Adam.” Thus, the first Eve was created together with Adam from the earth (Heb. *adamah*), without partiality to either one. In one version of this interpretation, Adam and the “first Eve” were created back-to-back and later separated, paralleling the legend Plato tells in *The Symposium* of an originally hermaphroditic and thus androgynous creature.⁶¹ But “the first Eve returned to her ground”⁶² – because, in one midrash, God despaired of her bloody secretions⁶³ – and another needed to be created, which explains the account in Genesis 2 of woman created from man’s rib. This second creation story is the source of rabbinic sources on preferred sexual positions for men and women, the focus of the debate in the Lilith story. The rabbis say each should face toward where he or she was created: “the man toward the earth, the woman toward the man.”⁶⁴

In addition to the midrashic first Eve, a demonic Lilith is named in the Talmud. “R. Hanina said: It is forbidden to sleep in a house alone. Whoever sleeps in a house alone is liable to be taken hold of by

Lilith.”⁶⁵ Adam and Eve were also at-risk to these same nocturnal forces. After Cain killed Abel, they are said to have been chaste for 130 years to avoid producing further offspring who might kill one another, but during this time their sexuality was not completely dormant. They were attacked at night by lilin and lilot, male and female succubi, who seized hold of them and drew out their sperm and eggs in order to give birth to demon children.⁶⁶ These midrashic traditions draw attention to the biblical account of “divine beings cohabiting with the daughters of men, who bore them offspring” (Gen. 6: 2). The idea of a deep spiritual charge in sexuality, which can easily be turned toward the demonic, will be extensively developed in the Zohar and other works of early Jewish mysticism.

For the rabbis of the Talmud, the distinguishing features of the she-devil, Lilith, were her wild, long hair and wings. Women’s hair as a symbol of their sexuality was deeply problematic for the talmudic rabbis. According to the Talmud, “the hair of a woman is like nakedness.”⁶⁷ The Talmud’s discussion of the curses pronounced upon Eve mentions women’s long hair among them. In the opinion of the sages, long hair recalls the hair of the demon Lilith: “she grows long hair like Lilith, she crouches when urinating (Rashi: like an animal), and becomes a cushion for her husband (Rashi: because he is on top during intercourse).” In the same passage, commenting on the phrase that a woman is cursed in being “dressed as a mourner,” Rashi notes that a woman is embarrassed to go outside with wild hair.”⁶⁸ This entire train of thought views woman as an object, (a “cushion for her husband”), bestial (“she urinates like an animal”), and seemingly malevolent (“she grows long hair like Lilith”). These images evidence a deep revulsion toward women on the physical level. Whether or not women were embarrassed by their physical beings, it is clear that male, patriarchal culture was embarrassed by something untamable and unfathomable about women’s sexuality, which was associated with being wild and hairy, like an animal. The Babylonian Lilith was ready at hand as a cultural icon who concretized and gave shape to these rabbinic fears.

THE LILITH MYTH IS BORN

In the tenth century in Babylonia, these two discrete rabbinic traditions – that of a midrashic “first Eve” who made a brief appearance in Adam’s life and was then gone, and that of a Babylonian she-devil who seduces men with her wanton ways and appearance – were fused in a single story. In that juxtaposition, the myth of Lilith was born. The story is still midrashic insofar as it accounts for the creation of a “first Eve,” but it goes far beyond the realm of midrash as it develops its central figures into a literary construct closer to a short story.⁶⁹ The anonymous story-teller took the pseudonym “Ben Sira,” after the 1st century c.e. apocryphal writer of proverbs and parables. The book is currently extant in over a hundred manuscripts, has been published many times, and translated into Yiddish, Persian, and Arabic.⁷⁰ No doubt, a great part of the appeal was the frankly sexual way in which the author told his scandalous tales:

When God created Adam and saw that he was alone in this universe, God said, ‘It is not good for man to be alone’ (Gen. 2: 18). He immediately created a woman for him, who was taken from the earth, like he had been. He called her name Lilith, and brought her to Adam. They both immediately began to quarrel. This one (Adam) said, ‘You should lie underneath me,’ and this one (Lilith) said, ‘You lie underneath me, as we were both created equally, and we both are of the earth.’

Neither of them could convince the other.

When Lilith saw that this was the case, she pronounced God's ineffable name, flew into the air, and ran away. Adam immediately beseeched God in prayer, saying: Master of the Universe! This woman You gave me has already run away. The Holy One, blessed be He, immediately sent three angels, and He said to them: Go bring Lilith back home! If she so desires, she will come (back home). If not, do not bring her against her will."

These three angels went immediately...and found her in the sea, in the place where the Egyptians would drown in the future. They took her and said to her, 'If you come with us, then all is well, and if not, we will drown you in the sea.'

She said to them, 'My friends, I know that the reason God created me was so that I could weaken the newborns until they are eight days old. From the day they are born until they are eight days old, I have power over them. From eight days onward I have no more power over male babies, but if it is a female, I have power over it for twelve days.'

They said to her: If you don't come back with us, we will drown you in the sea!

She said to them: I cannot go back, because it is written in the Torah: 'Then the first husband who divorced her shall not take her to wife again, since she has been defiled' (Deut. 24:4), and I have already slept with the Great Demon.⁷¹

They said to her: We will not leave you be until you agree that one hundred of your children die every day."

At this point in the story, the angels explain to her that Jewish women will write out amulets, saying "Out Lilith!" and that they will inscribe the names of the three angels, Sanoy, Sansenoy and Semangalaf,⁷² to prevent Lilith from harming the mothers and newborns (a practice continued in some circles to this day). Lilith realizes that her power has indeed been circumscribed and that some of her demonic children must die every day. Despite this, she does not go back with the angels.

The first point to remark in the story is that Lilith asks "to lie on top," that is, not to be subordinate in her ability to express sexual desire during intercourse with Adam.⁷³ Adam perceives her request as a threat. He would rather destroy the peace in the Garden of Eden than allow his wife to realize her desire. He fears losing control.

What Lilith has requested not only threatens his authority in the marriage, but it also disturbs his sense of mastery in all areas of life. He thus prefers a model of the family in which he alone is given the right and the power to decide how desire should be expressed. So conceived, his wife's function is essentially passive, since it precludes any desire on her part. Adam decides when and how much sexual activity will take place between them. If Lilith demands her own sexual voice, she upsets Adam's emotional balance, and this in turn threatens everything in his world. Such a woman is deemed devious and demonic.

In the confrontation with Adam, Lilith stands up to unreasonable domination. She knows that she and Adam have been created equally, and she will not tolerate being controlled by her equal partner. In the confrontation with the angels, she uses her knowledge of Torah to foil their errand. The angels themselves are portrayed as compromising their mission, for God told them explicitly not to force Lilith's hand. Like Milton's Lucifer, she concludes that it is better to be a demon at the Red Sea, than a slave in Eden. All of this indicates that the author of this midrashic short story seems to have a hidden sympathy for the problematic and even tragic figure he has created. At least one feminist author has suggested

that there was an original women's folktale embedded in this story, which was turned by a male author into an anti-feminist fable.⁷⁴ The misogynist element enters the tale in Lilith's transformation into a baby-killing demon, who is hell-bent on destroying the progeny of Adam and Eve and their descendants.

This demonization of the threatening feminine is carried much further in the medieval elaborations of the Lilith legend.

LILITH'S CAREER AS A DEMONESS

Daniel Boyarin has argued that "a change took place in Jewish gender ideology in the early Middle Ages – a change that resulted in a much more essentialized notion of women as dangerous and threatening."⁷⁵ We can see this in the revision of the Lilith story by a commentary on the Zohar. The Midrash HaNe'elam on Zohar Hadash cannot bear the thought that Adam and his first wife were both created equally from the earth. If they had both been created from the same elements, they should have reacted similarly to life's challenges, and both would have resisted the importuning of the serpent equally. It therefore maintains that woman was not created from the earth, but rather from its refuse and dregs, while the inner quality of the earth that Adam was created from was good. This is how the commentator explains why she became identified with the damaging force rather than Adam"

"R. Yitzhak said in the name of Rav: Adam and his soul-mate were created together. As it is written, 'Male and female He created them.' And then He took her from his back, and prepared her, and brought her to Adam. As it is written, 'He took one of his ribs' (Gen. 2:21) R. Yehoshua said: This is the first Eve, who was taken from him. She is the one who does damage to people. As it is written: 'And He took one of his ribs' – this means He took (away) the first woman, because she was a damaging spirit. 'And closed up the flesh at that spot' (literally, 'underneath her,' i. e. instead of her) – meaning that he brought a different one instead of her. Rava said: This one (the second Eve) was made of flesh and bones, while the other one (the first Eve, Lilith), was not. And what then was she? R. Yitzhak said: The filth of the earth and its dregs."⁷⁶

In this misogynist, essentialized version, Lilith was created from the earth's pollution. In this reading, she was meant to be a demon from the start. Thus, it is natural that she be matched up with demon husbands. Already in texts prior to the Zohar, Lilith appears as the bride of the Great Demon, who is named Samael. As the literature develops, Lilith splits into two – Big Lilith and Little Lilith, in order to accommodate several husbands. She is Samael's bride in the realm of the supernal kelippot, and on earth, she is the bride of the King of Demons, Ashmodai, who is known in many legends as a great antagonist of King Solomon.⁷⁷

In addition to these demonic husbands, Lilith attaches herself to Adam and to other men when they are asleep. She arouses them with erotic dreams, copulates with them and steals their semen in order to impregnate herself. From this human seed, Lilith begets demons, evil spirits, and other malevolent beings, all of whom take great pleasure in causing vexation to humans, including the death of their infants.⁷⁸

The Zohar supplies some details about how Lilith goes about seducing men by virtue of her unreserved sexuality. She spares no pains in making herself up for these trysts, like the married adulteress described in Proverbs:

"Her hair is well cared-for, red as roses; her face is pale, and blushes.

Six earrings has she on her ears, fine cloths of Egypt cover her thighs.

All the earth's hosts are before her mouth, ready and expectant. Her tongue is a sharp sword, her words soft like oil,

her lips are beautiful, red as the rose, sweeter than any sweetness.> She wears clothes of royal purple,

adorned with forty less one pieces of jewelry.

The fool is engaged by her and drinks from her cup of wine, commits adultery with her, and is led astray.”⁷⁹

The Zohar goes on to say that, after the fool has fallen asleep in the whore's bed, she will ascend to the heavens and testify against him. When she returns to the bed and he wakes up from his sleep, he wants her again. She then takes of the guise of the alluring woman and stands before him in the form of a male warrior, sword in hand and ready for battle: “She takes of her adornments and turns into a stern man, standing before him dressed in fiery attire.”⁸⁰ Lilith undresses to reveal her manhood, which is presented as if this were her true identity. Lilith's complex nature thus encompasses both the seductive feminine and the aggressive masculine.

She/he is also a figure whose human characteristics are combined with bestial, wild elements. In another description of Lilith, her entire body is covered by long hair, though her head is smooth, like a goat, whose head has short, smooth hair and whose body hair is long and droopy.⁸¹ In this version, Lilith is imagined as a totally wild female creature, akin to a primal Neanderthal woman, half-ape, half-human, the absolute essence of primordial and prehistoric wildness. Or, she is like the terrifying winged harpy, the monstrous woman of Greek mythology. Lilith symbolizes the essence of female nature before culture stepped in to civilize it. She is free of any cultural code, and she is therefore both threatening and attractive at the same time.

Precisely because of this duality, Lilith could gain great power over men's moral character, through their sexual nature. Here is what R. Eliezer Azcari has to say about Lilith's demonic vices: “Sometimes a person has fantasies about either men or women, and has a seminal emission during the day, or in a dream at night caused by Lilith, who appears to this sinner as either a man or a woman.”⁸² In his interpretation, R. Eliezer Azcari follows the lead of the Zohar concerning Lilith and her entourage. Men who sleep alone are teased and enticed by one of the female demons, like Na'amah, for example:

“... Until Na'amah came, and because of her beauty, the sons of God erred after her...for she goes and wanders in the night, passing through the world, mocking men, causing them nocturnal emissions. Wherever there are men sleeping at home alone, (she) is with them, grabbing hold of them and clinging to them, taking their longings, and begetting their seed.”⁸³ Lilith takes on the form of different demonic apparitions to excite men as they dream. She lies behind the sexual fantasies of masturbation and, for R. Eliezer Azcari, it makes no difference whatsoever whether the dream occurs during sleep or waking. It also makes no difference whether it is a heterosexual or a homosexual fantasy, for Lilith can appear to men as a man.⁸⁴ Lilith dons the dress of every forbidden passion.

Their anxiety about masturbation was so great that the Kabbalists believed that Lilith and her host became pregnant from drops of male seed spilt during dreams or erotic daydreaming, which then spawned all sorts of wicked demons. R. Hayyim Vital describes this process:

“...And that soul is drawn to her (to Lilith), and then the power of a damaging spirit which is born of that wife of harlotry unites with her, and it becomes one body for that soul. So it is that he who spills his seed in vain causes those drops of semen from which the future souls of his sons would have been born to become intermingled with the Sitra Ahra, where they receive bodies who were fashioned from the side of the Snake, the wife of harlotry.”⁸⁵

This process is equally at work if the father’s imagination is preoccupied with forbidden erotic fantasies during intercourse with his wife. The baby conceived at that moment will be given over to Lilith and vulnerable to her and her host at birth. According to the kabbalistic view, a man who sanctifies himself at the time of intercourse spares his children the dangerous encounter with Lilith: “Lilith has no power over the children of a man who sanctifies himself at the time of intercourse. The triad of angels known as Sanoy, Sansanoy, and Semangalaf watch over the child so that she cannot harm him/her.”⁸⁶

Lilith’s demonic sexuality not only imperils men. Women’s erotic dreams and fantasies are also the work of demons.⁸⁷ These are usually male demons affecting the souls of women in much the same manner as their female counterparts. Male demons cause women’s illicit sexual fantasies, which are regarded as “nocturnal emissions.” These demons can impregnate a woman and possess the souls of her children. A hasidic spiritual manual advises women who have had such evil dreams to bathe in the mikveh to purify themselves and protect their unborn children.⁸⁸ Other sources maintain that those male demons who seduce and sleep with dreaming women are themselves born from the fornication of the she-devil Na’ama, who gives pleasure to sleeping men by causing wet dreams. She uses these men to impregnate herself and then issues male demons. According to the Kabbalist R. Shlomo Algazi, although Na’ama gives birth to these demons, it is their spiritual mother, Lilith, who rears them. If man awakes from his sleep full of sexual desire and makes love with his wife as a result of that passion, then the child born will be enslaved to Lilith. The child is rightfully hers, because the man’s desire during intercourse had been for Lilith and not for his chaste wife, a daughter of Eve.⁸⁹

According to an early kabbalistic tradition, among the victims of Lilith’s host we find none other than King David. A thirteenth-century manuscript, from the school of R. Solomon ben Adret, tells of a she-devil by the name of Igrat bat Mahlat, a member of Lilith’s circle of demons, who entered into David’s dream fantasies while he was sleeping in the desert. She caused him to spill his seed and with it subsequently gave birth to the king of demons – Ashmodai.⁹⁰

Perhaps it is their very lack of corporeal reality that provokes demons like Lilith, Na’amah, Igrat and Ashmodai to operate parasitically upon the body and soul of humans – through human psychology. In sixteenth-century Safed, R. Eliahu de Vidas explained:

“Whenever a man defiles himself through sin, through evil passion, (he) sleeps with Lilith. All the passions of the world come from Lilith, because Samael, who is on a very subtle level of existence, does not have a way of taking hold of man, who is material. He therefore sends his woman, who is more physical...And these are all metaphors, just like King Solomon, of blessed memory, compared material possessions and worldly pleasures, (which draw their energy from Lilith), to a whore, as it says: “A woman comes toward him/ Dressed like a harlot, with set purpose.” (Proverbs 7:10).⁹¹

While hasidic folklore does portray Lilith as an actual demon, against whom there is an herbal remedy,⁹² Hasidism's unique contribution is to understand the mythical demonology of the Kabbalah psychologically. While Samael, Lilith and their host may lay siege to human beings from the outside, they also represent, in the kabbalistic-hasidic tradition, the dark forces inside the human psyche – our unconscious drives and impulses. In such works of R. Tzaddok HaCohen of Lublin as “The Conversations of Demons” and “The Conversations of Servicing Angels,” his discussion of these angels and demons is almost exclusively concerned with the nature of the human soul. In another work, R. Tzaddok offers his interpretation of the talmudic injunction against sleeping in a house alone:

“He who sleeps in a house alone is taken hold of by Lilith” – the meaning is that he has a nocturnal emission, which is what the wife of harlotry seeks and desires...This means that this desire envelops man when he sleeps. Because of the powerful passion (he experiences) in his dream, he has a nocturnal emission. During his sleep, he has no conscious intention of overcoming his passion by means of his wisdom, so this desire is free to act upon him.”⁹³

Lilith's hold on man is thus the illusion (Heb. achizat einayim, lit. “the holding of the eyes”) of forbidden desires in dreams. Now it becomes clear why Lilith tends to take her hold of men while they are sleeping “alone in a house.” Sleeping alone, away from society, facilitates the breakthrough of forbidden passions and deviancy can gain entry into consciousness.⁹⁴

When men lose control over their sexual desires, they feel that women pose a serious threat to their self-mastery. The dread which they experience causes them to have nightmares of a realm of dark, unfathomable beings. The Lilith myth incorporates masculine fears of the sensual, licentious woman who, because she possesses man during his sleep, is also making a mockery of him. As a projection from the world of men's unconscious fears, this archetypal image becomes hardened into the eternal enemy of civilized men and women.

In her book, *A Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan argues that masculine thinking is characterized by its patterns of control.⁹⁵ Consider, for example, the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, after which the relationship between the man and the woman hinges upon God's curse of Eve – “And he shall rule over you.” Accordingly, men's losing control to women is ominous and appears, mistakenly, as a violation of the divine order. The Zohar interprets the verse “My people's rulers are babes,/ It is governed by women” (Isaiah 3:12), as describing a situation in which demonic, evil-minded women, are sent from Lilith to rule over Israel:

“Whenever men are found guilty before the Holy One, blessed be He, as we have previously explained, those women from above (who come) from the side of strict judgment, will in the future rule over them from the side of strict judgment, as it is written: ‘My people's rulers are babes, It is governed by women.’ Women most certainly rule over them, and they are called ‘the bright blade of a revolving sword,’ not that they are the revolving sword, but they are rather the blade of that sword which is called “the sword that shall avenge my covenant, the ‘sword of God, full of blood.’”⁹⁶

Lilith and her host threaten to topple male supremacy. The moment women gain power, patriarchal man sees the demonic coming into play. Indeed it would seem that, for a man raised in this system of thought, an assertive woman cannot be other than a demon.

In this chapter, we have explored some of Lilith's salient character traits. Her persona has been forged out of two separate sources – that of the rebellious woman who demands equality, and that of the murderous demon, who kills babies and rapes men while they sleep. Lilith's figure is contrasted with

other constructions of woman. Eve, as the chief example, represents the opposite pole: a woman who accepts male dominance and whose power lies in childbearing, in family stability, and in chastity. The Ari sought to re-unite the two wives of Adam, i.e. the two faces of the female archetype – Lilith and Eve – in order to end the schizophrenia of women's condition and thereby reconcile these two faces into one complete feminine whole. As we move on to the Second Gate we will encounter that "strange and wonderful metamorphosis," as Isaiah Tishy puts it, of our mother Leah, the wife of Jacob, transformed into Lilith.⁹⁷

FOOTNOTES

1. Boyarin, Biale, Adler, Plaskow, Blu Greenberg

2. Wherever possible we have quoted from the NJPS translation of the Hebrew Bible. For a number of citations where we are explicating rabbinic midrash, a more literal translation has been necessary, and we have substituted our own. B. Eruvin 100b, Rav Yitzhak bar Avdimi enumerates ten curses upon Eve. On the messianic overturning of these curses, see Luria, *Sefer Hagilgulim*, chap. 23: And this is the curse of "and he shall rule over you" ... and after woman is freed of this curse when "death is destroyed forever" (Isa. 25:8), she will be "her husband's crown" (Prov. 12:4). Understand this well." Shabetai Tzvi, who saw himself as the Messiah, is quoted as saying: "Woe unto you, poor women, who, because of Eve's sin, must give birth with pain, and you are subjugated to your husbands, and everything you do is dependent upon their approval;" Happy are you, that I have come to the world, to make you free and happy like your husbands, for I have come to do away with the sin of Adam. " (Gershom Scholem, *Shabbatai Tzevi*, p. 327).

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4. Adler, *Engendering Judaism*, p. 124. Adler notes the possible exception of Berachot 61a, that men shouldn't walk behind women, because they were created first.

5. Blu Greenberg, *On Women and Judaism*, p. 45.

6. Robert M. Cover, "The Supreme Court 1982 Term, Foreword: Nomos and Narrative," *Harvard Law Review*, 97 (1983), pp. 4f.

7. David Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant*

8. "Halakhah and Aggadah," in *The Complete Works of C.N. Bialik*, (Tel Aviv: D'vir, 1947), p. 207; Gordon Tucker draws the connection between Cover and Bialik in "The Sayings of the Wise are like Goats: An Appreciation of the Works of Robert Cover," *Conservative Judaism* (REF), pp.21-22.

9. Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love* (1988)

10. Tania Modleski, *Feminism Without Women: Culture and Criticism in a "Post-Feminist" Age* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 7.

11. Jo Milgrom, "Some Second Thoughts about Adam's First Wife," in *Genesis 1-3 in the History of Exegesis: Intrigue in the Garden*, ed. Gregory Allen Robbins; see also Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*
12. See Eli Yassif, *The Stories of Ben Sira in the Middle Ages* (Hebrew), pp. 63f.
13. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 356-61. 14. Patai (1967), 180-225.
15. See the anthology, *Which Lilith? Feminist Writers Recreate the World's First Woman* (1998), and the magazine, *Lilith*, which has been promoting a feminist Jewish agenda since 1976.
16. Howard Schwartz, *Reimagining the Bible: The Storytelling of the Rabbis*, p. 65.
17. Plaskow, "the Coming of Lilith," in Ruether, ed., *Religion and Sexism*
18. This comment draws upon the language of Catherine Keller, *From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism and the Self* (Boston: Beacon, 1986), 11-15.
19. Jakov Lind, from *The Stove and Other Stories* (1986), 59-61. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*
20. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*
21. Nitzah Abarbanel, *Eve and Lilith* (Hebrew), p. 15.
22. Siegmund Hurwits, *Lilith: The First Eve: Historical and Psychological Aspects of the Dark Feminine*
23. Emma Jung, "The Anima as an Elemental Being," in *Animus and Anima*, p. 46
24. Look up David Biale book (Gershom Scholem: *Kabbalah and Counterhistory*)?
25. For a survey of the continuities between kabbalah and earlier versions of the Jewish myth, see Yehuda Liebes, *Studies in Jewish Myth and Messianism*, Ch. 1; on the development of the theological continuum stretching from Assyrian and Canaanite paganism to highly developed Kabbalistic myth, see O. Ezrahi, "On the Theology of King Solomon" (Hebrew), Hayyim Acheirim, REFERENCE.
26. This is the view of Yehuda Liebes, "Myth vs. Symbol in the Zohar and in Lurianic kabbalah," 225-26.
27. Our summary is based on Gershom Scholem's scholarship on Lurianic kabbalah, which is spread throughout his writings: *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, *On Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, *On the Mystical Shape of the Golem*. Perhaps the most accessible and succinct version is found in the volume, *Kabbalah* (1974), a reprinting of all Scholem's essays from the *Encyclopedia Judaica*. See especially, pp. 128-44.
28. There was a thin film of divinity left, the *reshimu*, which is compared to "the drops of oil that remain in a vessel after it has been emptied." Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 130. Liebes argues that Scholem has overemphasized the idea of a vacuum. Rather, he sees that the light of the Infinite returned to fill the empty space and that out of this light came the created worlds, which are not qualitatively different from the essence of the infinite itself, except in intensity and clarity. "Myth vs. Symbol in the Zohar and Lurianic Kabbalah," p. 227.
29. Aryeh Kaplan, *Inner Space*, p. 92.

30. *Pesikta de Rav Kahana 12, 24. See also Shemot Rabbah 28:5. This is the Lurianic comment on the midrash: "This is how you should understand Chazal's comment that at the Red Sea God appeared to them in the form of a young man with a black beard, like a warrior full of zeal, ready to engage the Egyptians and drown them in the sea; and at the giving of the Torah on Shavuot He seemed like an old man whose beard is white as snow. In fact, the beard of Ze'eir Anpin is black as a raven...and at the time of the giving of the Torah, on Shavuot, it ascends up into the beard of Arich Anpin, where it becomes white. This is the reason why He appeared to them then as an old man dressed in white at that time..." Sha'ar HaKavannot – discourses on the holiday of Shavuot, no. 1.*
31. *Lawrence Fine, "Purifying the Body in the Name of the Soul: The Problem of the Body in Sixteenth Century Kabbalah" in Eilberg-Schwartz, ed. People of the Body, p. 130.*
32. *Rachel Elior, "The Doctrine of Transmigration in Galya Raza"*
33. *Scholem, "Gilgul: the Transmigration of Souls" in On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead, 212*
34. *Scholem, Gilgul, 214*
35. *Liebes, "Myth vs. Symbol," 227.*
36. *See Liebes, "The Two Ewes of the Doe" Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought, Vol. 10, ppp. 114-16.*
37. *Elliot R. Wolfson, "Beautiful Maiden Without Eyes: peshat and Sod in Zoharic hermeneutics"*
38. *Sha'ar haHaqdamot, quoted in Wolfson, p. 187.*
39. *Boyarin, p. 129.*
40. *B. Shabbat 36a.*
41. *For the scholar, this minimum was once a week. M. Ketubot*
42. *NEED FOOTNOTE ON RABBINIC DECREE.*
43. *On the evil inclination being understood generally as sexuality, see the comprehensive survey by F.C. Porter, "The Yetzer Hara: A Study in the Jewish Doctrine of Sin," in Biblical and Semitic Studies: Critical and Historical Essays by the Members of the Semitic and Biblical Faculty of Yale University (N.Y.: Scribner's, 1901).*
44. *Rashi, ad locem.*
45. *Rashi on B. Sukkah 32a: "Charuta: a palm branch which has become stiff, like the branches of other trees."*
46. *See also Midrash Tehillim on Ps. 92 on the date palm's desire for its mate as an emblem of Israel's desire for the Holy One.*
47. *See B. Yoma 2a on the definition of household implying one's wife. Yet, see Shulhan Aruch, Even HaEzer 33,7, for citation of a pietist who claimed that he had never looked at his own wife, "as he had turned his heart away from vanity." See also Midrah Tanhuma Lech Lecha 5 on Gen 12:1, Abraham's comment to Sarah "Now I know that you are a beautiful woman," implying that he had not previously looked at her.*

48. See Gen, 39:6: Potphar "left all that he had in Joseph's hand... save the bread that he ate," and Rashi ad locem. "'Save the bread' – meaning his wife, but the Torah speaks in a clean language." See also Proverbs See B. Yoma 2a on the definition of household implying one's wife. Yet, see Shulhan Aruch, Even HaEzer 33,7, for citation of a pietist who claimed that he had never looked at his own wife, "as he had turned his heart away from vanity." See also Midrah Tanhuma Lech Lecha 5 on Gen 12:1, Abraham's comment to Sarah "Now I know that you are a beautiful woman," implying that he had not previously looked at her.
49. See Gen, 39:6: Potphar "left all that he had in Joseph's hand... save the bread that he ate," and Rashi ad locem. "'Save the bread' – meaning his wife, but the Torah speaks in a clean language." See also Proverbs 30:20, where sex is called food: "So is the way of an adulterous woman,; she eats and wipes her mouth and says, I have done nothing wrong."
50. See Ruth Caldron, "The Secondary Figure as an Archetype in the Aggadic Literature in the Babylonian Talmud" (Master's Thesis, Hebrew University), for a discussion of this story as an example of how women and men react differently to sexual failure.
51. Driver, "Lilith," Palestine Exploration Quarterly, 1959, pp. 56-57. He does not identify the biblical lilit with the night raptor owl presently known as a lilit (*Strix aluco*), but with the night bird called tahmas (*Caprimulgus*), in English, Goat sucker or Night jar. In fact, the tahmas flies at night in circular movements. It is often seen flying around goats and other animals in order to eat the insects usually found near such animals. See *Animals and Plants of Israel*, published by the Society for the Protection of Nature and the Ministry of Defense 1986, Birds, p. 294.
52. See I Kings 6:8. Rashi: "Iulim – the Targum Yonatan says: a spiral...which means a stone construction with stairs. One who walks up this is like someone encircling a pillar, which ascends higher and higher, but it does not need a slope like a ladder, as its circumference is already inclined."

This verse comes directly after the verse which tells us that the Temple was built without the usage of metal tools: "And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone that was made ready before it was brought there; so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was being built." This became one of the focuses for discussion in ancient Jewish demonology, since there is a Talmudic legend (B. Gittin 68), whose source is in The Testament of Solomon (first to third centuries A.D.), which discusses Solomon's complicated relations with Ashmadai the King of Demons. Solomon called him to help with the construction of the Temple. In the Talmudic version, Ashmadai is asked to help find the shamir – a special worm that can drill into stones and cut them without any need of metal tools. If we further examine Solomon's ties with the world of demons, we find that commentators from the Targum Yonatan on Job until the middle ages, identified the Queen of Sheba as an embodiment of Lilith (see Scholem, New Topics...).

53. Ancient Near Eastern Texts,
54. Jo Milgrom
55. Y. Kaufmann, The History of the Faith of Israel, Bialik, Jerusalem, and Dvir, Tel Aviv, 5736, vol. 1, p. 428.

56. See Pintel, REF (Hebrew), the chapter on The Babylonian Lilith.
57. Building on the theme of lust, R. Tzaddok HaCohen of Lublin attempts to link the two approaches – demon and animal/bird. He asserts that every spiritual entity has its terrestrial counterpart. The damage that these demons cause, he says, is very concrete, so the demon or evil spirit is named after the type of damage which he or she causes. The Lilith, then is a female animal “common to the country of Sabea (in Africa), in which, because of its airs, sexual lust is very strong. And the nature of this animal... is great lust, demanding and grabbing any male beast.” This, on the “natural” side. On the spiritual side, it is also called “the power of the wife of harlotry in the world.” The ancient “theory of the airs” assumes that every place has a special quality in its air. This quality, be it good or bad, passes into the souls of those who live there. The Rabbis said that the air of Israel makes one wise (Baba Batra 158/b), while R. Zaddok thinks the air of Africa causes unbearable lust and passion. See Dover Tzedek, 4, the entry beginning with the word u-vakasha.
58. Holalut must certainly be an expression of the negative aspect of the word hallel (praise) which may also be related to hilat (a halo) of light. As it says, “the light shining” (yahel) (Job 31: 26) or “When his lamp shone (behilo) over my head (Job 29: 3). Kabbalists and Hasidim have noted this in their discourses on the significance of praise (hallel).
59. The Rabbis commented that the letter heh can be interchanged with the letter het (hallel – challel), so that kodesh hilulim (holy for praise-giving) mentioned in Leviticus 19:24 can also be read kodesh chilulim (holy for secularizing or desecrating), in the case of taking that which was designated as ma’aser sheni (the second category of tithes, which was to be eaten in Jerusalem) and freeing it of its holiness by redeeming it with money (see B. Berahot 35a). If we have already taken Lilith from holalut to hilul, and from hilul to chilul (desecration), then we have gone a significant distance. There is also challal (a dead person). Lilith’s soul is also the seat of emptiness, which seeks fulfillment through revenge. Pregnancy is also linked to this root, since a pregnant woman is called hallah – “Zion travailed (hallah) and at once bore her children!” (Isa. 66: 8). We have gone from the two-letter combination l”l to ch”l, which can both be found in the word challel. In this analysis, we have used “gates” of two letters as does the Sefer Yetzira – not confining ourselves only to three-letter roots, which were imported into Hebrew in the middle ages from Arabic grammar. The linguistic gate ch”l takes us even further, to the mystery of dance (machol), forgiveness (mechila), and challal (space).
60. The verse “Wanton (or foolish) men (holalim) cannot endure in your sight” (Psalms 5: 6) is interpreted by Rashi: holalim – foolish ones, and in the language of the mishna ‘mixed ones’ (see B. Sanhedrin 42a). This is also how the concept of holalut was explained in Kohelet 7: 25 “and foolishness is madness.” There Rashi comments: holalut is foolishness and confusion.
- Elsewhere in Kohelet, it says “His talk begins as silliness and ends as disastrous madness” (10: 13) – “confusion and something which is mixed up” (Rashi). See Gershom Scholem, Elements of the Kabbalah and its Symbolism (Hebrew), p. 386, on how the Lilith legend reads the difference between the two creation stories in a new manner.

61. NEED REF

62. Bereishit Rabbah 22, 7

63. See Bereishit Rabbah 17, 7: "In the beginning He created her, but saw her full of secretions and blood flowing out of her. So he returned and created her a second time."
64. B. Niddah 31b.
65. B. Shabbat 151b. As we find suggested in the Will of R. Eliezer HaGadol: "My son, do not sleep alone at night in any house, for in these circumstances Lilith is liable to cause damage. And if she takes hold of a man or a baby, she takes them out of the world" (Para. 54). Later authorities took this view to be law, as we find in the Mishna Berurah, Orakh Hayyim, chap. 239, sub- chapter 9: "Our sages of blessed memory have stated that whoever sleeps in a house alone, meaning at night, is taken hold of by Lilith, and house means even a room." The Zohar interprets "alone in a house" to mean "a house alone" – i.e. to sleep in a house which itself is alone, i.e. an isolated house in a field. "Whoever is alone in a house, whether it be day or night, in a solitary house – especially at night. What is meant by alone? Isolated from other houses, or someone walking alone at night, might also be hurt" (Zohar III, 45a.). See also the references brought by the Nitzotzei Zohar, there.
66. REF.
67. REF.
68. B. Eruvin 100b. The full text of this passage is based on a word-by-word interpretation of Gen. 3: 16: "Eve was cursed with ten curses, as it is written, "And to the woman He said, 'I will make most severe' (alt. 'I will greatly multiply'): this is the two drops (sorts) of blood, one being that of menstruation, and the other that of virginity; 'Your pangs' – this is the pain of raising children; 'in childbearing' – this is the pain of pregnancy; 'in pain shall you bear children' – this is self-evident; Yet your urge shall be for your husband' – this teaches us that the woman longs for her husband (Rashi: 'desires intercourse') when he travels; "and he shall rule over you" – this teaches us that the woman asks (for sex) in her heart, while the man demands it verbally.
- So far, we have only numbered seven curses!
- When R. Dimi came back from Babylon, he said (i.e., numbered three additional curses): she was dressed like a mourner, excommunicated from the society of man, and imprisoned in jail" (Rashi: imprisoned in jail – 'it is honorable for the daughter of the king to remain inside.')
69. See G. Scholem, "Elements of the Kabbalah and its Symbolism," p. 386, on this legend and how it reads the difference between the two creation stories in a new manner.
70. A scientific version of the book, including extensive debate on its structure and history was published by Eli Yassif, The Ben Sira Fables from the Middle Ages (Hebrew), Magnes Press, 5745. For the text of the story, see pp.
71. However, according to the halakha, only if the divorced woman married another man is it forbidden for her to go back to her first husband. If she was divorced, and someone else slept with her without marriage, she is permitted to her first husband. See Me'oray Or, (a alphabetically arranged collection of definitions of Kabbalistic terms compiled by R. Meir Paporos, one of the authors of the Lurianic corpus) in which Lilith is presented as an archetype of a divorced woman:

“A divorced woman is known as Lilith, who was divorced from holiness and became the wife of another man, an other man” (the letter Gimmel, entry 25).

72. Reuven Margoliot, Malakhey Elyon, p. 236, suggests that the name Sansanoy may be derived from sansenay (the boughs of) the date palm, mentioned in the Song of Songs (7:9) “Let me climb the palm,/ Let me take hold of its branches (sansenav)”. We discussed the sexual connotations of the date tree in relation to several Talmudic stories in Ch. 3. In the Zohar, vol. 2, in the Haichalot d’kedusha 251a., there is a similar name of an angel Sansanaya – who is appointed over one of the gates of the Fourth Hall. There is another angel facing him on the left side, with the same name – “And he is responsible for the askara disease which attacks babies.” The severe throat disease known as askara is often identified in the Zohar with Lilith, the killer of babies. It is therefore reasonable to assume that we are talking about the same angel, the one who is appointed over Lilith, and is known as Sansanaya in the Zohar, and Sansanoy in the Alphabet of ben Sira. Semangalaf is a self-referential name, meaning the symbol is engraved.
73. In Tractate Kallah (chapter one), we find the following sentence: “If he is underneath and she is on top, he is seized by shaking. If he is on top and she is underneath, this is the way of human beings. If both of them were as one, this is the way of the stubborn.” According to ben Sira, what is called in the Talmud “the way of the sons of Adam (man)” is the only position acceptable to Adam, their father. It is possible that this fragment was the basis of the Ben Sira story. It is interesting to note that if someone uses the position that Lilith prefers, “shaking seizes him” (Heb. ochazat-hu avit). Compare B. Shabbat 151b, quoted above, about someone who sleeps in a house alone at night and is “taken hold of by Lilith” (Heb. ochazat-hu Lilit). This entire section addresses itself to the man – he is the one who uses her – has sex with her. The woman is not a partner to this halakha, which defines “the way of the sons of Adam.”
74. See Aviva Cantor, “Lilith, the Woman Who Would Be a Jew,” in Which Lilith, p. 19.
75. Boyarin, p. 193. For a more nuanced view, see David Biale, Ch. 3-5.
76. REF. to where in the ZOHAR.
77. On the two Liliths, see Ma’amar HaAtzilut HaSmalit (Treatise on the Emanation of the Left Side). On the development of the figure of Samael in the Hebrew sources, and on the difference between him and the “king of the Jewish demons,” Ashmodai, see, once again, Idit Pintel, G. Scholem, “New Elements,” page 165, and Joseph Dan, “Samael, Lilith and the Concept of Evil in the Early Kabbalah,” Essential Papers on Jewish Mysticism.
78. In the Zohar, Lilith is commonly identified as the spiritual force causing the disease of askara, a fatal throat disease in infancy.
79. Zohar, II, 148a, in the Sitrey Torah section. In Zoharic thought, red hair is identified with the root of din, strict judgment, whose color is red. The number of Lilith’s pieces of jewelry – forty less one – is connected to the forty curses with which creation was cursed, the same as the number of lashes that the sinner receives – forty minus one (lamed tet, or la”t like the Aramaic word latia, which means curse). The Zohar, in the section on Parshat Behukotai (114b – 115a), also links this to the number of plagues that the Holy One, blessed be He, smites the sinning people with. He does so by means of thirty nine appointed oicers who fly through the universe, descend to the “pit of the

great abyss, get empowered there, surface, and smite the earth as punishment for the sins of man.”

This entire description is a paraphrase of the description of the adulterous woman found in Proverbs 7: 16-23: “‘I have decked my couch with covers/ Of dyed Egyptian linen;/ I have sprinkled my bed/ With myrrh, aloes and cinnamon./ Let us drink our fill of love till morning;/ Let us delight in amorous embrace./ For the man of the house is away./ He is of on a distant journey./ He took his bag of money with him/ And will return only at mid-month.’/ She sways him with her eloquence,/ Turns him aside with her smooth talk./ Thoughtlessly he follows her,/ Like an ox going to the slaughter,/ Like a fool to the stocks for punishment–/ Until the arrow pierces his liver./ He is like a bird rushing into a trap,/ Not knowing his life is at stake.” This passage on the stormy licentious woman can be juxtaposed to the chaste “woman of valor” in Proverbs 31, as a parade example of the dichotomy in women’s images in patriarchal culture, which is central to this book’s argument.

80. Zohar, II, 148a, in the Sitrey Torah section. SAME PAGE REFERENCE?

81. “That group known as lilin are covered by hair from head to foot...Lilith has hair on her body but not on her head...just like a goat whose entire body is covered by hair while his head is smooth.” See Emek HaMelekh, Sha’ar Raisha d’Zaya, Ch. 30, p. 42b. See also the encyclopedia, Reuven Margoliot, Malakhey Elyon, p. 235, footnote 3. See also the Ner Mitzvah commentary on Sefer HaMitzvot Hagadol, (Saloniki 5570), the chapter on “The Ways of the Amorites,” p. 215b., and see Margoliot there.

82. AZCARI REF

83. Zohar, I, 19b. In the original there is a linguistic shift from the singular to the plural. We should therefore have translated this as “they mock men, and they beget their seed.” In order to create a unified sentence, we presented it in the singular. It is possible that this vagueness is intentional, in order to emphasize that we are not talking about one she-demon in particular, but rather about all of Lilith’s host (asksara).

The reference to the “sons of God” connects Na’amah to the beautiful daughters of man, whose beauty was so appealing to angels before the flood. The Zohar connects Na’amah to the sister of Tuval-Cain. However, in the midrash brought in the Yalkut Shimoni, this beauty is attributed to a woman by the name of Istahar. According to the midrash, Istahar refused to sin with these fallen angels and she escaped back to the heavens by means of the ineffable divine name: “Shamhazai (one of the angels) immediately saw a maiden by the name of Istahar. She found favor in his eyes, and he requested that she obey him. She answered him ‘I will not obey you until you teach me the ineffable divine name by which you ascend into the firmament when you pronounce it.’ He taught her the Name. She then pronounced it, ascended into the heaven, and did not defile herself. The Holy One, blessed He, said to her: ‘Since you did not succumb to sin, go, and take a place among these seven stars, in order that you be remembered forever. She was given a place in (a constellation). When Shamchazai and Azael saw this, they married women and begat Hewa and Hiya (sounds made when sighing)” (Yalkut Shimoni Bereshit, 6 – remez 44). In contrast to Na’ama, who apparently did whore with the sons of God, Istahar refrained from this temptation. What is common to them both is the transformation into a heavenly being, although Na’ama becomes the mother of demons while Istahar becomes a star in the heavens. Elsewhere, the Yalkut Shimoni

quotes a tradition that identifies Queen Esther with the Babylonian Ishtar and the planet Venus: "R. Nehemia said; Her name was Haddasah. Why was she called Esther? Because the idol worshippers called her Ishtar, like the planet Venus." (ibid., Esther 2, remez 1053). CHECK: SHOULD IT BE ISHTAR THROUGHOUT?

84. Lilith's ability to also appear as a male is mentioned in the Zohar in another context: In the section called Sitrei Torah on Parshat Va-yetze, (I, 148a), there is a description of how Lilith dresses up and seduces man into having sex with her. As he sleeps peacefully, she ascends up to the heavens to prosecute him, receives permission from the heavenly court, and comes back to his bed. Then "that fool awakes and thinks to play with her like before, and she takes off her clothes, and is transformed into a valiant warrior facing him, wearing a terrifying and fiery armor, causing bone and soul to tremble..."
85. R. Hayyim Vital, Sha'ar HaKavanot, D'rushei Ha-laylah, discourse no. 7.
86. See Kehillat Ya'akov, the entry on "Death of Children." This Kabbalistic writer distinguishes between someone who on the one hand, did not sanctify himself at the time of intercourse, but on the other hand also did not "defile himself" by forbidden thoughts. The dead child of the first sort of person is not totally in Lilith's hands – she can only possess his dead body, while his soul is saved by the angelic triad. This is not the case with the son of the second sort of person, whose soul is also in Lilith's clutches. It is interesting to note that the angels who save the child's soul are also regarded by this author to be human-like incarnations of pure thought patterns that occur in the human psyche: Malakhey HaSharet (servicing angels) is a name for man's intellectual powers, being the pure thought in man." (entry on "angels").
On the sanctification of intercourse, see also Ezrahi, "Two Cherubs" (Hebrew), pp. 32-33.
87. It seems that the meditations proscribed for the Sh'ma which is recited before going to sleep are also effective against these demons! The Kabbalist and Halachic authority, R. Yosef Hayyim of Baghdad, in his book Ben Ish Hai (First Year Lectures, Parshat Pekudey), recommends that women, too, recite the Sh'ma, in order to heal the souls that were taken captive by the forces of uncleanness because of the sin of their having spilled their seed in vain, which refers to their erotic waters of desire: "Reading the sh'ma is efficacious for a woman also, for the seed that she expels due to the great degree of arousal awakened in her."
88. R. Eliezer Tzvi of Komarno, Hanhagot HaTzadikim, letter dalet. The parentheses appear in the original:
- "When a woman, God forbid, has an evil dream, which is her nocturnal emission, just like a man, as it written (Zohar, Bereshit 54b):
- 'When a man dreams, female spirits come and make merry with him, and get sexually aroused by him, and afterwards give birth. These are called 'the aliction of mortals' and they take on human forms, and they have no hair on their heads. Concerning this matter it is written in relation to King Solomon: "I will chastise him with the rod of men, and the aliction of mortals" (II Sam. 7:14). In the same fashion, there are sometimes even male spirits that come to the women of the world, become impregnated from them, and give birth to spirits, and they are all called 'the aliction of mortals.' In the same fashion, there are even (instances) of male spirits that come to the women of

the world, become impregnated from them, and give birth to spirits. And they are all called 'the aliction of mortals.'"

Therefore, a woman who has had this experience should immediately purify herself in the mikveh, because the external forces and the kelippot may take hold of her children and kill them in terrible ways. Even if she is already pregnant, and the male spirits come to her, there can be no doubt that damage will be done to her unborn baby. But if she immerses herself in the purifying waters after such an evil dream, then the kelippot no longer have power to harm either her children or her unborn babies."

On the phrase "laugh with him," the Aramaic is *v'hayekhin ima*, lit. "They smile with him." We think "laugh with him" is a better translation, as the Zohar is echoing biblical laughter, with its erotic connotations. For an extensive treatment of the subject of laughter in the Torah and its erotic context, see M. Gafni, "The Dance of Laughter." (English?), Forthcoming. For a limited treatment see Gafni, *Non Dual Humanism* vol. 1 of 3 chapter on Laughter in the Zohar.

89. In the book *Meu'lefet Sapeerim* (the nineteenth day), the author, R. Sholomo Algasi, writes the following: "Concerning the matter of the sister of Tuval- Cain, Na'ama: "The heavenly angels went astray after her, and spirits and devils were born of her. They are suspended in the air and reveal things to people. Until this day, Na'ama's abode is in the Mediterranean Sea. She comes out at night, warms herself on sleeping men's bodies and clings to them, and from that passion she becomes pregnant, eventually giving birth to spirits. Now these spirits that she expels come to women at night in order to give birth to spirits from them. All of them then go to Lilith, and she raises them. Then Lilith goes out into the world and sees peoples' babies, and attaches herself to them in order to kill them... These babies, which Lilith has the power to kill, (are brought into the world in this fashion:) When a man sees Na'ama in his dreams, and desires to sleep with her, and he wakes up and has sex with his wife, but his real intention is to be with the figure that he saw in his sleep, then the son that will be born is familiar to Lilith, (since) he came from her sphere." (See *Marrot HaTzovot* by R. David ben Yehuda ha-Hasid of the fourteenth century, parshat Ahare Mot).
90. "One night, David was sleeping in his camp in the dessert, and Igrat copulated with him in his dream. He had a seminal emission, and she became impregnated, and gave birth to Adad. When he was asked what his name was, he answered, 'My name is Ad, Ad is my name (shmi Ad, Ad shmi)'. They called his name Ashmadai, this is Ashmadai, the King of the Devils, who threw King Solomon of his throne and sat on it in his place." From a kabbalistic anthology from the school of the Rashba, MS Parma de Rossi 1221, f. 285a, quoted by Scholem, *New Elements*, p. 172.

In a Kabbalistic manuscript from the fifteenth-sixteenth century we find a tradition concerning the various preferences of the mothers of the demons when choosing a human mate: "Igrat bat Mahlat and all her company do not cling in their dreams to anyone other than the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not to Ishmael and not to Esau. All the others attach themselves to all the other nations of men" (Sasson ms. 56 pp. 128-137, quoted by Scholem in "New Elements," pp. 173-174). Igrat prefers Jews (in spite of her connection to Ishmaelite genealogy, and maybe because of it). Igrat hits the jackpot in her search after Jewish seed, and she manages to get the very best – the seed of King David, who was sleeping innocently in the desert. She bore him Ashmadai, the King of the Demons.

The son to whom the text refers is Hadad the Edomite, the enemy of King Solomon: "So the LORD raised up an adversary against Solomon, against Solomon, the Edomite Hadad, who was of the royal family of Edom" (I Kings 11:14). The author claims that Hadad and Adad are one and the same. Hadad is said to be of the king's seed, and our text comments that Hadad was born from the seed (that was spilled in vain) of King David.

This is why two of David's sons, Solomon who was born of Batsheeba, and Adad-Ashmadai who was born of the she-demon Igrat, became enemies who were competing over the inheritance of the kingdom.

In addition to Igrat, there are three other "Queens of the Demons," whose initials form the acronym Alman (Me'orot Natan, by R. Meir Paparos, letter dalet, entry dalet, and "Spirits" in Margoliot, Malakhey Elyon, p. 205).

They are Igrat, Lilith, Mahlat, and Na'ama.

In the Babylonian Talmud, the she-devil named Igrat is already clearly linked to men's fear of women's strength: In B. Pesachim (111b – 112a), there is a tradition according to which someone who sees two women sitting facing each other on either side of the road, can assume that they are involved with sorcery. The Talmud recommends that he exercise caution and recite a special spell: (Igrat azlat asya blosya mitqatla bakhek kabel). In this spell, Igrat's name is combined with the names of other demons, whose power can be deflected by this spell (see also Bamidbar Rabbah 12, 3). We know the name of a woman by the name of Mahlat from the Bible – this is Mahlat, the daughter of Ishmael, whom Esau married (Gen. 28: 9). We have no information that she had a daughter by the name of Igrat. However, one of the commentators on the Zohar (R. Sholom Lavi, the author of Ketem Paz), brings an interesting tradition about the birth of Igrat: "I found writings in which I read that a master of sorcery left Egypt in order to do solitary meditation in the desert. He came upon a cave, in which an ancient book was hidden. He studied its wisdom, to the point that no one excelled him among all of Egypt's sorcerers. They say that he had a daughter, and she also learned wisdom and sorcery. When Ishmael went to the Wilderness of Paran, he took her as his wife. She led Ishmael astray by her magic, until Abraham his father came and took him away from her. She, however, was pregnant, and she gave birth to an exceedingly beautiful daughter. And they say that there is a demon by the name of Agartiel who is in charge of that desert, and he was drawn to this maiden, and she bore him a daughter. And her mother called her name Igrat, after her father the demon. She is none other than Igrat the daughter of Mahlat the daughter of Ishmael, who leads a host of tens of thousands of damaging angels" (see Margoliot, Malakhey Elyon, p. 204).

It is possible that there is a connection between the kabbalistic demonology that crystallized around the figure of Mahlat the daughter of Ishmael and the historical fact, emphasized by Yitzhak Baer, that there was a widespread phenomenon of sexual liaisons between Spanish Jews of the thirteenth century and Muslim girls, who were called "the daughters of Ishmael." See Y. Baer, "Researches and Essays in Jewish History" (Hebrew), chapters 13-14. It is not far-fetched to assume that Jewish men, who had young Moslem girls working as maidservants in their houses, had erotic dreams about "the daughter of Ishmael." If so, the demonic figure that developed in the Kabbalah around the figure of Mahlat the daughter of Ishmael could have been an expression of both fear and forbidden desire. The comments of R. Todros Abulafia, the head of the community of Toledo, who was also a great kabbalist, prove that this was a common phenomenon, and was

perceived, at least by this kabbalist, as a threat to the future of Jewish souls. "...It would be fitting to excommunicate...any son of Israel who has relations with a Ishmaelite...and anyone who knows that his friend had relations with an Ishmaelite...for it is not fitting for Israel, who is a holy people, to defile their seed in the bowels of strangers, and to bear children for idol worship. It is therefore fitting for every Jew who is zealous for God to do away with this abomination" (Baer, p. 291). The section of the Zohar known as the Raya Mehemna is full of disdain and insults for children born of illicit relationships, which the author refers to as the "mixed multitudes." And the Raya Mehemna (fn. 111) identifies such handmaidens with Mahlat bat Yishmael; "He who plants his seed in (the body of) a handmaiden, Mahlat bat Yishmael, or in the daughter of a foreign god, who is evil, darkness, etc."

91. Reshit Hokhmah, The Gate of Fear, Ch. 8.

92. See Buber, *Legends of the Hasidim* (p. 159, Schocken 1979): "There was a man who was possessed by Lilith, and he came to Neschiz to beg R. Mordechai that he release him from her clutches. The master sensed in his heart that this man was on his way to him, and he ordered that in the evening, all the doors of the city's houses be closed, and no one should allow him to enter their abode. When the man arrived in the town at night, he could not find anywhere to lodge, so he was forced to sleep on a pile of hay.

Lilith immediately came to him and said, 'Come down to me from the hay pile.' The man asked: 'Why are you demanding this of me? You always used to come to me.'

'In the hay pile that you are lying on,' she said, 'there is a certain herb that prevents me from coming close to you.'

'Do you know which one it is?' he asked, 'I will throw it out and then you can come to me.'

He stood up and showed her herb after herb, until she said, 'That's the one.' He immediately tied it to his chest and was delivered from her." We have not yet found any other evidence of an herb that was used as a folk remedy against Lilith.

93. Dover Tzedek, the letter "dalet."

94. Concerning sleeping "alone in a house," it is worthwhile to note a Jewish magical text from the fifteenth century which is quoted by G. Scholem in his article "New Chapters Concerning Ashmodai and Lilith" (p. 175). The author of the said magical text intends to consciously take advantage of Lilith's nature. He appeals to Igrat bat Mahlat, one of the sexual she-devils who belongs to Lilith's entourage, and enjoins her, i.e. compels her, to appear before him in the form of a maiden that he desires, a beautiful girl whom he can be with only in his flights of imagination: "I adjure you O Igrat bat Mahlat, queen of demons...that you send me plonit the daughter of plonit, one of the beautiful maidens that accompany you...and there is need of a solitary room, and a bed, and white clothes, clean, very clean...and the wise will understand (on their own)." Concerning the subject of adjuring the forces of Lilith for the sake of supplying beautiful women for human pleasure, G. Scholem (pp. 170-171) quotes interesting testimonies about how the Queen of Sheba and her handmaidens were brought for this purpose (she, too, is considered to be one of the embodiments of Lilith in many sources). Here is one of the testimonies: "...it is possible to bring beautiful women, and even the Queen of Sheba, and they walk daintily and prettily."

Going in an opposite direction, we find a directive in the writings of R. Hayyim Vital to sleep “alone in a house” as one of the conditions for a question asked in a dream: “...and he should be alone in a house, in a place where no person can wake him up, and then his question will be answered during sleep..” (Sha’arey Kedushah, section 4, the end of Gate Aleph).

95. Carol Gilligan, REF.

96.

97. In his book *The Doctrine of Evil and the Kelippah in Lurianic Kabbalah* (Hebrew), p. 81. Tishbi noticed the subject and its inherent fecundity, but suices himself with a short quote from Gate 38 of Etz Hayyim, and does not really attempt to lock horns with this “strange and wondrous metamorphosis.”

The Second Gate: Leah is Lilith

Chapter 5: Biblical Figures Unlock the Divine

Those who see Lilith as the first feminist are following in the footsteps of the Ari. For, in the writings of the Kabbalists who preceded the Ari, Lilith is not even a human being, but a foul (though very sexy) demon. The Ari, on the other hand, turned Lilith's story into a saga spread out over the length and breadth of biblical and world history—a saga whose express goal is to witness Lilith's return to paradise, and to her original status as the soulmate of Adam.

The starting place for this drama of tikkun is in the household of Jacob, which we have described above as an archetypal matrix within Kabbalah for discerning divine patterns in the events of the human world. In this chapter, we will deepen our understanding of these correspondences between human and divine. According to the Ari, the Godhead reveals itself through many faces, some masculine, some feminine, and some – the highest ones – are androgynous.¹ Some of these divine aspects are named after Jacob's family and their history. In the language of early Kabbalah, the highest revelation of God is usually called Ze'eir Anpin, but the Ari often refers to Him as "Israel." Alongside the central system of the sefirot, there is a lower, parallel image known as "Jacob." Just as Jacob merited two names, which expressed two different levels of his existence, there are two levels of revelation of the divinity, or two types of divine personality systems – one, as it were, "Jacobic" and the other "Israelic."

When attributing divine aspects to Jacob's image, the Ari is following in the sages' footsteps. In commenting on Genesis 33:20, they maintained that God called Jacob a 'god:'

"R. Aha said in the name of R. Elazar; How do we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, called Jacob a "god?" As it says, "He called him El-elohe-yisrael, i.e. God, the god of Israel" (Gen. 33:20). If you were to claim that Jacob called the altar 'god' – it should have said, 'Jacob called it 'God...' However, (the proper reading is) 'He called Jacob god.'" And who called him a god? The God of Israel!²

The Zohar continues this line of thought and comments: "The Holy One, blessed be He, called Jacob a god. He said to him: "I am God in the upper realms, and you are God in the lower realms."³

We see then, how both the Rabbis and the Zohar speak of the deification of Jacob. The Ari, following the Zohar's lead, interprets everything that happens in the house of Jacob as events occurring both in human time and in the divine world concurrently. Jacob's wives and concubines must therefore play a corresponding role in the divine drama, and they too become expressions of the different aspects of the Shekhina. This viewpoint has deep roots in the rich imagery of the Zohar and in the literature of the early Kabbalah. In Zoharic literature, Abraham represents the sefirah of hesed, Isaac the sefirah of gevurah, and Jacob the sefirah of tiferet, which unites and combines the first two. The Ari, by making a transition from discussing the world of sefirot to a discussion about a world of partzufim, turned Jacob into a much more central figure than his ancestors, as all the lower six sefirot were united into one partzuf – that of Ze'eir Anpin, which is primarily characterized by Tiferet. This is the reason why there are no partzufim bearing the names of Abraham and Sarah or Isaac and Rebecca in Lurianic Kabbalah. Only Jacob and his extended family reflect the totality of the divine. This choice of Jacob as a representation of the forefathers can be found in the midrash on Bereshit: "The chosen one of the forefathers is Jacob, as it says, 'For Jacob was chosen by God (CITE BIB. REF.)'"⁴

With this background, we can now begin to read and unpack the highly condensed, coded and symbolic language of the Zohar. In our example, Jacob will be mentioned explicitly, while Leah and Rachel are in the text only implicitly or allusively. They come into play through their associations with the higher and lower worlds, the sefirot of Binah and Malkhut. The higher world is called “who?” inviting wonder and questions. The lower world is called “this,” embodying the revealed face of the Shekhina. The presentation of these two worlds is suggested through the exegesis of a verse from Song of Songs:

“R. Shimon opened up (and said): ‘Who is this that looks out like the dawn, beautiful like the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners’ (Song of Songs 6:10)? ‘Who’ and ‘this’ – the mystery of two worlds which come together as one... ‘that looks out’ – when the two of them combine as one...Jacob, the complete one, sends love into the two worlds ... if other people were to do so they would be incestuous both below and above; they would cause strife in the two worlds, as it is written, ‘Do not marry a woman as a rival to her sister’ (Lev. 18:18), as they will become as rivals to each other...”

Jacob could marry two sisters, despite the prohibition from Leviticus, because it is necessary for his love to unite the upper and lower divine worlds, in the language of the Zohar, for the two to “combine as one.” The idea of Jacob marrying two sisters in violation of Leviticus and sending love into “the two worlds” collapses human events and Torah laws with divine realities. This mode of kabbalistic thinking is possible only because the concrete figures of the physical Jacob, Rachel and Leah, are interchangeable with the spiritual Jacob, Rachel and Leah, who represent various divine energies or sefirot. For the Ari, they represent Ze’ir Anpin and the two aspects of the Shekhina partzuf – the higher Shekhina, Leah, and the lower Shekhina, Rachel.

We may ask to what extent, in the Kabbalists’ eyes, Jacob and his wives were aware of themselves as a reflection of the divine countenance. Or, to put it differently: are we speaking of two parallel but separate systems functioning as different reflections of the same set of relationships – one heavenly and one earthly – or is there a crossing of the boundaries between these two orders?

A partial answer to this question may be found in the words of the Maggid of Meziretch, the student of the Baal Shem Tov. He describes how it is possible, through inner meditation on the physical beauty of woman, to unite and become one with the beauty of the Shekhina. In this context, the Maggid mentions Jacob, who sees Rachel and her physical beauty as a reflection of the splendor of the heavenly Rachel: “...that by seeing this Rachel, Jacob became attached to higher Rachel, as all of this lower Rachel’s beauty stems from that of the higher one.”

So we see how, in kabbalistic-hasidic thought, the constant movement between concrete biblical figures and their spiritual counterparts in the realm of the divine has what we might call a diagonal aspect as well. The physical Jacob draws a line of relationship not only to the Leah and Rachel who share the experiences of the material world with him, but also to the supernal Rachel and Leah, through the medium of his relationship with his concrete wives. Of course, this experience is mutual. Leah and Rachel, through their relationship with the physical Jacob, become connected with the divine Jacob.

In the eyes of Kabbalah and Hasidut, the patriarchs and matriarchs were chariots for the divine and so it follows that the movements of their souls also reflected the events of the divine universe. It would be even more accurate to say that their soul movements not only reflected the higher course of events, but actually caused them. When Jacob was in an enlightened and open state of consciousness, known in kabbalistic language as *mohin d’gadlut* (expanded consciousness), Ze’ir Anpin of Atzilut would also receive *mohin d’gadlut*, and when he would fall into depression and limited consciousness, this would

also be the case in the supernal world. We can deduce this from the teachings of the students of the Baal Shem Tov regarding each and every human being: “‘God is your shadow’ (Ps. 121:8) – this implies like a shadow. This means that every movement a person makes below awakens the same above, meaning that the Holy One, blessed be He, parallels (people) with a similar movement.

If we look at the Biblical narrative through this lens, then a psychological analysis of the figures in the story of Jacob also sheds light on the events taking place in the internal world of the Godhead. In other words, the relationship of Jacob to his wives, and their relationships with each other, are keys by which it may be possible to unlock the Divine.

Chapter 6: Leah and Rachel – Lilith and Eve

In the Ari's world of divine-human correspondences, the goal of tikkun is constantly in view: restoration of what had been broken by the shattering of the cosmic vessels and by the human fall from Eden. The inner dynamic of Scripture is a steady moving forward toward that end. In this light, we can approach his comments linking the primal family of Adam, Lilith and Eve with the later Israelite family of Jacob, Leah and Rachel:

...and so we can understand the matter of Adam, who had two wives, one named Lilith and the other named Eve. Adam is in the image of Ze'eir Anpin, and Ze'eir Anpin has two females, Leah and Rachel ... and, in fact, supernal first Eve [i.e. Lilith] is the aspect of Leah, and lower Eve is Rachel.

This is in accordance with the spirit of the Zohar, which sees Jacob as an improved version of the figure and story of Adam.

Leah and Rachel, reflect the two faces of the Shekhinah, and they conduct a complex and changing system of relationships with the male partzuf Ze'eir Anpin, also known as Jacob. Notice how these two women are presented: Lilith, who returns in the figure of Leah, is both the first wife chronologically, and the first wife hierarchically, while Eve, who becomes Rachel, is positioned below Leah, towards the bottom of the world of Atzilut.

The hierarchical positions of Leah and Rachel were already known to the Ari from the Zohar. It was the Ari's innovation to link Leah, who is the higher face of the feminine divine, back to Lilith, and to link Rachel, who is the lower face of the feminine divine, back to Eve.

Let us now return to the Zohar (I: 154a) to discover how it explains the fact that Jacob loved Rachel and despised Leah. Would it not be more fitting for Jacob to prefer his more spiritually elevated wife? In the Zohar, Leah reflects the higher world, which is also the concealed world.

Jacob, the Zohar says, did not willingly attach himself to hidden things, preferring that which was revealed. So he loved and clung to Rachel and was repulsed by Leah. "This is the secret of the verse, says the Zohar, 'and he will cling to his wife' (Gen 2:24)." Jacob can understand Rachel because her soul is laid bare before his eyes, and consequently she does not threaten him. Leah, however, is concealed, and Jacob cannot begin to fathom her.

There are three steps to the Zohar's argument. The first is a comment about the despised wife, "'And God saw that Leah was despised' (Gen. 29:31). Why was she despised? We also know that the children of a despised wife are not virtuous, yet we find that all of Leah's children were excellent, although it says 'that Leah was despised.'" There is an assumption here that if one hated a given wife, one would think of another during intercourse. Such illicit fantasies made the intercourse improper and ought to produce, as the talmudic rabbis believed, deformed children.¹³ According to the rule of "the children of the despised one," Jacob and Leah's children should have been born evil and rebellious, if their lovemaking had been dependent only on their natural inclinations. Since they were born "excellent," some other force must have been at work in their conception.

At this point, the Zohar jumps to the second step in its argument, the secret of the Jubilee year, which is understood as a code name for the Sefirah Binah, to which Leah is connected. The essence of the argument is that the level of Jubilee, like Leah, is always hidden and is therefore not addressed directly

as 'you,' but by the third person pronoun, 'he.'¹⁴ The third step in the argument is that when Jacob slept with Leah, the text uses the pronoun "he," not his name Jacob. The implication is that the hidden level called 'he' intervened in Jacob and Leah's coupling.¹⁵ An even more radical interpretation would be that "He" slept with Leah, that is, God, through the medium of the concealed level of the higher world of the Jubilee, in order to draw a blessing from above for her children.

Representing the hidden, Leah is from the world of freedom; and her uninhibited freedom threatens Jacob, just as Adam was threatened by the freedom Lilith demanded for herself in the Ben Sira story. It is little wonder that the Ari identified Leah, the wife Jacob rejected, with Lilith, the wife Adam rejected:

"Because 'the beauty of Jacob was like the beauty of Adam.' Just as Adam had two wives, the first and second Eve, so Jacob had Leah and Rachel. The first Eve was the shell (qelippah) that covered the Leah of holiness. And because Jacob thought that she was similar to the first Eve, he did not want to marry her."¹⁶

Jacob, the Ari maintains, did not want to marry Leah because he sensed that she was an incarnation of Lilith. This is the real secret of why "Leah was despised." Jacob thought that Leah should be given to Esau, just like the first Eve, Lilith the wicked, was the bride of Samael, who was considered the ministering angel of Esau. In the end, though, Jacob married her because of her prayers and tears.¹⁷

The Ari continued a line of thought already extant in the Zohar in identifying Jacob's family with Adam's. The Ari's claim that Leah is the Lilithian face of the feminine goes beyond any explicit arguments in the Zohar. As will be seen in the following chapters, an in-depth study of the biblical narrative and the rabbinic commentary on them leads us to make exactly the same claim.

Chapter 7: The Magic Square of the House of Jacob

The Torah tells us that Jacob loved Rachel with all his heart. But did Rachel love Jacob? Did Rachel desire Jacob as he desired her? Nowhere in the Torah does it state otherwise. But there are two significant instances in which the Torah tells us that Rachel was willing to forego intimacy with Jacob. The first time was on their wedding night, when Laban deceived Jacob and put Leah, his firstborn daughter, in Jacob's bed instead of Rachel. It is difficult to imagine that this could have occurred without Rachel's knowledge or consent.¹⁸ The second time Rachel was willing to forego physical intimacy with Jacob took place a few years later. Reuven, Leah's son, found mandrakes, an herb considered to increase a woman's chances of pregnancy, in the field. She promises Leah one night with him in return for the mandrakes. Rachel is willing to temporarily forego intimacy with Jacob for the sake of that which she desires more than anything, children.

Tragically, what Rachel wants most of all, more than life itself,¹⁹ Leah already has, and in abundance. But Leah has her own tragedy. Leah desires Jacob, and she is willing to pay any price and to make almost any necessary sacrifice to taste of his love. She is prepared to get into his bed on the night of his wedding to her sister Rachel, even at the cost of the terrible shame that will certainly be her lot the following morning. Then, she is prepared to give Rachel her son's fertility-enhancing mandrakes in order to gain another night with him.

The Rabbis go into more detail to describe Leah's embarrassment the morning after Laban's deception of Jacob has been discovered:

"And Laban gathered all the men of his town and made a party" (Gen. 29:22) – He gathered all the men of his town ... and they were singing to Jacob and saying "Ha lia, ha lia" – she is Leah, she is Leah (hee Leah,²⁰ hee Leah)..."

In the evening they brought her to him, and extinguished the candles. Jacob said to them: "What is this?" They said to him: What did you think, that we are immodest²¹ like you?" All night long he called her "Rachel," and she answered him. When morning came, "and behold she was Leah!" "Deceiver! Daughter of the deceiver!" he said to her. She said to him: Is there a scribe without students? Did your father not call you "Esau" and did you not answer him? So, too, you called me and I answered you...²²

Leah's answer embodies the rabbinic principle of "measure for measure." Jacob, as the deceiver of his father and brother, got what he deserved, the daughter of a deceiver and a deceiving wife. As a soulmate of Jacob, Leah is prepared to undergo whatever humiliation may come for the sake of intimacy with him. Just imagine her torment! The memory of her wedding night with Jacob (when he believed he was with his beloved Rachel), must never have left Leah's heart. She could not forget how ardently Jacob was capable of loving when he was really in love. She could not forget the night when Jacob thought she was her sister. That night set the standard for her expectations. Its memory must aggravate her sense of rejection, and intensify her desire to once again experience the fullness of Jacob's love.²³

Consider the names Leah chooses for her sons. They reveal that Leah regards childbearing as a means to an end. Her real aim in life is the love of Jacob. The Hebrew names of Leah's children represent and express her desire for intimacy with their father: Maybe Jacob will love me because of the children I have born him (Reuven); maybe he will stop hating me (Shimon); maybe I will finally be joined with him (Levi).

However, when Judah, the fourth son, is born, Leah experiences a sense of gratitude towards God and names her son for this profound awareness.

The Rabbis were sensitive to this shift. They arrived at the conclusion that Leah had expected only three sons, by doing the simple arithmetic of dividing twelve sons amongst four mothers. Consequently, when her fourth son was born, she felt blessed with an unexpected gift,²⁴ and she stopped naming her children after her relationship with Jacob, and instead gave her fourth son a name describing her relationship with God. This spiritual independence in the naming must have greatly altered and influenced Leah's relationship with her fourth son. We can surmise that Judah was the only one of Leah's children to feel loved on his own merit from the time of his infancy. Woven into his brothers' very names and identities was the idea that they were all means to an end, existing to bring their mother closer to their father, with what negative consequences for them we can only imagine. Reuven even brought mandrakes to his mother in the hope of winning her love! Judah, though, would have grown up with a secure identity, without the feeling that he had to win her affections. As an end unto himself, Judah could become a person in his own right, with his own relationship to God. He therefore goes on to become the father of the tribe that sires King David and the messianic line.²⁵

The Ari's conception of messianic times, as we have said, entails the emancipation of women. This liberation, which the Ari portrays within very precise parameters, is dependent on the healing of Lilith. The fact that Judah is born to Leah, is enormously significant, given the Ari's suggestion that Leah is one of the central embodiments of Lilith in this cosmic drama. Judah is born when Leah first experiences liberation. R. Tzadok HaCohen of Lublin taught that such inner freedom can only be achieved when a person feels with her entire heart that she is no longer a pawn in someone else's game.²⁶ Everyone has his or her individual story, but not everyone lives it. That is why, of all Leah's sons, Judah is the most liberated. He was born at a moment of grace, when Leah was spiritually uplifted and gave thanks to God from the depths of her heart; in so doing, she enabled Judah to live his own story. Unfortunately, Leah's liberated state does not last very long, and the children born to her after Judah are once again given names that reflect her hopes and expectations of meriting Jacob's love.

Leah's behavior stands in marked contrast to that of Rachel. Rachel wants children, and she is prepared to forego her intimate connection with Jacob in order to obtain them. She even puts her maidservant Bilhah in his bed in order to be blessed with surrogate children through her. When Bilhah's first son is born, Rachel says: "God has judged me, and also heard my voice, and has given me a son; she therefore called his name Dan" (Gen. 30:6).

In reaction to the birth of Bilhah's children, Leah also gives her maidservant Zilpah, to Jacob. However, while Rachel relates with indifference to the fact that her husband has been intimate with her maidservant, it is evident that, for Leah, this practice is very painful. After she gives Zilpah to Jacob, and they conceive a son, she claims that Jacob has betrayed her with Zilpah: "And Leah said Bagad (lit. betrayal, read as ba gad (fortune has come), and she called his name Gad" (Gen. 30:11). Similarly, when Leah gives birth to her fifth son, she names him Yissachar: "And Leah said, God has given me my reward for giving my maidservant to my husband, and she called his name Yissachar" (30:18), implying that giving her maidservant to Jacob was very difficult for Leah, and so she saw her fifth son as a reward for her self-sacrifice.

When Joseph, Rachel's yearned-for son, was finally born, his name expressed her desire to bear additional children. "And God remembered Rachel, and God heard her, and He opened her womb. And she conceived and gave birth to a son, and she said, 'God has taken away my disgrace.' And she called his

name Yosef, saying, 'May the Lord add another son to me'" (30:22-24). Again, it would seem that Rachel longs to be a mother much more than a wife: Even though she has a loving husband, without her own children Rachel feels humiliated. Only when she gives birth to a son is she reconciled within herself. Then, when her next son, Benjamin, is born, Rachel passes away, and is buried by the road to Bethlehem. This roadway is befitting for Rachel who symbolizes home and hearth (Bet – home; lechem – bread). Rachel is the goodly housewife who experiences fullness of the soul by raising children, while her husband manages his own spiritual life. This is why, even in biblical times, Rachel became the symbol of the gentle mother and protector of children, so much so that the prophet Jeremiah hears the cry of mourning for Israel in exile coming from her lips.²⁷

We have called this pattern the magic square of the house of Jacob, which we can summarize as follows: Jacob wants Rachel, but Rachel wants children, which is exactly what Leah, her sister, has, but doesn't really want, since she loves Jacob, who really loves Rachel, and so on and so forth.

In Lurianic Kabbalah, when someone desires intimacy with another, it is said that he "faces" her. Or, when a relationship involves someone who desires less intimacy with the other, it is said that he "turns his back" on her. Turning one's back on another person is to relate to another human being as though he or she were a means in service of some goal. In Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue, this is called the I-it relationship. In contradistinction to the I-Thou or intersubjective relationship, the I-it relationship denotes subject-object relations.²⁸ Rachel (who wants children) relates to Jacob as an "it;" Jacob (who wants Rachel) relates to Leah as an "it;" and Leah (who wants Jacob) relates to her children as "it." We can therefore say that Jacob faces Rachel, who turns her back on him, unlike Leah, who faces Jacob, who he turns his back on her. This analysis of the family dynamics of the house of Jacob helps us to appreciate the striking symbolic language of the Lurianic writings, in which Rachel stands back-to-back with Jacob and Leah stands face-to-back with him: "Rachel and Ze'eir Anpin²⁹ stand back to back. And Leah and Ze'eir Anpin stand with Leah's face turned towards the back of Ze'eir Anpin." What is being depicted is a level of alienation that needs to be overcome before face-to-faceness, true spiritual intimacy, can result.

Chapter 8: The Prostitute

Let us return to the story of the mandrakes. When Jacob comes home from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him, and said, “‘You are to sleep with me tonight, for I have hired you with my son’s mandrakes.’ And he lay with her that night” (Gen. 30: 16). There can be little doubt that Leah’s behavior in this case, sex for hire, borders on prostitution. One only need glance at the uproar this incident caused among the classic biblical commentators to realize just how problematic they found the story. They tend to act as apologists for Leah, claiming that nothing here can be understood in its simple sense. Leah’s intentions, they claim, were entirely for the sake of heaven.³⁰

The Rabbis of the midrash, on the other hand, were quite willing to consider Leah’s behavior as that of a prostitute.

“No woman is a prostitute unless her daughter is a prostitute also.” They said to him: “Does this mean that our mother Leah was a prostitute?” He said to them: “‘And Leah went out to meet him...’ She went out dressed up like a whore. It therefore follows: ‘And Dinah the daughter of Leah went out’”³¹

What led the sages to the unpleasant conclusion that “our mother Leah was a prostitute” (which implies that we are all begotten of whoredom), is the fact that the Torah uses the word “going out” when describing how Leah approached Jacob and how Dinah approached the daughters of the land, just before she was raped by Shechem:³²

“And Dinah the daughter of Leah went out” – was she not also the daughter of Jacob? The Torah associated her with her mother – just as Leah was “a woman who goes out”, so was Dinah. From where do we know this? As it says, “Leah went out to meet him.” The prophet Ezekiel said: “Behold, whoever uses proverbs will use this proverb against you, saying, Like mother, like daughter. You are the daughter of your mother...” (Eze. 16:44-45).³³

The general context of the Ezekiel verses, we recall, compares the kingdoms of Judah and Samaria to adulterous and whoring women, who intermarried and worshipped foreign gods. Dinah likewise “went out” to women who were not of her family and who, presumably, did not share her family’s theology and values. The connection between idolatry, sexual immorality and fear of the foreign were deeply connected in the biblical and rabbinic imagination.

What did the rabbis mean by prostitution in the case of Leah and Dinah? In modern Hebrew, a prostitute is called a yatzanit, that is, one who “goes out,” – that is, we submit, goes out from herself. In order to understand what in the nature of prostitution links it to the concept of “going out,” we need to consider the idea that each and every one of us has his or her own “story” and that we can live either inside or outside that story. Spiritual prostitution occurs when a person looks for self-realization anywhere other than within – even if that other should happen to be the one and only beloved, as in the case of Leah with Jacob. If I “go out” from myself and try to become someone else, or to “be” through someone else, I am prostituting myself.

Living inside a personal story, however, a person gains an original perspective on life, influenced by that individual’s unique character and by the environment he/she inhabits. Moreover, each person possesses a unique way of “reading” the script of his or her life. The people I encounter, the events and the physical fabric of my life create a text; which I am reading and interpolating simultaneously. As I navigate my way around life, I also interpret my movements. I make my next move based upon my understanding

and interpretation of my previous move. Consciously and unconsciously, I am choosing a perspective and mode of interpretation for every event in which I take part. This is my personal legend. There is no other story quite like it.³⁴

In an ideal situation, I discover meaning within my personal story, and I do not need to seek meaning elsewhere, in places which are foreign to me. But who among us has not been tempted to look for meaning outside of ourselves? Which of us has not turned our gaze vicariously towards another's experience, in the hope of finding that which has not yet been found in our own domain? The hasidic movement has read God's call to Abram, Lech Lechah – literally "go to you," as a call to the inner quest, to go into your own story, to discover the meaning of your life: "When our father Abraham began to search after the source of his life,... God said to him, Lech Lecha, meaning Go to yourself! Because the truth is that all the things of this world cannot really be called life. The essence of life can only be found within."³⁵

Each of us is born unique, and each of us weaves a unique story in life. However, there are times when we are less inclined to accept our own destinies. When our self-esteem drops, we are accustomed to grasp for any straw lest we drown in our emptiness. In such a state, it is easy to abandon our own story and leech on to another's tale. Thus, we become dependent on others; we look to justify our own existence through theirs. This is an addictive disposition: finding oneself outside of oneself, be it through drugs, food, sex, career, flattery, or occasionally even love. A sexual encounter occurring outside of a couple relationship, where members of the couple have strayed, is usually one in which there is a "going out" from the personal story, implying that such a relationship "has no story."³⁶ There are parents who lack their own story and become addicted to their relationship with their children,³⁷ and there are students who become addicted to their teachers. There are famous rabbis, Hasidic masters, and all types of gurus who become addicted to the worship and adoration they evoke in their disciples.³⁸ In all these examples, a person abandons his own story and looks for an identity elsewhere.

This analysis can provide a structural analogy to the case of prostitutive or promiscuous behaviour. Bereft of her own personal story, the prostitute attempts to fill the void with borrowed content from the story of others. She may be a young girl who was abused by "trusted" adults, and consequently gave up on herself and the adult world. Not understanding her trauma but seeking to reenact it, lacking in self-esteem, she seeks comfort in the temporary esteem strangers seem to have for her body. Her absent sense of spiritual worth is not really compensated by the transitory and illusory ego-fulfillment these strangers sometimes afford her. But she is paid and therefore convinces herself that if so many men desire her then she certainly must be worth something. She is a yatzanit, one who goes out of herself in order to find solace in the moments of pleasure that others experience through her body.

Thus, prostitutive relationships attempt to find meaning through that which is foreign. If I prostitute myself, then I intentionally choose someone who has no real part in my story or my life. When I do not love myself or my story, then I am liable to evade my life by searching for situations whose otherness and strangeness comfort me precisely because they have nothing to do with me. Therefore I imagine that illicit encounters will sweeten the bitterness of my life with myself. This process of leaving myself and searching for my identity through an ephemeral connection with a complete stranger can occur in each and every one of us in subtle ways. Each of us is at times liable to fall into such a prostitution.

Of course, not every departure from one's personal story should be considered so negatively. Vicariousness is certainly a sign of dependence, and a lack of personal meaning in one's life, but it is not necessarily evidence of the drive to prostitute oneself. Prostituting oneself is simply one possible result

of such a dependence. When I depart from my own story and try to create an alternative story through the other, I will often try to attract him/her by externalizing things that have previously remained concealed in intimate chambers. I may try to seduce him/her to enter into relationship with me – a relationship by means of which I hope to find some self-esteem. I leave myself and attempt to form a pseudo-intimate connection with the other – to live vicariously through the stranger. This way, I give up on my own life.³⁹

We have already discussed how Leah's seeking to forge an identity through Jacob was a giving up on herself. She imagines that her life will have meaning only if she latches onto him. This is why she cries; this is why her eyes are "weak" or "soft." This is why she is incapable of seeing her children as separate entities, rather than as means by which to measure the degree of her closeness to Jacob. In this respect, Leah, just like an addict, knows the heavy price she will pay the morning after, when Jacob discovers that she is not Rachel, but she cannot stop herself. Leah is addicted to Jacob and will pay for her habit, whatever it costs. This is the reason why the rabbis sense that, when Leah goes out to meet Jacob and says "You are to sleep with me tonight," there is something in her brazen, yet dependent behavior reminiscent of a prostitute. The case of Dinah is more complicated, because her "going out" led to her being sexually assaulted by Shechem. In this case, the rabbis are willing to blame the victim, for her "going out" meant to them leaving behind the theology and morality of her people.

Lilith, of course, is the archetype of the prostitute,⁴⁰ and our analysis fits her story as well. The moment Lilith runs away from Adam, she immediately sleeps with Samael, the Great Demon, to fill the vacuum of her life. She begins her long-term career as "the wife of harlotry," and under that title drawn from Hosea 1:2, the Zohar locates her in Haran, Leah's home town.¹⁴ When the angels come to look for her, after she has run away from Adam and taken up with Samael, "She said to them – My friends, I know that the reason God created me was so that I could make the newborns weak...". She now has a satanic goal, but Lilith's link to evil is not axiomatic. Her new and inauthentic life-story, prostitution, is a departure from her real story. Everything that happens to the Lilith archetype afterwards is directed towards one purpose – bringing her back to her real story, re-uniting her with Adam and liberating her once and for all.

Chapter 9: Three Patriarchal Images of Woman

Jacob had before him two sisters. According to Genesis, “Leah had weak eyes; Rachel was shapely and beautiful” (29:17). On the basis of this description, it is not hard to explain Jacob’s choice for the beautiful sister. The midrash explains Leah’s unattractiveness; her eyes were watery and tearful from crying, out of fear that she would have to marry Esau. At least one later commentator, however sees sexual yearning in the description of Leah’s eyes. Choosing the alternate translation, “soft,” rather than weak, the Baal Turim notes: “As it says – ‘Will he speak soft words to you’ (Job 40:27). For she spoke softly to him, and, even so, he did not love her.”⁴² Given this interpretation, why would Jacob not have loved Leah?

We can evoke here three distinct archetypal images of woman in the male psyche: there is the virginal, demurely beautiful maiden – innocent, pure and holy, often presented as an image of the soul. And then comes the time for lovemaking, when woman loses her virginity – her innocence, her newness and, if virginity is seen as a sign of purity and holiness, then she loses these also. Sexual woman may be lauded, in the language of Song of Songs, as a “love-making doe,”⁴³ but she is also liable to be construed as seductive and dangerous, as we have seen in the Lilith myth. After the sexual stage comes woman as mother and housewife – the childbearing woman, the nursing mother who raises the children and is responsible for the organization of the entire family unit. At this stage, there is usually a correlation in the male psyche between the image of the woman who raises his children and his own mother. Woman as mother is no longer perceived as highly sexual. Later, with maturity, menopause and old age, this de-eroticism becomes even more pronounced. The grandmother is already perceived as a totally asexual being.

We can give these three personae the following names: The Divine Virgin; The Loving Doe; The Mother of Children. The first and the third stages are usually sanctified by patriarchal society. However, the middle stage, in which woman expresses her sexuality, is not so revered. Man relates to this persona with a frenzy composed of desire and fear. At the time of passion, he calls her all sorts of affectionate names – loving doe, graceful roe, etc. – but when fear takes hold of him, he has an inherited store of derisive terms with which to degrade her.

Within this patriarchal framework, woman is sanctified when she is simultaneously both virgin and mother. Mother Mary, for example, was successful in omitting the middle stage, which, in Catholic doctrine, is perceived as an aspect of the “original sin.” Mary went straight from being the divine virgin to becoming the mother of children, without getting tainted by sexuality on the way. The second stage, that of sexual woman, is played by a different Mary, Mary Magdalena, who, with Jesus’s help, escapes the trappings of original sin.⁴⁴ Woman’s sexual stage is such a great threat for the male that Tratolian, an African head of the church, called the female genitalia “the Devil’s gateway.”⁴⁵

This three stage schema is helpful for understanding the relationships of Rachel, Leah and Jacob. According to our characterization of Rachel, she would have been happy to omit the middle stage, and go directly from being a beautiful virgin to her role as the mother of Jacob’s children.⁴⁶ As far as she is concerned, sexual intercourse is a necessary evil. Rachel is more than ready to forego this dubious delight, as exemplified by her exchange of a night with Jacob for fertility-enhancing mandrakes. For Leah, however, the sexual stage is critical.⁴⁷ And so, Jacob is terrified.

To shed further light on these relationships, it will be helpful to return to the Lilith of the Ben Sira version:

“When God created Adam and saw that he was alone in the world, He said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone.’ He immediately created woman who, like him, was from the earth, called her name Lilith, and brought her to Adam. They immediately began to argue. He said, ‘You should lie underneath,’ and she said, ‘You should lie underneath, as both of us are equal and both of us were created from the earth.’ Neither one could convince the other.”⁴⁸

Adam and Lilith begin to argue about sex immediately after being created. Lilith demands equal status, which is expressed in the sexual position she prefers. It frightens Adam, it threatens him – he prefers a woman created out of his rib – a number two, a faithful homebody, someone who will remain beneath him. This is also the case with Jacob: he prefers Rachel because she is unthreatening. In Rachel, Jacob finds holiness and purity, a feminine perfection uncomplicated by sexual desire.

This is not the case with Leah. She asserts her sexuality and is not ashamed of it. She is an immediate threat to Jacob’s superior status. A woman who takes the initiative in intimate relations, as Leah does when she says “You are to sleep with me” – is symbolically saying to her partner that “you will be underneath” – you will be the passive one. This, of course, is a threat, but it is also very seductive. Such women symbolize forbidden passion, which are powerful, alluring and exciting, but which easily turn threatening, dangerous, and deadly.

It sounds altogether like Lilith, the original femme fatale.⁴⁹ While they sleep, Lilith takes possession of men who are trying to maintain the sanctity of their relationship with chaste and modest wives. She excites them with erotic dreams of wild and forbidden sex, and impregnates herself from the seed they spill. She dominates them and they are powerless over her. She sucks from them their life-force without asking their consent. Essentially, she makes fools out of them.⁵⁰ Consequently, these men view her as satanic, impure, the soulmate of Samael, the Great Demon. This is why commentators had an intuition that Leah should marry Esau, the impulsive man of the field, the hunter who is closer to nature than to the confines of culture, whose entire body is covered by a mantle of hair that makes him seem animal-like and wild. Leah and Esau, in this view, deserve each other.

Jacob, by contrast, is characterized as a “mild man” (Gen. 25:27) He prefers to avoid uncertain and doubtful situations.⁵¹ He would not have received his father Isaac’s blessings were it not for the courage of his mother Rebecca, who overcomes his doubts. It is totally in character that Jacob, who tries to avoid such tricky moments, clearly prefers Rachel to Leah.

If Leah were in Rachel’s shoes, if she were the woman who was desired but barren, she would never have cried like Rachel: “Give me children, or I shall die” (Gen. 30:1). Leah would probably have been delighted to hear tender words of comfort from Jacob and would easily have foregone her desire for children.⁵² But Leah, like Lilith, was destined to be the unwanted wife all of her life, pining away for a deeper connection with her man, a yearning which only pushes him further away. So, when the Ari maintains that, in Jacob’s eyes, Leah embodies Lilith, he is providing us with a provocative and fruitful reading of the biblical narrative.

FOOTNOTES

1. As R. Hayyim Vital says concerning the partzufim of Keter: "And you therefore see that Atik includes the (divine names) of 45 and 52 letters, and they are both male and female in one partzuf." (Etz Hayyim, Gate 19, chap. 9, final edition).
2. B. Megilla 18a.
3. Zohar, I, 138a; free translation of the Aramaic.
4. Bereishit Rabba ??? 76a.
5. Zohar, NEED REFERENCE. to standard edition, (2:126b). On the two combining as one, the notes of the Nitzotzei Zohar comment that the word nishkafa is a combination of the two words, nishak peh, "the kiss of the mouth."
6. Maggid D'varav LeYaakov, Oppenheimer edition, pp. 29-30. For early kabbalistic sources for this approach, see Moshe Idel: The Beauty of Woman – On the History of Jewish Mysticism."
7. Degel Machane Efraim, Pareshat Behar, commentary on u-ve-chol. R. Levi Yitzchak of Berditchov quotes this teaching in the name of the Baal Shem Tov, adding a moral emphasis: "And just as I heard in the name of the Baal Shem Tov on the verse (Psalms 121:5) 'God is your shadow' – just as when a living being stands in the light and his shadow echoes his movements, so it is as if He, blessed is He and blessed is His name, does the same above according to the actions of earthbound man. For example, if a man acts with kindness towards his fellow man, so God acts towards him." Kedushat Levi – Discourses on Chanukah.
8. Hayyim Vital, Etz Hayyim, gate 38, chapter 2, second edition.
9. "The Beauty of Jacob was like the beauty of Adam" (Zohar 1:35b).
10. "The secret of these things is the following: It is already known that the partzuf of Ze'eir Anpin has two women: Leah and Rachel, and they represent two aspects [...] because at the beginning man was created, and God took his rib and magnified it, and this was how woman was created. And from the chest (of Ze'eir Anpin) on up, which is a concealed place, is the place of Leah from the back side, and she is called alma d'itcasya (the world of concealment). R. Hayyim Vital, Etz Hayyim, gate 38, chap. 4, second edition.
11. This is related to the general Zoharic conception of Binah as the "concealed world," "a place which elicits questioning." Anyone exposed to it will ask "who," but ultimately, after descending from level to level, he/she reaches the other extreme known as "what," and he/she is asked, "What did you seek? What did you find? Everything is still as mysterious as ever!" (Introduction to the Zohar, 1/b.). The very fact that the more personal question "who" is considered to be higher than conceptual queries whose nature is that of "what-ness" is a fascinating idea, representative of the mythological outlook characteristic of the Zoharic debate on the mystery of the Godhead. If we understand the "what" question not as a conceptual question of what (ma) is the essence (mahut) of the matter, but rather as a practical question of what needs to be done, and if we continue this line of thought, we can say that the "what" question relating to essence is the query being posed in the realm of chochma, above binah. It therefore follows that the proper order of the questions is what-who-what. What in chochma, who in

binah, what in malkhut, which is also known as “lower chochma.” Again, however, the Zohar did not propose this approach, and as far as the Zohar is concerned, the most critical and relevant question is that concerning the personal figure of the Divinity – Who are You, God? This is the question that should be asked, even if one obtains no concrete result; (this section of the Zohar may have served as the basis of R. Y. D. Soleveitchik’s comments in his book “The Lonely Man of Faith,” p. 15, see there).

12. The JPS translation here, “unloved,” does not capture the force of the Hebrew s’nuah. We will use “despised” throughout.

13. “And do not stray after your hearts” – Rabbi learned from this verse that a man should not drink out of one cup while his eyes are straying to another. Ravina said that this is the case even with his two wives. “And I will purge out from you the rebels and those that have transgressed against Me” (Ez. 20:38). R. Levi said: “These are the children of nine attributes: the children of Osnat, Mashga’ach, the children of terror, the children of rape, the children of the despised one, the children of excommunication, the children of exchange, the children of strife, the children of drunkenness, the children of she who was driven away from the heart, the children of mixed seed, the children of audacity”. (B. Nedarim 22b.). In kabbalistic thought, there is a parallel tradition concerning Lilith, for which see appendix, n. #REFERENCE.

14. “But certainly the Jubilee is always the hidden world, and nothing about it is revealed, and all its deeds were therefore concealed from Jacob. Come and see: The lower world is revealed, and it is the (place) where all begins to ascend, rung by rung. Just as Supernal Wisdom (Hokhma) is the beginning of all things, so too the lower world is also Hokhma, and is therefore also the beginning of all things. We therefore call it you,’ since it is the revealed Sabbatical year (shmita). And the higher world, the Jubilee (yovel), we call ‘him’(third person), since all its matters are concealed” (REF).

Commentary: The sefirah of Hokhma is the beginning of the revelation of the divine world from above, just as Malkhut is the beginning from below (or in later Kabbalistic language: malkhut is chochma in the form of returning light). Malkhut occasionally receives characteristics of Hokhmah, which are different than those of supernal Hokhmah, and is usually called “lower Hokhmah”, or “the wisdom (Hokhmah) of (King) Solomon,” or “the wisdom (Hokhmah) of women” (see Proverbs 14:1: “The wisdom of women builds her house”) or Oral Torah. This idea of the daughter of the king, who is the shechinah, who is the reflection of the unique nature of Hokhmah, can already be found in Sefer HaBahir (Margoliot edition), paragraph 65.

15. “The secret of this matter is that concerning Leah it is written: “And he slept with her on that night” (Gen. 30:16). He refers to the higher world, which is always concealed. Jacob did not willingly cling to anything concealed, he (preferred) only that which was revealed. This is the secret of the verse: “and he will cling to his wife” (Gen 2:24). REF.

16. REF.

17. This is according to the midrash in Bereshit Rabba, 70, 16, which is also quoted by Rashi in his commentary on the Torah: ““And the eyes of Leah were soft” – R. Yochanan’s translator translated it in this manner: ‘And the eyes of Leah were tender.’ He (R. Yochanan) said to him: “Your mother’s eyes were tender! What does “soft” mean? It means soft because of weeping. Because (people) would say: “This was the deal – the older one to the older one, the younger one to the younger one. And she (Leah) would cry and say; “May it be Your will that I not fall in the lot of the wicked one” (i.e. Esau). See further discussion of this point below.

18. In midrash, the rabbis added that Rachel actually gave Leah the secret signs that she had made with Jacob so that they could identify each other in the dark: “And morning came, and behold it was Leah” (Gen. 29:25) – but at night it was not Leah, because Jacob had given certain signs to Rachel, but when Rachel saw that Leah was being taken to Jacob, she said, now my sister will be shamed. So she gave her those signs” (Rashi on Gen. 29:25, based on B. Megilla 13b). It should be noted that Rachel consciously agrees to Leah’s being substituted for her, and she doesn’t even hint to Jacob that anything is amiss. It is also interesting that the Targum Yonatan translated the verse thus: “And it was at morning time, and he looked at her, and behold she was Leah all of the night.” Leah is of the night (laila). This may possibly be an early hint of Leah’s later identification with Lilith, who is named for the night and the wailing (yilala).

19. “Give me children, and if not, I will die” (Gen. 30:1); in the end, Rachel did die in childbirth, and takes comfort in the knowledge that her second child is also a son; see Gen. 35:17-18.

20. The Midrash means to say that the townspeople were giving a hint to Jacob by singing a song about the deception: instead of singing la-la-la, ya-ba-ba, or the like, they sang “ha lia, ha lia.” Jacob did not get the hint.

21. In the original Aramic, the word is dichrin “males,” but in Yefet and in Theodore-Albek’s edition of the midrash it says d’bzayon (disgraced). Irit Aminof, in her article “The Soft Eyes of Leah,” REFERENCE, translated it as “immodest,” and we have adopted her translation.

22. Bereishit Rabba, 70:19; the last line is in accordance with the Theodor-Albek edition, p. 819.

23. See Nechama Leibowitz, Studies in Bereishit, Parshat Vayetze. Thanks to Naomi Regan for calling our attention to this point. (***)REFERENCE – if this is in one of her novels)

24. “Since the mothers thought that they would each give birth to three sons, when Leah gave birth to her fourth son, she said, ‘This time I will thank the Lord.’” (Bereshit Rabba, 71: 4).

25. The intimate relationship between the house of David and God is clearly emphasized in the words of the prophet Nathan to David, which describe how God will act towards his son Solomon, who will reign after him: “I will be his father, and he will be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the plagues of the children of man; but my love shall not depart from him, as I made it to depart from Saul, who I took away from before you” (II Sam. 7:14-15). It should be pointed out that, in Zoharic terminology, “plagues of the children of man”, with which God rebukes the house of David (and especially king Solomon) as a loving father chastises his children, are in fact the spirits of demons and Liliths, created by the spilling of man’s seed.

26. “Just as a person must believe in the Holy One, blessed be He, so he must also believe in himself. This means (the belief) that God cares about him, and that (his actions) are not taking place in a void... he must believe that his soul emerges from the source of all life” (R. Tzadok Ha Cohen of Lublin, Tzidkat haTzaddik, entry 154).

27. “Thus said the LORD: A Cry is heard in Ramah/ Wailing, bitter weeping/ Rachel weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted/ For her children, who are gone” (Jer. 31:15-16).

28. Buber, I and Thou

29. Sha'ar HaKavannot, Discourses on Pesach, discourse no. 4. We did not find in either the writings of the Ari or his students a description of a state in which the back of the Rachel partzuf faces the face of either the Jacob or Ze'eir Anpin partzuf.

30. Sforino, the Italian Renaissance era commentator, makes the following comment: "In this story, which may seem disgraceful to those who find their own interpretations for the Torah, we are told how, for our patriarchs and matriarchs, intercourse was like it had been for Adam and his wife before the sin. Their intention was not at all for personal pleasure, but rather to bear children for the honor of their Maker and for His service. When our mothers gave their husbands additional wives, or this matter of the mandrakes, their intention was acceptable to God, and their prayers were therefore accepted..." And he lay with her that night "...willingly, when he saw how eager Leah was and how pure was her intention." See also: Or HaChayyim ad locem.

31. Bereshit Rabba, 80, 1, free translation of the Aramaic.

32. "And Dinah the daughter of Leah that was born to Jacob went out to see the daughters of the land. And Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivvite, the prince of the land saw her, and he took her, and he raped her (Gen. 34:1-2).

33. Tanchuma Vayislah chap. 7. We find a similar comment in the Talmud Yerushalmi (freely translated from the Aramaic): "What is the meaning (of the verse): 'Behold, whoever uses proverbs will use this proverb against you, saying, Like mother, like daughter?' Was our mother Leah a whore?, as it says, "And Dinah went out?" He said to him: Since it is written: "And Leah went out to meet him", we learn one "going out" from the other." NEED SOURCE FOR YERUSHALMI

34. The opening sentence of Sefer Yetzirah states that the Holy One, blessed be He, created His world through *sfr*, *sfr*, and *sfr*. There are different opinions as to how these three forms of "*sfr*" should be punctuated, each lending a different hue to how the creation story should be understood. One of the most interesting interpretations, via Shai Agnon (NEED REFERENCE), is to read them this way: *sefer*, *sofer*, *v'sippur* – meaning that God created His world through a book, an author, and a story. There is a text, the book (*sefer*), there is an author (*sofer*), and there is a process by which this text is read so that it becomes a story (*sippur*). Let us attempt to understand this in relation to our present context, in which a person is asked to find themselves through their own story, rather than abandoning it for someone else's story.

Each soul has three "cumulative states:" 1. Before descending into the world, which is the primal state. 2. During physical existence in this world. 3. After death.

In the primal state of the soul, she is seen as a letter in the supernal *sefer Torah*. Only after her descent into this plane of existence does the soul begin to tell her story (*sippur*) and to develop it, which she does by living it out. This implies that life itself is a process of developing and unfolding the data imprinted on the primal letter, which is the representation of the soul's higher root. This leads to the conclusion that, after death, it becomes clear how an individual's deeds were in fact a living commentary on that "letter" of the heavenly Torah. The totality of her life constituted the essentials of this Torah. It therefore follows that each person is an author (*sofer*), who wrote, by means of every choice he ever made, the commentary to the heavenly Torah scroll.

There are very few people in whom we can identify this quality. Even fewer know it about themselves. Such people experience their lives as a theological exercise, like R. David of Lelov, who said that when

the Messiah comes, the “Tractate of David of Lelov” will be studied, just as today we study the tractate of Baba Kama. This experience is not common to most of us other than in moments of déjà vu, in which we sense that everything is happening exactly as it was written, as it must be, as it was intended to be. Can the story of my soul be told in only one way? In other words, is there only one, predetermined way by which I must unfold the meaning imbedded in my supernal letter? This is one of the meanings of the mystery of the transmigration of souls – the story is told a little differently each time, in order that a new light be shed on it each time anew. This shows that the divine text of the heavenly Torah, of which I am one letter, can be read in various manners. My entire life story is a suggestion of one possible reading.

In terms of Beshtian Kabbalah, these three stages can be understood as the process of “surrender-separation-sweetening” in the mystery of the hashmal (see Keter Shem Tov, letter 28). For the implications of this teaching in the theological biography of R. Nachman, see O. Ezrahi, “The Descent into the Dark Hollow of Childhood,” (Hebrew) Dimui, NEED REFERENCE.

A practical application of this line of thinking can be found in M. Gafni, Soul Prints.

35. R. Mordechai Yosef Leiner of Ishbitz, Mei HaShiloah vol. 1, at the beginning of the section on Lech Lecha.

36. A “couple relationship” does not necessarily imply marriage. A steady couple relationship without marriage, which we call “living together” (in early sources pilagshut, i.e. a relationship without chuppah and kiddushin), would not be considered “illicit” or “prostitution” by most halachic authorities: “What is considered ‘wives’ and what is considered ‘concubines’? R. Yehudah said in the name of Rav: Wives are with ketuba and kiddushin, concubines are without them.”. Both these categories are considered legitimate (B. Sanhedrin 21a.). The talmudic discussion is actually dealing with the wives and concubines of King David, while as regards a regular layman there is disagreement among the halachic authorities: Rambam holds that “a concubine is forbidden for a layman” (Hilchot Melachim 4:4) so, in his opinion, any sort of sexual encounter outside of marriage is similar to prostitution. However, many of the Rishonim and the Achronim disagree with him, as the Rama writes in a footnote in Shulchan Aruch: “If a man singles out a woman for his own, and she immerses herself in the ritual waters (miqve) for him, some say that this is permissible, as this is the concubine (pilegish) which is mentioned in the Torah (this is the opinion of the Ra’avad and some other authorities). Others maintain that it is forbidden and (he who disobeys) receives a lashing, as it says “There should not be a harlot among you” (Rambam, the Rosh, and the Tur). The reason provided by the Rosh and the Tur is that a single woman will be embarrassed to go to the miqve, as everyone will know that she is having sexual relations with someone. This will cause her not to go, and to lie about it, so that she and her boyfriend will transgress the prohibition of sleeping together when the woman has not been purified from her menstrual blood. After all, in those times there was one miqve for the whole town, so everyone knew everything that was going on with everyone else. In our days, both the Rosh and the Tur would probably have agreed that it is preferable that an unmarried woman be allowed to go to the miqve, so that she can have sexual relations with her partner in a state of purity.

Rabbi Arthur Waskow has opened a discussion on creating a sort of graded scale, rather than presenting a black and white picture of this matter. We could describe a continuum whose one extreme, the most desirable situation, is marriage – while the other extreme, the most repulsive, is rape. On this continuum relationships based on seduction and deception would be located very close to the rape-extreme, followed by prostitution in which the prostitute receives payment for a deed she does of her own free will. One-time sexual encounters occurring with the consent of both partners would obviously be better

than prostitution, while deep friendship based on love and intimacy would be closest to the opposite extreme, where we have placed marriage. If we look at things this way, we see that, among the various sorts of relationships common between two unmarried people today, "living together," which in Biblical language was called *pilegesh* (that is, *plag isha* – a "half-wife"), is a relatively positive institution. See Arthur Waskow, *Down to Earth Judaism*.

See also an interview with Rabbi Arthur Green by O. Ezrahi, "Sold on Freedom," in *Chayyim Acheirim* (Sept. 99): "In an era where people are getting married at ages 25-35, but are becoming sexually mature at 12-13, it is both difficult and undesirable to postpone sexual experience until marriage. It might be necessary to think up some sort of a ritual that would express a couple's decision to begin living together even before marriage, some sort of an engagement ceremony, although the issue of a ceremony is secondary. The main point is to discover a basis for a loving and responsible relationship even before marriage. When I conduct a marriage ceremony for a couple I try to omit the blessing which says "He who forbade to us those we are engaged to, and permitted to us they who we married by means of huppah and kiddushin." I think that today, when we know that the couple was probably living together for a few years before getting married, this is a total lie."

37. These parents often identify themselves as "X's father" or "Y's mother," as if their identity was dependent on their children. Sisra's mother has no personal name and is satisfied to be known as the mother of Sisra: ("She was watching from the window, and Sisra's mother was crying..." (Judg. 5:28). When her son dies, she experiences total loss of identity. This may be the reason why her cry becomes a model of the type of cry that the shofar reproduces every Rosh Hashana (see B. Rosh Hashana 33b.). This is the cry of the shedding of false identities. Rosh Hashana is a new beginning, when we try to free ourselves of these addictions, and to touch our own living, vibrant, but threatening stories once again.

38. R. Nahman of Breslov calls these teachers and Rabbis "famous lies." See *Liqueti Moharan* 1 and 67.

39. In studying "The Concept of Autonomy in the Female Experience," in her book *She Comes with Love* (HEBREW?), Ariela Friedman quotes a study by the social psychologist Nitzah Yanai on the concept of autonomy as perceived by (ISRAELI?) women. According to the study's conclusions, the concept of independence or autonomy is not defined by women as separation from the other and lack of dependence on him, but rather "as the capability of authentic expression... the capability to express oneself authentically in the framework of the connection with the other" (p.43). We are in total agreement with this concept of autonomy.

40. Chaim Vital, *Sha'ar HaPesukim*, *Pareshat Vayetze* (??): "Any given prostitute is Lilith, because she was originally in Adam's household, and then went out, and always abides in the desert, as is well known.

41. *Zohar*, *Vayetze* (VOLUME?), 148a

42. *Baal HaTurim*, ad locem.

43. *Song of Songs*, REFERENCE

44. Luke 7:37-50. Nicholas Kazantzakis wrote *The Last Temptation of Christ* about this sexually charged figure and the tribulations that she caused Jesus. In the Gospel of Luke, there is no identification of the "sinner woman" who washes Jesus's feet, but according to the decision of Gregarious the Great, Mary Magdelena was identified both as this sinner woman and also as Miriam of Beth Anna (Luke 10: 39-42). As a result, Mary Magdelena became the patron saint of those who repent.

45. Shlomit Steinberg in “The Face of Temptation” (REFERENCE) quotes Anatole France who said to one of his students: “Everyone knew that hell exists, but its exact geographical location was unknown. Until one day, a brutal African church father revealed that the gates of hell are located in a very specific spot – between women’s legs.” A reference in Sefer HaChinuch (mitzvah 188) shows that Jewish sources also identified a “door to hell” in women. When he explains the commandment that forbids a person any intimate contact with sexually taboo persons, the author recommends to his son, for whom the book was written: “And if a man, when meeting a beautiful woman, will think that hell opens between her eyelashes, and whoever comes close to her will burn forever, and he focuses all his thoughts on similar images, she will not become a stumbling block for him.”

46. This trait seems to have been passed on to Rachel’s chosen son, Joseph, who does not succumb to the sexual enticements of Potiphar’s wife in Egypt. Tradition has awarded him the title “Joseph the Tzaddik” (Righteous). Particularly in the opinion of the Kabbalists, maintaining sexual purity is considered the chief attribute of Joseph.

47. This attribute also seems to be passed on among Leah’s descendants. Judah, Leah’s chosen son, lies with his daughter-in-law Tamar, who is disguised as a prostitute. Boaz, a dignitary of the tribe of Judah, gets into a dubious situation by marrying Ruth the Moabite. According to the midrash, Jesse, his grandson, intends to sleep with his Canaanite handmaiden but at the last minute she is replaced by his wife, and David is born. David has a sexual fall with Bathsheba, who gives birth to Solomon, whose many wives turn his heart, etc. The entire dynasty of the tribe of Judah, from whom the House of David and the Messiah emerge, place themselves in very questionable sexual relationships. This is dealt with at length in the hasidic literature, especially in Mei HaShiloah. It is noteworthy in this context that critical biblical scholarship attributes the second creation story, the one in which consciousness is achieved through the sin of eating from the tree of knowledge, to the J source, from the tribe of Judah. This source, it is argued, shows how good and evil are bound together and how it is that through evil, good is revealed. See Yisrael Knohl, *The Many Faces of Monotheistic Faith* (Hebrew) pp. 31-32.

48. Eli Yassif, *The Alphabet of ben Sirach*

49. Popular culture deals extensively with the dangerous and seductive woman. Sharon Stone in “Basic Instinct” is one recent example of the misogynist tendency in this genre.

50. See Kehillat Yaakov, written by a student of the Seer of Lublin, the entry on “Laughter.” He maintains, on the basis of a midrash and Rashi’s commentary on this verse, (WHICH VERSE?) that laughter in the Torah is mentioned in connection with the three cardinal sins, concerning which the law is “he should let himself be killed rather than transgress.” They are idol worship, murder, and incest. Idol worship, since it says concerning the golden calf, “and they rose to make merry;” murder, as it says (concerning David’s general, Joab), “Let the lads rise and make merry before us;” and incest, as it says (concerning Potiphar’s wife and Joseph), “They brought us a Hebrew man to laugh at me.” The author claims that these three sins cause damage to the first three sefirot – keter, chochma, and binah – and that is why they are so severe. The “laughter” of incest damages the sefirah of Binah, which is relevant to our study of Lilith, since Lilith, who is the kelippah of Leah, is the lowest level of Binah.

51. See Mei Hashiloah, *Pareshat Toldot*, beginning “And Isaac loved Esau”, and *Pareshat Vayeshev*, beginning “And Er the firstborn son of Judah.” He describes Jacob as someone who does not want “to put himself in doubt, a theme that will be developed at greater length in the Fifth Gate.

Compare Elkanah's unsuccessful attempt to comfort the barren Hannah, who, like Rachel, values children, more than her husband's love, for which, see I Sam 1:8.

The Third Gate: Upper Leah and the Women of “Binah”

Chapter 10: Leah, The Scholarly Woman

In this gate we will look at how the Ari defines the unique nature of partzuf Leah. We will observe how, by sanctifying the image of partzuf Leah, the Ari facilitated bringing her shadow image – Lilith – back into the realm of holiness. He abstracted her human image and deified it in the world of Atzilut.

Unless we are specifically referring to the biblical narrative, whenever we speak about Leah, our meaning is the Leah of Atzilut, who is not a mortal woman but rather the connotation for a certain aspect of the Shechinah. There is a certain overlap between the two, since the human image of Leah penetrates into that of supernal Leah, which in turn affects lower Leah, and so on. In hasidic terminology, the human Leah merited to become a “chariot” or “vehicle” (merkavah) – for a certain aspect of the divine.¹ This receptacle was molded into the form lent it by Leah and, as such, it is named for her and characterized by her personality traits. In fact, every partzuf is a specific emanation of the divine lights perceptible to human beings, and the emanation’s form is molded according to the nature of the human receptacle. Jacob, Leah, and Rachel, are human archetypes, who represent different ways of perceiving God. For this reason, each divine emanation is created in the image of each of their modes of consciousness.

Leah is a complex partzuf in Lurianic Kabbalah. For example, R. Hayyim Vital, in his book Sha’ar HaMitzvot, presents a list of no less than eighteen different aspects of partzuf Leah and the minute differences between them. He admits that he cannot precisely remember how the Ari explained them all.² In our discussion, we will focus on the general characteristics of Leah within the partzuf of the Shechina, and specifically on those aspects which are connected to the identification of Leah, the wife whom Jacob hated, with Lilith, the wife whom Adam rejected.

First we will focus on the status conferred upon the two women, Rachel and Leah, in terms of where they are located in the world schema. They express two different faces of woman: one is more spiritual (Leah), the other more practical (Rachel);³ one possesses highly developed intellectual skills (Leah), while the other’s wisdom is more common sense and pragmatic (Rachel).

Illustration no. # (GET ILLUSTRATION) details the structure of the relationships between some of the partzufim of Atzilut. The two wives of Ze’ir Anpin, Rachel and Leah, the two faces of the Shechinah, are each pictured as having a different height in relation to her husband. Rachel, the main wife, has her feet on the same spot of ground as Jacob.⁴ Rachel’s head, however, is very low in relation to the height of Ze’ir Anpin’s head. Her back is attached to his, while her head only reaches his chest. In Kabbalistic thought, each partzuf receives sustenance from the partzuf above it. Thus, Ze’ir Anpin receives sustenance, called mohin (minds), from the partzufim above it, those of Hokhmah and Binah, which are also called Abba and Imma. Rachel receives her sustenance through Ze’ir Anpin. This means that, when Ze’ir Anpin receives his mohin, it comes together with those intended for his wife Rachel. He first feeds himself with his own mohin, and then, through a hole in the center of his chest, he transfers to Rachel the mohin intended for her. These are the mohin that give her life and sustain her inner core.

Leah, on the other hand, is standing tall. Her head touches the feet of partzuf Imma, while her own feet are positioned on Rachel’s head. This means that, in the diagram which describes the structure of the relationships in the world of Atzilut, Leah is portrayed as being on the same plane as Ze’ir Anpin,

located between his chest and the top of his head. Unlike Rachel, Leah is not dependent on Ze'eir Anpin for receiving her mohin. She touches the bottom of partzuf Imma and can therefore receive sustenance from her directly.

Interpreting these symbols, we see that partzuf Rachel, Jacob's modest and beloved wife, is the shorter of the two. "Short" in this case means spiritually small. Rachel lives on the practical side of life, with her feet firmly on the ground. Not an intellectual concerned with lofty, abstract ideas, she is the woman Jacob prefers. Rachel's "head," or her spiritual side – that which the Ari would call her "limb of consciousness" – reaches only as high as the chest of Ze'eir Anpin, which is the location of his heart, his emotional center. A woman whose thinking is closely tied to her heart, Rachel does not venture beyond this plane.⁵

Leah, on the other hand, is located "above." Partzuf Leah is closely tied to Partzuf Tevunah ("Understanding"), which is above Ze'eir Anpin, so that her head is on the same level as Ze'eir's. as a result, upper Leah is capable of deep thinking, deductive reasoning, and abstract contemplation. On the other hand, she is not in touch with the lower aspects of Ze'eir Anpin, the earthy, practical side of life. There, in the legs of Ze'eir Anpin, stands Rachel, who knows how to ground things.

In hasidic Kabbalah this difference in the position of the two images of the Shekhinah indicates two different types of souls. There are "Rachel souls," practical and grounded in their nature, over against "Leah souls," more contemplative and spiritual. Two such souls may arrive in the same generation, but they may also appear in successive generations, so that practically-minded eras in history are followed by spiritually-oriented epochs. R. Yitzchak Isaac of Homil, one of the most profound and original of the hasidic Kabbalists, used this teaching in his attempt to characterize the souls of the generation that entered the Land of Israel. R. Isaac understood that Jewish life in Israel would be radically different than the sort of Jewish life he was familiar with in the Diaspora. Diaspora Judaism, like the generation of the wilderness, could pre-occupy itself with lofty, abstract ideals, but an Israeli Judaism would need to find godliness in the earthy, practical, and the natural. R. Isaac based this fundamental distinction on the different positions of Rachel and Leah in relation to Ze'eir Anpin:

The partzuf of the wilderness generation [= partzuf Leah] is that of a generation of knowledge, the knowledge of God's glory (and its position) above the chest, (since) that is the place of the respiratory organs. These are spiritual forces, those of intelligence and understanding as related to hokhma, binah, and da'at...(however) the partzuf of the Shekhina of the generation that entered Israel, which is the main partzuf, is that of the Shekhina which was present in the holy temple. It is the partzuf of Rachel, (which is located) beneath the chest, where the digestive organs are found, and they are not sensitive to the light and power of intelligence and understanding, since they are concerned primarily with survival and the preservation of life in an orderly and reasonable manner.⁶

Leah represents the higher woman who is capable of contending with a partner intellectually. The Zohar teaches us that it is Leah's very superiority which causes Jacob to feel repulsed by her and to prefer Rachel. Threatened by an intellectual woman, he prefers to marry an earthy woman, whom he can more easily understand. At the same time, he turns the image of the woman who threatens him into an other, a demonic being – in the Zohar, the chief ally of the Great Demon himself.

We will later examine the correlation between the female figure who is perceived as a sexual threat, such as Lilith, and the female figure who is threatening because of her spiritual/intellectual talents. Leah embodies both threats. In the biblical narrative, she is a woman whose sexual urge is dominant. For this

reason the Rabbis did not hesitate to call her a prostitute. In the Torah's only description of her, we are told that "the eyes of Leah were soft" (Gen. 29:17).⁷ We will not be far from the truth if we interpret this "softness" as alluring, seductive, sensual, but also threatening and, therefore, understood by the tradition paradoxically as weak, repulsive and ugly.

For those shaped by patriarchy, it is easy to be repulsed, it seems, by women who openly express their sexual desire.⁸ It is very possible that Leah's eyes broadcast her desire, rather than concealing it under some modest veil. In the Kabbalah, female desire is known as "female waters" (mayyin nukvin). These are the waters that moisten and vivify a woman whose yearning for a man is great. Prayer is conceived as the collective arousal of the female waters of all of Israel towards God. The great abundance that God showers on the earth in response to prayer is known as the "male waters," (mayyin dichrin) i.e. male seed. Leah's watery eyes symbolize the arousal of her female waters, and they threaten Jacob, just as they would threaten any man used to a certain set of patriarchal mores.

On the other hand, Leah is also sophisticated. She tricks Jacob into a life different from the one he had intended. She uses her head, and he, of course, does not appreciate it. In Lurianic Kabbalah, Leah's resourcefulness links her to the sefirah of Binah, which is also Partzuf Imma. We can understand something of Jacob's reaction to her based on this association. Rebekah, Jacob's mother, was the first woman who, by her cunning and against his will, changed his life into that of a man pursued. She taught him to lie to his father Isaac, and she turned him into the character he is constantly trying to free himself from – that of his brother Esau. Jacob identifies Esau with the ugly, low-down and brutal. But Esau is Jacob's shadow side and twin. Throughout his life Jacob wants to detach himself from this threatening, bestial figure. He wants to be able to say "I am Jacob, not Esau," but Rebekah, whose name connects her to the more primal world of animals,⁹ forces him to put animal hides on his delicate skin, and to go to his father and say, "I am Esau, your first-born" (Gen. 27:19) Rebecca forces her younger son to identify with the primal animal side of his own nature against his better judgment. He does as she commands, but he does not internalize this action by allowing a place in which his own shadow side might be integrate. Jacob remains only Jacob, who needs to run far, far away from Esau, all the way to his mother's home.

And there he meets another woman in whom he recognizes the same animal nature as that of his brother Esau. "(People) would say ... the older one goes to the older one, the younger one to the younger one!"¹⁰ Those who knew of them felt that Leah was intended for Esau, because they both exposed their more primitive sides. Rachel, the modest one, was fitting for Jacob. Everyone thought so, except for Leah. She, like her aunt Rebecca, has an almost compulsive desire to bring out the primal – animal in Jacob. It is no wonder that, for Jacob, the figure of Ze'eir Anpin, Leah represents the partzuf of (Imma), his mother Rebecca.

Chapter 11: Rebekah, the Great Mother

Given the similarities between Rebecca and Leah in terms of their guile, it should come as no surprise that there are also parallels between them in matters pertaining to sexuality. At first glance, it would seem that no one was more chaste than Rebekah. The Torah testifies that she was a virgin: "The maiden was very beautiful, a virgin whom no man had known" (Gen 24:16). Rashi, following the lead of the midrash, comments that she was a "'virgin' – in the place of virginity; 'whom no man had known' – in an unnatural way. Since the daughters of the Canaanites would guard the place of their virginity but were wanton elsewhere, the Torah testifies that she (Rebekah) was completely pure."¹¹

Although Rebekah seems to be the very soul and image of chastity, the rabbis of the midrash nevertheless find reason to suspect her of sexual promiscuity. The occasion for this midrash is the moment she fell off the camel,¹² upon first seeing Isaac (Gen. 24:64):

"And she fell off the camel" – since she saw that in the future Esau, the Wicked, would be born of her, she trembled and became as if "struck by wood," and virginity blood came out of her...And when Isaac came to her, he found no sign of virginity, and suspected she had been with Eliezer. He said to her; "Where is (the sign of) your virginity?" She answered him: "When I fell off the camel I became as one struck by wood." He said to her: "You speak falsely! It must be that Eliezer was with you!" She swore to him that he had never touched her. They went and found the piece of wood that was stained by blood, and Isaac immediately knew that she was pure.¹³

If the Rabbis needed to emphasize so markedly that Rebekah was a virgin, then there must have been some tale which they needed to discredit. Furthermore, Rebekah's immediately covering her face with a veil after falling from the camel, elicits another suspicious comment: "There were two who covered themselves with a veil and gave birth to twins: Rebekah and Tamar. Rebekah, as it says: "So she took her veil and covered herself" (Gen, 24:65). Tamar, as it says: "So she...covered her face with a veil" (Gen.38:14). Again, we find that the Rabbis link Rebekah's behavior at the moment of her encounter with Isaac with the behavior of Tamar, who disguised herself as a prostitute when she met her father-in-law, Judah.¹⁴

This all comes back to Jacob, upon meeting Leah in her parents' house. According to the Zohar, she reminds him of something threatening, which is linked to the image of his mother:

"And God saw that Leah was despised" (Gen. 30:31): From here we see that a man hates his mother's nakedness. A man can therefore be alone with his mother anywhere, and there is no need to worry. As the Sages have already remarked:¹⁵ "A son may be alone with his mother." Everything was concealed from Jacob, because the higher world was not yet revealed (I:154b).¹⁶

Jacob's hatred for Leah, according to the Zohar, stems from the deep fear a man has of his mother's nakedness – presumably because of his very attraction to it.¹⁷ In Leah's eyes, Jacob saw glimmers of Rebekah.

There cannot be a more radical yet fitting image for this doubling of the two women than that used by R. Hayyim Vital. Referring to the section of the Zohar quoted above, Vital analyses the architecture of the world of Atzilut and explains that if one knows the exact location of partzuf Leah in relation to partzuf Imma, then the sefirah of Yesod of both these partzufim connect at one and the same point. In Kabbalistic terminology, the sefirot of yesod represent the sexual organs of the male and the female,¹⁸

which indicates that (in so far as Jacob's consciousness is concerned), the sexual organs of Leah and Rebecca are fused into "one womb." Therefore, R. Hayyim Vital says, with Leah, Jacob feels the revulsion of incest.

And this is what is also written in the Zohar ... on the verse "And God saw that Leah was despised" (Gen. 30: 31): From here we see that "a man hates his mother's nakedness" (Zohar 1:154b), meaning that Leah emerges from the malkhut of Imma, who is Jacob's mother... The conclusion is that the Yesod of Imma and the Yesod of Leah are connected together, so that they both become one womb to mate in... and this is the secret of "from here we know that a man hates his mother's nakedness." Nakedness means just that.¹⁹

He meets the taboo of his mother's nakedness when he comes into Leah, for deep inside her womb is the womb of his mother Rebecca. A mother's power to give of her goodness, to nourish, to love, and to encourage, but at the same time to withhold nurturing, to ignore, or to suffocate, transforms her from a simple mortal into a virtual goddess in the psyche of the dependent child. During the prolonged encounter between the child and the goddess who rears him, the child learns to attach great values to her. They are fraught with meaning and loaded with symbolical significance. Jung writes, "Many things which awaken admiration and a sense of the sacred can be symbols of the mother," but adds, that mother-symbols may occasionally take on negative meanings, fraught with terror.²⁰

One of the most widespread symbols of the fearsome mother in primitive art is that of the spider.²¹ A small creature in itself, it has a web of information extending in all directions. From a distance, it can sense everything that is happening and quickly runs wherever it is most needed. The stereotypical image of the Jewish mother who always knows what is happening, shows up everywhere, pulls the strings behind every scene, and is involved with exaggerated and often smothering concern in her children's lives, is well represented by the symbol of the spider.²¹

This description can help us to refocus on Rebekah, the great and fearsome mother in her son, Jacob's, psyche. Rebekah manipulated and triangulated Jacob's relationships with his brother and father, putting him through a humiliating ordeal that ended up threatening his life. We can easily see how her son would fear ever getting caught in the web of another assertive woman. For Jacob, loving Leah is returning to the stranglehold of his fearsome mother. So long as Jacob is incapable of rising above and beyond himself, or of transforming himself into "Israel," then he is constantly running away from those parts of himself which he fears or cannot understand: his shadow and twin, Esau, and his mighty mother, Rebekah. \Given the power of these shadow projections in his psyche, it is inevitable that he would be revolted by Leah.

The significance of the higher level of femininity and divinity that Leah represents is unknown to Jacob. Leah is linked to the world of Binah, which is also the world of the supernal mother. Jacob, however, is only capable of understanding women who represent the sefirah of Malkhut, the world of Rachel – the revealed, lower world that we inhabit.

Chapter 12: Scholarship and Sexuality

Traditionally, Torah was seen as the exclusive preserve of men: study, in-depth analysis, and contemplation were considered male pursuits. There were very few women who managed to break out of their accustomed roles as child-raisers and home-keepers in order to enter the scholarly world.

The first to do so, or at least the first we know of, was Beruriah, the wife of R. Meir, who lived in the classic age of the Mishna (late 2nd century C.E.). Beruriah was a scholar with a rebellious attitude to the portion allotted to women by the rabbinic culture that surrounded her. Partly as a result of that attitude, she came to a tragic end, as we will discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

Hundreds of years were to pass until another woman attained the stature of Beruriah in the rabbinic world, and she too came to a bitter end. Hannah Rachel, known as the Maid of Ludmir, who remained single until forty, tried to function as a female hasidic rebbe.²² She was forced to forego both her position and her power due to pressure brought on her by the Rebbe of Tchernobel, who was a central spiritual authority in the hasidic world of that era.²³ The Rebbe of Tchernobel pressured her into marriage and into following the only acceptable path for daughters of Israel, regardless of how intellectual they might be.²⁴ However, Hannah Rachel's marriage was not successful, and she was divorced from her husband three years later.

The unhappy careers of Beruriah and the Maid of Ludmir show that the male protectors of Jewish tradition saw any attempt made by a woman to penetrate the male world of study as deviant. A woman, it would seem, could not be a scholar, almost by definition, and, if she were a scholar, then there must be something abnormal about her. This attitude has been prevalent from talmudic times through the Kabbalah and Hasidism. The tragedy of the Maid of Ludmir indicates that a learned woman could not be considered sexually attractive as a woman and had to give up her learning and teaching in order to marry. In fact, Hannah of Ludmir wanted to remain a virgin. Similarly, Barbara Streisand, in the musical "Yentl," plays the role of a woman who, in order to gain entry into the study hall, disguised herself as a male yeshiva student, and even became engaged to an attractive, young girl.

Of course, this denial of female sexuality wherever a woman shows intellectual interest, is as far from the truth as possible. It is unfortunately facilitated by the kabbalistic distinction that we have been exploring between two levels of femininity – higher femininity and lower femininity, or, in other parallel terms: mother and daughter, the concealed world and the revealed world, Leah and Rachel, Binah and Malkhut. We have heard that certain women who belong to the Habad sect and study Habad Hasidut, do not say the morning blessing, "Who has made me according to His will" like other Orthodox women, but rather "Who has not made me a woman," as Orthodox men recite.²⁵ These scholarly Habad women are blessing the fact that they are not connected to the sefirah of Malkhut, but rather to Binah, which is also feminine, but not entirely so. The spiritual fulcrum of Habad is contemplation, i.e., increased attention to the sefirah of Binah as it operates in the human soul, which elevates its practitioners to a state in which they are encompassed by the light of the supernal Mother, the light of Binah. These women are therefore blessing the fact of their not being regular "Malkhut" women, but rather, contemplative "Binah" women, which is to say, not entirely feminine women. It is often stated in the Zohar that Imma (the partzuf of Binah) occasionally functions as a male.²⁶

The purported masculinity of a "Binah" woman does not in any way annul her sexual identity as a woman – quite the opposite. The masculinity of Binah is not a negation of female identity, but rather a way of expressing female assertiveness. A "Binah" woman is usually more active – or, in Kabbalistic

language, more masculine – in her sexuality. What is called her “masculinity” is expressed through her willingness and courage to take an active and assertive part in her sexuality, just like a man. This assertiveness thus comes to reinforce her femaleness. While tradition has maintained a grudging respect for those women like Hana Rachel of Ludmir who understood that acceptance into the world of Binah was dependent on denying their sexuality, it has totally negated a woman who chooses to interpret her entering the world of Binah as an expression of female assertiveness. This latter case has been catalogued as threatening and demonic, like Lilith.

By demonizing the assertive female, men have controlled the gateways to knowledge and so safeguarded their a priori supremacy. A woman chooses between the world of knowledge and the world of feminine sexuality. If she chooses the world of knowledge, then she forfeits the latter. If she chooses the world of the senses then she may not enter the study-hall, lest she appear as a warped woman, the sister of Lilith. This is a perverse way of silencing women’s voices in the world of Torah learning. Once she has left behind her persona as Eve, she is forced to choose between identifying with the Adam or with the Snake, between scholarship and sexual identity.

This same dichotomy does not exist in the realm of male scholarship, though there is considerable tension around the issue. The study of Torah can itself be a means of sublimating erotic impulses through spiritual practice. We saw in the story of R. Hiyya and his wife who seduces him in the guise of a prostitute an example of an accomplished scholar who felt he had to renounce his sexual urge in order to lead a life of holiness. We intend to explore a few more sources, which will show that, unlike the standards which have been set for women, for men, there is a very strong link between eroticism and scholarship.

The following excerpt from Talmud is well-known, in which it is implied that greatness in Torah is intrinsically related to a strong sexual drive:

Abaye said: (The evil urge) tempts scholars more than anyone else. Like that story about Abaye, who heard a man say to a woman, Let us meet and go on our way together. Abaye said to himself, I will follow them and prevent them from sinning.

He followed them for three parsangs. When they reached a junction, he heard them say to one another: Our ways part (as they were from different townships), and we must separate, although it is very pleasant to walk together. Abaye said to himself: If it was me who was alone with that woman, I could never have stopped myself from sinning. When he got back, he leaned sadly on the doorpost. That old man (apparently Elijah) came and said to him: Whoever is greater than his colleague, also has a greater (yetzer).²⁷

The old man’s comforting words to Abaye became a common saying in the Torah world: “Whoever is greater than his colleague, also has a greater urge.” This saying cannot be examined apart from the context of Babylonian rabbinic culture, where it originated. Daniel Boyarin has shown, that, unlike their counterparts in Palestine, the Babylonian academies held up the ideal of “the married monk.”²⁸ The most famous example is R. Akiba, whose wife sent him away from home for twenty-four years, till he came back with 24,000 disciples. Torah was clearly “the other woman” in R. Akiba’s life. A less successful “married monk” is R. Hiyya, who was tortured by the inclination to sexuality, the yetzer that he had tried to suppress, and which came out of hiding when his wife dressed as a prostitute. So we can understand that what Elijah taught Abaye was an important corrective to the competing ideal of married celibacy in that culture. “Whoever is greater than his colleague, also has a greater urge,” is not meant to give Torah

scholars carte blanche for acting out their fantasies, but rather to help them attain a balanced acceptance of sexuality as fundamental to an integrated personality. Perhaps with some greater degree of self-acceptance of his own yetzer, Abaye would not have followed the couple so far down the road of his unacted desire.

Why then, should we assume any different of a scholarly woman? The woman scholar is equally incomplete as a human being without successfully integrating sexuality into her personality. R. Tzadok HaCohen of Lublin offers an account of what makes us uniquely human, based on what we make of our "urge:"

Man is primarily the passion in his heart, which is his advantage over the angels. This is what is called the "urge" – the evil urge and the good urge.²⁹ When he increases his desire to do good, it is good, and if not...As our Sages have stated, "Whoever is greater, his urge is also greater" (B. Sukkah 52a); the way a man is greater than his fellow man is only a function of how great his passion for good is, i.e. the good urge."

Seen in the light of this critique, we can offer as a parallel to Elijah's statement the following: "Whichever woman is greater than her colleague, also has a greater urge," that is, for using her sexual passion toward good and holy ends.

Does spiritual greatness always imply intense passion? Surely we can identify situations in which the spiritual takes one beyond the temptations of the physical. Here are two such cases:

R. Gidel was accustomed to go and sit by the gates of the (women's) bath house, and would say to them, This is how you should immerse yourselves, this is how you should immerse yourselves. The Sages said to him, Is his honor not afraid of the evil urge? He said to them, They are like pure (white) geese to me.³⁰

R. Aha would take the bride on his shoulders and dance (at weddings). The Sages said to him, Should we do the same?

He said to them, If they are like beams (of wood) to you – then L'hayyim! And if not, not.³¹

In these two interesting examples, the great sages share a dubious intimacy with women. In both instances, the sage justifies what are questionable practices to others through his subjectivity. He compares women to objects, like beams of wood or white geese, which do not awaken any degree of sexual desire in him. In these incidents, the Talmud presents an alternative conception of the great man. He is someone who has totally vanquished the evil urge. Hence, he is able to commit acts such as an ordinary man could not perform without becoming sexually aroused.³² In contrast, Abaye perceives himself trapped in the snare of seduction, much more so than the average man.

In our opinion, the case of Abaye is really no different than that of R. Gidel or R. Aha. What is different is the situation in which we find them. R. Aha carries the bride on his shoulders at a wedding dance, which is a time of great communal ecstasy. The erotic passion of his soul is thus elevated beyond the simple focus of a woman's body. R. Aha was exactly like Abaye. Both were men with an unusually intense erotic charge. If this were not the case, R. Aha would probably have taken the bridegroom on his shoulders rather than the bride. His greatness and the greatness of his urge are expressed through his ability to rise to sublime heights in moments of ecstasy. He can go beyond the boundaries of permitted physical contact with women, because his spiritual ecstasy enables him to express the erotic passion in his soul while at the same time liberating him from any attachment to the body of the bride.

This is also the case for R. Gidel. He too is a great man with a great urge, and for this reason he chooses to go and see the women who are purifying themselves in the miqve. But, as we have already mentioned, his “urge” is no common urge, but rather, a “great” urge. His greatness is expressed in his seeing beyond a beautiful woman as a sexual object, and going from her to something more transcendent. If we pay close attention to the text we find that R. Gidel does not claim to be indifferent to the sight of the bathing women. Quite the opposite – he says that the women embody a most subtle form of beauty – that of pure white geese. Here, too, eroticism finds a different avenue of expression. It is at once elevated and at the same time sublimated into an aestheticism. Female beauty is reminiscent of the absolute beauty and purity of nature. This is the reason that R. Gidel has no fear of his evil urge, or rather, he suffers no anxiety about his inclinations, for he knows himself capable of appreciating beauty without allowing it to confound him.

Students of the Baal Shem Tov would almost certainly claim that R. Gidel saw divine beauty reflected in the bathing women, whose spark he elevated into its higher root in the Shekhinah. Here is how one of the Hasidic masters describes the meeting between R. Akiva and the beautiful Roman matron who tried to seduce him:

R. Akiva saw her beauty, which was the very essence of beauty. So he began to think to himself: Where did such grace and beauty come to this world from? Behold, all beauty and grace come from the Shekhinah, who is known as “the most beautiful among women...”³³

Of course, in order to experience things in this way, a man must first possess a highly developed aesthetic sense. Beauty spoke to R. Akiva, to R. Gidel, and to Abaye. “The greater a man is, the greater his urge is,” and the greatness with which it endows him is expressed through a heightened sensitivity to all dimensions of life, including the erotic. There is no reason why this should not also be true of women, such as Leah, for example.

In Kabbalistic literature, the study of Torah is in itself considered an erotic act: R. Eliezer Azcari, a sixteenth-century Kabbalist from Safed, compares the study of Torah and the relationship to one’s wife to the two wives of Jacob. The highest wife is the Torah, while second in line comes the wife of flesh and blood. R. Eliezer even emphasizes a man’s obligation to have sexual relations with each of his two wives, both the physical and the spiritual one:

“Her food, her clothing, and her times (onah) shall not be diminished” (Ex. 21:10). Her times (for sex) – this means the mind, as all the six days of the week (he should) cause his soul to cling to her, “that he might kiss me with the kisses of his mouth” (Song of Songs 1:2). As it says in the Zohar, at midnight, when common people are with their second wife, this is the time when sages are with their first wife.³⁴

The erotic energy converted during the study of Torah into an experience of spiritual coupling is manifest in the rhythmic swaying familiar to us from times of study and prayer. This is mentioned in the writings of the school of the Gaon of Vilna: “And this is the movement of a person studying Torah, who is then called alive, as in the mystery of the living organ.”³⁵ Thus, we discover that the learning experience that is at the foundation of Torah scholarship is itself analogous to sexual union – and occasionally even more powerful than it.³⁶

The Talmud teaches us that scholars are people with strong sexual instincts, although they may sometimes be able to experience sexual ecstasy on a more abstract than physical plane. While the talmudic, kabbalistic and hasidic examples that we have brought are from the sphere that their authors knew best, namely, male sexuality and its sublimation in Torah study, there is no reason to conclude that

the same arguments could not be applied to a woman who excels in her studies, or who reaches spiritual heights.

If, however, this potent energy is sensed only unconsciously, it may suffer social repression and so develop into a complex and a desire to prove just the opposite. Sometimes, when the scholar, male or female, senses their sexual passion to be greater than average, he or she might suffer profound anxiety or neuroses. Attempts may be made to deny this psychological fact, as seems to have been the case with R. Hiyya in our opening story. with Beruriah, R. Meir's wife, and, hundreds of years later, with Rebbe Hannah, the Maid of Ludmir. We are calling this unfortunate state of affairs , to which we turn in the next chapter.

Chapter 13: Beruriah

Beruriah is known from a half-dozen or so stories scattered in the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds and midrashic collections.³⁷ The story that gives the best flavor of the living women's spirit, without any veil of either idealization or misogyny, is one in which she meets Rabbi Yose Ha-Gelili ("The Galilean"), on the road. He asks her, "By which road shall we go to Lod?" And she replies, "Galilean fool! Did not the sages say, 'Do not talk too much with a woman.' You should have said, 'By which to Lod?'"³⁸ She did not suffer fools or hypocrites gladly. Daughter and husband of rabbis, a woman with sharp rabbinic learning, known as someone who once learned three hundred traditions in one day from three hundred different masters,³⁹ she engages in learned argument with sages and apostates alike, but she is not accorded the status of either disciple or colleague. She is an anomaly in the rabbinic world.

The most famous story of Beruriah is also the most heartbreaking. It is told in the margins of another story about her husband, R. Meir, and her unnamed sister. R. Meir had gone to Rome at Beruriah's request to redeem her sister from a brothel, to which the Romans had consigned her when they sentenced their father to death. At the end of the story, we are told that when Meir returned, he left for Babylonia, "because of the Beruriah incident." That Beruriah incident is not narrated in the Talmud, but Rashi, in his marginal gloss to the Talmud, brings down the following tradition, whether folk or rabbinic we do not know:

"And some say because of the Beruriah incident:" One time she mocked what the sages said: "Women are frail of mind." He (R. Meir, said to her: "By your life! in the end, you will admit that they are right!" He ordered one of his students to tempt her to sin. And he (the student) propositioned her for a long time, until she finally agreed. When the matter became known to her, she strangled herself, while R. Meir fled because of the disgrace.⁴⁰

This is the only instance known to us of Rashi's bringing down a tradition that is not attested anywhere else. (THIS IS MY CLAIM – BUT IS IT TRUE?) We believe that this story was considered so horrific that it was suppressed in written form and only passed down orally, until Rashi wrote it down in the 11th century, about five hundred years after the closing of the talmudic text.

What makes the story so horrific, we believe, is R. Meir's betrayal of Beruriah.⁴¹ A rabbinic sage was willing to have his wife violate the most sacred bonds of marriage and transgress the divine commandment against adultery in order to prove the validity of the sages' words. What misplaced loyalty! A scholar of folklore has suggested that the story is entirely fictional, based on parallel legends circulating in the ancient world.⁴² If so, it may have been the sages' way of killing off the threat that Beruriah, a learned woman, represented to their entire system.

We would now like to suggest another, perhaps even more controversial reading of the story, refocusing our attention on the rabbinic tradition over which Beruriah and Meir argue, namely, that "women are frail of mind." In context, it is evident that "frailness of mind" signifies women's inability to resist sexual temptation. Because of our sympathy for Beruriah as a victim of her husband's machinations against her, it may be hard to acknowledge that Beruriah is her own worst enemy. She denies that she is capable of being seduced, as any average woman might be. She had sought a place among the intellectual elite of her time. In order to prove herself, she feels she needs to be a "man." She needs to prove that the patriarchal construction of feminine characteristics, such as fickleness or "frailness of mind," do not play any part in her psychological make-up.

Is Beruriah's struggle personal or ideological? Is it an attempt to prove that she is unlike other daughters of Eve, who could be seduced by the alluring promises of the snake? Or is her mocking the sages' teaching an attempt to create a precedent for how the world should rightly perceive her sex? Ironically, it is Beruriah's very failure to overcome temptation – her "frailness of mind" – that boomerangs on her.

One way of reading the end of the story, Beruriah's suicide, is to understand that her breaking point occurs at the moment when she is forced to admit her frailness to her husband. She did not commit suicide at the moment that the sexual act was over, as did R. Hiyya, who burned himself immediately upon sinning. If we read the talmudic phrase, "when it became known to her," as "when it became known" [HL: CAN YOU FIND A DIFFERENCE OF VERSIONS among various Talmudic MS? OTHERWISE, THIS BLAMING THE VICTIM IS HARD TO JUSTIFY.] then the story shifts its meaning considerably. Rather than killing herself over Meir's betrayal of her, she kills herself when the matter became public. Perhaps she was capable of coping with a sense of personal failure, but not with the publicized version. Coping with the shame of having her weakness revealed to her husband was more than Beruriah could endure, and she committed suicide.

What we see in the story is how a patriarchal construction of gender difference was internalized by Beruriah to the point of self-denial and complete psychological break-down. Her internalization of these mores caused her to feel the need to prove both to herself and to the world that a woman could be as scholarly as a man without falling into sexual impropriety. At the same time, the many stories about men and sexual temptation suggest that men's sexual desire presented no hindrance to their joining the spiritual and intellectual elite. R. Akiva could chase up the date palm after a beautiful girl and not stand accused of "frailness of mind," because male sexuality is no threat to the male world. Beruriah, standing closer to R. Hiyya in this regard, required an asexual passport into the world of scholarship, a passport that was a negation of her human nature. Tragically, no amount of proving herself sexually repressed could have gained Beruriah full admittance to the rabbinic elite.

The Biblical Leah, and her kabbalistic counterpart among the partzufim, did not fall victim to the Beruriah complex. Even though Leah, coming from the world of Binah, the highest "feminine" world, is related to a "masculine" mode of being, this did not render her susceptible to the Beruriah complex. Leah never tried to prove herself asexual. Quite the opposite. The Leah archetype joins together two wholly different orientations. On the one hand, Leah is an intellectual, i.e. from the sefirah of Binah, but on the other hand, she is the sexual agent in the story. Her loftiness and her spiritual independence lead her to demand the same rights afforded to men.

She refuses to internalize values constructed so as to restrict her freedom and her desires. The Ari thus limits the rule that "women have weak minds," and argues that it applies primarily to the Rachel archetype. Leah's mind, he comments, is not weak at all: "Only the mind (da'at) of Rachel is part of the mystery of 'women have weak minds,' as we have often explained."⁴³

According to the Ari, the "weak mind" is characteristic of the lower female partzuf, whose mores and values men can easily understand. This is not the case with Leah. We have seen already how Leah initiates intimacy with Jacob – how just one look at her wet eyes is enough to disarm him both emotionally and sexually. Jacob realizes that the Leah archetype implies a spiritual, sexual and intellectual freedom, which threatens his status. He therefore tries to push this figure into the margins of society. From this orientation comes the midrash that Leah is first engaged to the much maligned older brother, Esau, and then she becomes the hated and rejected wife of the younger brother, Jacob. Her

provocative behavior evokes the rabbis' not so subtle suggestion that she may be a prostitute. The Ari took this one stage further and recognized in Leah the archetype of the greatest of all prostitutes – Lilith.

Chapter 14: Doubt and Sexual Failing

In the name of the Baal Shem Tov: One should say the following poem before going to sleep. “Certain is His name, Certain is His fame” (Ha’vadai shmo, ken teheelato – and this is useful for chasing away demons, spirits, and Lilith from him who says it.⁴⁴

In hasidic tradition, this charm is attributed to the founder of the movement. Its purpose is to chase Lilith and her fellow demons away from a sleeping man, for they are liable to mock him in his sleep by arousing him with erotic dreams and sexual transgressions. The repeated words are meant to inspire confidence, conviction and certainty in whoever utters them before falling into the mysterious and uncertain world of sleep. “Certain is His name, certain is His fame” is a line taken from the liturgical poem “And all believe” (V’khol ma’aminim), recited during the Days of Awe. The significance is clear: doubt will turn illicit, whereas certainty can deliver us from every impropriety.

Lilith can grasp a person who suffers from doubt more readily than someone who has certainty. According to the hasidic masters, the Hebrew word for doubt, *safek*, has the same numerical value as Amalek (240). In Hasidism, Amalek is the internal enemy who causes nocturnal emissions (*keri*). Doubt cools (*mekareret*) a man’s attachment to the sacred, and so the fire in his soul gets channeled into less holy waters. Amalek is perceived in hasidic thought as the cause of both doubt and sexual arousal, which leads to spilling the seed.

Lilith represents longing for the “other woman,” with whom there can be no acceptable family tie, only an illicit connection. Lilith is the “forbidden fruit” that attracted Adam. This is why Lilith remains both seductive and dangerous. Eve, the legal wife, the housewife, the mother of children, is linked to certainty. She represents stability, continuity of the family dynasty, and the safe place one can always come home to. Lilith, on the other hand, is the unpredictable woman. She is the unknown, or doubt in its broadest sense. Hence, the charm of certainty “chases Lilith away,” because it imprints certitude and psychological stability on whoever utters it. It is like an Eastern mantra, which moves one from conscious to unconscious awareness. Thus it protects a person at the deepest levels – even in those parts of himself to which he has no direct access.

The charm might be thought of as an oxygen tank for those diving into the world of dreams, but who do not want to be spiritually awake to the unknown depths of their souls. They prefer to be spiritually asleep. In order to remain anchored during this sleep-state, such souls demand a safe place to which they can retreat and survive. On the other hand, when we do not experience this powerful inner need to fortify ourselves with words of certainty, then we may be feeling more secure in ourselves, in a place where doubt does not threaten us. When we are indeed spiritually awake, then we are capable of containing the dangers of uncertainty and profound doubt.⁴⁵ Lilith represents the negative force threatening the sleeping, unconscious dreamer. Someone in a state of spiritual alertness is quite capable of integrating her. This is why the mantra of certainty “chases Lilith away” from a sleeping person, whereas a person who is awake does not need such a mantra.

Lilith, as we have said, causes sleeping people to loosen their grip on reality, fall into fantasy, and spill their seed. The first man in the Jewish tradition to spill his seed, and incur the wrath of God, was Er, Judah’s firstborn son. Er (in Hebrew, “awake”) is named after the waking state. We need to delve more deeply into the character of Er in order to better understand the connection between Lilith’s powers, which are characterized by sexual failing, and the fact of her connection to doubt and uncertainty.

In Genesis, we are told that Er was the husband of Tamar, but that “Er was displeasing to the LORD, and the LORD killed him.” It was a brother-in-law’s duty to marry his brother’s widow in order to produce offspring who would carry on the dead brother’s name. But Onan, the next brother in line, “knowing that his seed would not count as his, let it go to waste whenever he joined with his brother’s wife, so as not to provide offspring for his brother. What he did was displeasing to the LORD, and He took his life also” (Gen. 38:7-8) The Torah does not tell us the exact nature of Er’s sin, but, based on a comparison with his brother Onan, who spilled his seed on the earth and was killed, the Rabbis claimed that both brothers shared the same dishonorable trait. “Why did Er destroy his seed? So that she (Tamar) would not get pregnant, which might destroy her beauty.”⁴⁶ He doesn’t want his wife to get pregnant, because he does not want her to look worn-out and so cease to arouse him sexually. He associates pregnancy and birth with a lessening of sexual magnetism, and he wants to be constantly aroused.

Er’s name means that he constantly strives to keep awake. We might conclude that he fears sleep and the loss of control that sleep represents. He fears Lilith’s world, the unconscious world of nightmares and dreams, which might ignite erotic fires in other places over which he has no control.

The name Er also has another meaning, connected to the verb *l’arair*, to appeal or undermine. When one takes a legal case to the court of appeals, it means that there is some doubt as to the truth of the verdict. Thus, Er is awake as a skeptic. He does not accept things at face value. Such doubt jerks people awake. They start to ask questions. But it can also upset a person’s equilibrium, leading to feelings of inner exhaustion, apathy, and coldness. Then doubt becomes an obstacle and Lilith’s demonic powers take control.

So, Er is subject to Lilith on both counts – fear of the unconscious connected with sleep, and fear of uncertainty, connected with waking reality. His attempt to control Tamar by spilling his seed is a turning away from pregnancy and birth, which are characterized, according to the Mei HaShiloah, by their hiddenness and uncertainty:

For every birth comes only out of concealment and forgetfulness, just as no seed can grow unless it first decomposes in the ground and rots. So it is, too, with the drop of life that comes down from the brain – it cannot cause birth until it first materializes and becomes corporeal in human seed. For this is the moment when human consciousness stops and is forgotten. And, if a person would constantly maintain awareness and consciousness of his Creator, he could never come to the state of concealment and forgetfulness that allows birth to occur. Therefore Er....did not want to destroy this. This is the meaning of “he did not want to destroy her beauty.”⁴⁷

While the Mei haShiloah seeks to characterize Er as a religious seeker, we would suggest that Er wants to remain awake to reality, because he does not have a basic confidence in it. Instead of bravely entering the uncertainty of the night, as the Baal Shem Tov recommends, Er prefers to maintain his illusory stance of total consciousness and control. He attempts to create a situation in which Tamar will always remain an alluring virgin. By spilling his seed and completing neither the sexual act nor their bargain as husband and wife, he treats her essentially as the prostitute she will later impersonate.⁴⁸ This way, he never stops desiring her.

According to the Baal Shem Tov, to contend with his unconscious, man must dive into the world of dreams (albeit with an oxygen tank). Inner certitude – “Certain is His name, certain is His fame,” – does not contradict the mysterious. In fact, a person is enabled to dive more fully into himself or herself through such protection. Pay attention to the poem’s phrasing: “Certain is His name” – that is, the

certainty is ascribed to the name; to name is to be certain. The certainty one needs to safely enter the world of the unconscious is contingent upon self-identity. I must first know my name if I am to step into the world of the unknown.⁴⁹ Only with such awareness can the forces inhabiting this world express themselves constructively, without injury. Then I will be capable of contending with Lilith in a positive way. I can also allow myself to encounter another, more subtle Lilith, than the one I am habituated to fearing.

The mantra of certainty can be used by any true student of the Baal Shem Tov's teachings, as a small raft upon which to traverse the immense sea of the unconscious without drowning. This certainty within uncertainty is the real waking state – the ability to be both awake and in a state of reverie. The opposite direction is represented in the figure of Er, who turns out to be “evil,”⁵⁰ precisely because he is incapable of transforming bad into good. This is why he spills his seed and “gives birth to demons” – they are the demons in his soul, his unresolved fears. Er does not have the spiritual strength it takes to unveil the humanity that every demon conceals.

In his book, *Mei HaShiloah*, the Rebbe of Ishbitz teaches us that Er is the archetype of one who is afraid to enter uncertain situations, or, as he calls them, “doubts.” Jacob likewise, according to the *Mei HaShiloah*, was always trying to follow well-trodden paths in his spiritual life, in order to avoid the darkness of uncertainty. According to the *Mei HaShiloah*, the story of Er, comes to teach his grandfather Jacob, quite explicitly, what happens when you try to steer clear from all doubt:

“Jacob wanted to live peacefully” (REFERENCE)- this means that he wanted to stay away from any deed that would put him into a doubtful situation. This, however, is not the Holy Blessed One's desire for this world. God therefore showed him – see who “shall issue from your loins” (Gen. 35:11), since he (Er) also guarded himself from any type of deed that brings loss, except that he did so on the physical plane.... for Jacob had the same lack as Er did, except that Jacob's lack was in the service of God. He protected himself so as not to destroy the beauty of his service (of God).⁵¹

Just as Er was concerned about “destroying his wife's beauty, so too, says the *Mei HaShiloah*, Jacob was concerned not to destroy the beauty of his spiritual service. The *Mei HaShiloah* goes on to connect such loss of beauty with “concealment and forgetfulness,” since in every birth experience, creativity and fertility are necessarily associated with “‘destruction of beauty’ – as we quoted above – “no seed can grow unless it first decomposes in the ground and rots.” Because Jacob fears the unknown in his own soul, he prefers certitude, although this is not necessarily God's will for Jacob, which he could realize were he to contemplate the story of Er, his descendant.⁵²

According to the *Zohar*, it is for these very reasons that Jacob fears marrying Leah. Leah emanates uncertainty. He prefers, in the words of the *Zohar*, “to stay attached to what he understands”⁵³ – that is, Rachel, whose beauty symbolizes clarity of consciousness. Jacob's aversion to Leah's tender and mysterious eyes demonstrates his fear of the unknown. Entering the darkness of uncertainty implies leaving his housewife, Rachel, behind. Only by entering into the darkness can one know or understand Leah's fertility and creativity; but this, the *Zohar* says, is precisely what frightens Jacob.

In this respect, the idea that both Leah and Lilith come from the sefirah of Binah is very significant. One of the most fascinating names the *Zohar* gives to Binah is “the place that stands in question.”⁵⁴ Binah challenges a person to study, investigate and ask questions. Hence, a person may savor their attachment to the Divine when faced with those ultimate questions which can never be answered.

The Zohar unequivocally maintains that the people of Israel was spiritually incapable of asking the questions that emerge from Binah. This inability caused them to seek out quick and easy answers, such as the golden calf.⁵⁵ Those who made the calf said: "This is your god O Israel." The Zohar points out that the words "this" (eileh)⁵⁶ and "god" (elohim) have the same letters, and the two extra letters in elohim can be used to spell "who is this?" (mi eileh). The Zohar teaches us that, without the element of wonder, we are left only with conclusions. This is just like removing the two letters that form the word "mi" from "elohim," so that we are left with the letters that create the word "eileh" – turning the unknown into the transparent – "eileh elohekha Yisrael" – this is your god, O Israel."⁵⁷

When we cannot face the question that disturbs us, then each of our doubts becomes a devilish monster; "creating demons," says the Kabbalah. Both Er and Jacob share in this dynamic; Er symbolizes fear of the unknown, and Jacob suffers deep anxiety when faced with unresolved questions. Following out the Ari's suggestion that Leah is Lilith, we might say that Jacob's impulse to run away from Leah's taunts is what enables him to imagine her as the demonic figure of Lilith. He turns his doubts into unwanted strangers trespassing upon his soul, and these strangers are only entertained at night, in his dreams, when they become capricious and demonic. Because Leah symbolizes the uncertain quest for understanding, she belongs to the sefirah of Binah; the questions she asks really have no answers. Her provocative presence, and the uncertainty it intimates, causes Jacob great discomfort, for he cannot live under the sign of the question mark. He relates to the one who calls his attention to the unresolved expanses of his soul as a terrifying and demonic being.

Chapter 15: Leah's Tefillin

In the Lurianic writings, the figures of Rachel and Leah are linked to the mysteries of tefillin. Tefillin are composed of two "houses" – black leather boxes containing portions from the Torah. One "house" is worn on the left arm, facing the heart, while the other is worn on the top of the forehead, facing the brain. In rabbinic terminology, woman is also called a man's "house" or "household," so it is only natural that, in kabbalistic thought, the two houses of tefillin came to symbolize the two partzufim – Rachel and Leah. It is not difficult to guess how the two women are identified with the two houses: Rachel, the more practical and housewifely is identified with the arm tefillin, facing the heart, while Leah, the more intellectual, is associated with the head tefillin, facing the brain. Rachel is represented by the actual tefillin of the arm, the black box that has the portions from the Torah in it, while Leah is represented only by the knot formed by the two leather straps, which is shaped like the letter dalet.⁵⁸

This kabbalistic image is based upon two rabbinic sources: one maintains that God, also, wears tefillin;⁵⁹ the second relates to the dialogue in Exodus 33: 18-23 between Moses and God, in which Moses asks to see God's face, but God will only allow him to see His back. Moses hides himself, at God's command, in a cleft in the rock when the glory of God passes over. He does not gaze at the face of God, and only after God passes is it permissible for Moses to look upon his back. But the Rabbis, with their very literal approach, try to determine exactly what Moses saw when he looked upon God's back. Their answer: "'Then I will take My hand away and you will see My back' – R. Hanna bar Bizna said in the name of R. Shimon Hasida: This teaches us that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed Moses the knot of the tefillin."⁶⁰

If the Shekhinah in its lower aspect – Rachel – is the hand tefillin, but in its higher aspect – Leah – is the knot of the head tefillin, then we can say that the peak of Moses's spiritual realization is the revelation of partzuf Leah. Hence, the aspect of the divine universe at which Moses arrives is Leah's face in the Shekhinah. This is enormously significant. Given that Moses' s seal is impressed on the entire Torah, the level of consciousness he achieves must then have tremendous influence on the Torah's essential nature,⁶¹ as we will presently see.

According to the Zohar, Jacob did not merit to assimilate the higher Leah partzuf. He preferred to love Rachel, who was on a lower level (we recall that Rachel's head only goes up to Leah's feet),⁶² and more easily mastered by him. Leah was beyond his grasp and Jacob was afraid where he could not understand. Unlike Jacob, however, Moses merits attaining the level of Leah, according to R. Hayyim Vital.

And this is what the Rabbis said concerning the verse, "The effect (ekev in Heb., also means heel) of humility is fear of the LORD" (Prov. 22:4) – just as humility becomes a heel to her sandal, so fear becomes a crown for her head. For humility is the aspect of Leah. And since Moses achieved this and reached the fiftieth gate of Binah, he is called "very humble" (Num. 12:3), because he reached the place of Leah.⁶³

Leah expresses the character trait of humility, while Rachel expresses fear. In the Torah, Moses is regarded as the most humble of people, leading the Ari to conclude that Moses achieved the spiritual intuition of Leah – humility – which enabled him to receive the Torah. Moses perceived the partzuf Leah of the Godhead – the knot of God's tefillin. He perceived higher feminine reality's connection to the sacred, whereas Jacob could not. Jacob only sensed how fear and the sacred complement each other – how, in the words of Proverbs, "a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised" (Prov. 31:30) – but not

how Leah, who demands equality and expression of the whole of her being, including her sexuality, could possibly belong to the sacred. For Jacob, Leah is far from humility, and closer to audacity, perhaps even to licentiousness.

In order to finally understand Leah, Jacob needed to experience a serious metamorphosis, including changing his name from Jacob to Israel. This name change reflects an archetypal process of transformation that the archetypal image of Jacob needs to undergo before it can face the spiritual challenge that Leah presents. “Because these (...aspects of partzuf Leah) were concealed, and were not revealed to Jacob before he was called Israel as we explained earlier. Only then (i.e., when he was named Israel) could he realize the entire partzuf of Ze’eir Anpin, as is well-known.”⁶⁴ The name “Jacob” represents only the diminished aspect of the masculine partzuf, while the name “Israel,” represents fullness, which is the mature figure of Ze’eir Anpin. This is why changing Jacob’s name to Israel enabled him to understand where he had formerly not been capable of understanding, and to accept Leah instead of rejecting and hating her.

In the Lurianic writings, it is Moses, the giver of the Torah, who sees the knot of God’s head tefillin, and receives spiritual enlightenment from this revelation of partzuf Leah. The revelation of the feminine received by Moses is that the real meaning of humility is to be truthful about who you are. When people fail to admit things about themselves, they become sly, the opposite of humility, which entails simplicity and straightforwardness. A humble person is capable of saying that he possesses positive qualities in the same direct way that he is capable of confessing his failings. This is why Moses was capable of writing all of his praises in the Torah, including the fact that he was “a very humble man, more so than any other man on earth” (Num. 12:3). This, too, was said simply, without craft, without hypocrisy, i.e. humbly. In the Babylonian Talmud, there is a list of many things that ceased to exist the day the Temple was destroyed, or the day a certain tzaddik died. The Talmud tells us that the amora R. Yosef said to the man who had quoted the mishna before him that he should not say “from the time that Rabbi died, humility was abolished,” – since he, i.e. R. Yosef, still lived, and he is a humble person. The amora, R. Nahman, went on to say that people should not say that fear of God was also abolished, since he, R. Nahman, is still alive, and he fears God. R. Nahman of Breslov learns from this talmudic text that humility does not mean that I hide my merits. Quite the opposite – humility means my ability to accept my merits without being haughty about them, as Moses did.⁶⁵

Moses received the attribute of humility from partzuf Leah. This implies that Moses’s humility is connected to his ability to perceive the role of Leah within the divine image, and to recognize that, what Jacob saw as brazenness, was in fact her modesty. Leah was faithful enough to herself to seek out the proper place for herself in the world. Unfortunately, the society in which she functioned saw her as “someone who goes out,” like a prostitute.

We are arguing that patriarchy is forged in the image of Jacob. But Moses, in Lurianic Kabbalah, represents a different approach. He looks at Leah eye to eye. The root of Moses’s soul comes from partzuf Leah, and the highest level of his perception of the Divine is rooted in supernal Leah. He recognizes that Leah’s psychological vulnerability is an expression of great humility, and so his entire teachings are sealed with the image of her partzuf.⁶⁶ The Kabbalah sees Jacob and Moses as two separate beings symbolizing one essence. Jacob represents the external, while Moses (and Israel also) represents the internal: “Moses from the inside, Jacob from the outside.”⁶⁷

According to the Ari, the purpose of the Torah that Moses brought down from heaven was to bring the entire people to a sublime state, so that those insights Moses had merited to receive would become

accessible to everyone. In the Lurianic writings, the “Torah of Moses” is read as an effort to bring society to a state in which Leah can wholly belong. Lilith became a demon only because she could not fit into Adam’s patriarchal paradise. The children of Israel in the generation of the wilderness were not so high as Moses as to be able to receive Leah-Lilith into the realm of the sacred. The general level of Israel, as the Ari explains, were souls from the lower, Rachel partzuf. Moses, however, heralds a new era. He has a message for a simplistic, patriarchal, Jacobic society, a message that is geared toward changing that society step by step in order that it reach a new state in which it can truly answer to its name – Israel. The Torah’s goal, conceived in this way, is to change the Jacobic world, to expand it, and make it more flexible – more Israeli. When this happens, Leah-Lilith will no longer be relegated to a state of separation and alienation, and she will no longer be perceived as a demon. She will be seen for what she is – an essential part of all women. As long as Lilith is playing the role of the demon, she is murderous and jealous, and she seeks to kill Eve’s children. The moment she is liberated, however, she no longer has any need to usurp Eve or Rachel’s place. On that day, all aspects of women’s experience will be fully expressed. and Lilith can return to the Garden of Eden.

We find an example of this of revaluing of Leah over Rachel in the writings of the Ari, where he offers his interpretation of the sin of the golden calf. The Torah tells us that, after the sin of the golden calf, God wanted to create a new people out of Moses. In the Kabbalah, “erasing the people” means destroying its root in the world of Atzilut, or, as the Ari puts it, “to abolish partzuf Rachel.” God wanted to establish a new people from partzuf Leah, who would be the spiritual descendants of Moses. However, it was Moses himself who halted this plan:

The intention of the Supreme Emanator was to annihilate the entire reality of the lower wife of Ze’eir Anpin – Rachel – and to make a new wife for Ze’eir Anpin out of the aspect of the higher Dalet – Leah – which would have ten complete sefirot. As the rabbis have already stated, this blessing was realized in Moses’s seed, as it says, ‘And the children of Rehavya were very many’ (I Chron. 23:17) – more than six hundred thousand.⁶⁸

But Moses did not want this, and God listened to him, and kept His word and the word of His servant Moses. Both (intentions) were realized. He did not destroy the lower Rachel, while higher Leah, which was at that time one solitary point, He developed into ten sefirot, making her a complete partzuf, but not bringing her back (to the) face to face (relationship). And this is the secret of ‘and you shall see My back’- this is the knot of the Tefillin that was fixed. However, “My face,” which means returning face to face with Ze’eir Anpin, must not be seen” (Ex. 3:23), this can not be.⁶⁹

Interpreting this quotation requires a review of human history until this time. At first, femininity belonged to the Leah partzuf, since Lilith, who is Leah, was the first Eve. Then Lilith flees, and the second Eve, who is also Rachel, becomes the mainstay of the household. Rachel is the dominant wife and Lilith is perceived as a demonic figure. Now, after the sin of the golden calf, God suggests turning back the course of history. He is prepared to erase partzuf Rachel, and build a new society based exclusively upon partzuf Leah. However, Leah herself (represented by her human counterpart, Moses), does not agree to this plan. Rather than the erasure of Rachel, she awaits a reunion with her sister and a healing of women’s divided self.

In the Zohar, the sin of the golden calf is associated with human beings’ inability to bear the spiritual state of questioning and uncertainty. Those who worshipped the calf said “eileh elohekha Yisrael” – “This is your god, o Israel” (Ex. 32:4), eliminating the letters mi from the word elohim, which is composed of the same letters as mi eleh (“who are these”)?⁷⁰ The ideal concept of the divine assumes uncertainty,

thus making faith the human being's facing of the Divine unknown. Divinity perplexes man, who constantly seeks to understand it with his rational mind. The sin of the golden calf is the attempt to escape from the unknown to the comforting bosom of the familiar – "This is your god, o Israel."

In patriarchal society, the housewife, Eve or Rachel, will always be in the place that men deem fitting for her. She poses no threat. On the other hand, Leah, with her soft eyes, broadcasts threatening messages; facing her, a man must have courage to face the unknown, without needing to escape to the familiar bosom of that which he already knows. Rachel symbolizes the exact opposite – the need for boundedness and fortification in a revealed, and familiar universe.

With this Lurianic paradigm in mind, we can appreciate that religion itself can become an obstacle to a believer's facing the unknown. This is why R. Tzadok HaCohen of Lublin maintains that the sin of the golden calf was an attempt to hide behind the commandments of the Torah and to make them into a statue and a graven image. If we take the Torah and see it as a closed system of familiar rules, which are not open to the Infinite, then we are making the Torah itself an idol:

For this is the entire Torah: that there should be no fence or known boundary, which is also called a statue and a picture...but...they wanted something tangible and accessible, and they therefore eliminated the face of the ox from the divine chariot – meaning that they made its picture tangible, making the observance of the commandments like the harnessing of an ox to its yoke, which becomes their primary focus, since they do not perceive anything deeper. And this need for a statue and a picture in order to grasp the Holy One or His Torah is idol worship. For just as God is infinite and has no end, so His Torah is infinite and has no end.⁷¹

In R. Tzadok's remarkable refocusing, God wants a people who are constantly open to questions and to wonderment, which, like His Torah, is infinite and has no end. To make this point, R. Tzadok reverses the import of his talmudic source concerning ox-like observance of the commandments, where this was seen as a positive value. According to B. Avodah Zarah 5b: "It is taught from the House of Elijah: A person should always be towards the Torah as an ox to the yoke and an ass to its load." But this is what R. Tzadok calls "making a calf out of Torah."

It is our characterization of Leah as the higher partzuf of the Shekhinah – open to wonder and uncertainty – which has brought us to this point of understanding the role of Torah and faith in God's unfolding plan. Now that we have become familiar with the characterization of Lilith in Jewish thought, and with the nature of the bond between her and Leah – both in the Torah, and as the higher partzuf of the Shekhinah – we need to answer a few questions that present themselves in the wake of our discussion: What is the meaning of the change from Jacob into Israel, and what is it that finally enables him to understand and accept Leah? What is the meaning of the change that Leah-Lilith undergoes, from a murderous, demonic, evil creature into someone who protects Rachel, as Moses did? How does the Ari think that the Torah manages to create the means by which Lilith will be liberated from her excommunicated state and returned to the circle of sacred legitimacy? These questions will be addressed in the next two gates, where we examine the processes leading to Lilith's redemption, as they are described in both the Torah and Lurianic Kabbalah. The next gate will focus on dynamic processes rather than static situations. We will be looking at changes undergone by man, symbolized by Jacob, and also at changes undergone by woman. Through myriad reincarnations, woman gradually takes leave of her divided self and paves the way for her eventual redemption.

FOOTNOTES

1. Bereshit Rabba 47, 6: "Reish Lakish said: The patriarchs are the divine chariot." See also in the Tanya, which was written by R. Shneur Zalman of Lyadi (Section one, chap. 39): "This is what is meant by the sages' comment that the patriarchs are the divine chariot: that all their limbs were holy and separate from this world, and they were a vehicle for the Divine Will all the days of their lives."
2. Sha'ar Hamitzvot, on the mitzvah of Shiluach Haken. See also Sha'ar HaKavanot, Discourses on the Amidah, 2, explanation of the word Eloheinu.
3. An interesting viewpoint on the conflict in the feminine soul between these two identities can be found in the myth of Eros and Psyche, specifically in the analysis of this myth by Erich Neumann. REFERENCE In the saga of Eros and Psyche, which describes the course of development of the female, Aphrodite gives Psyche four tasks. The first one is to clean a giant stack of seeds mixed with garbage. Aphrodite, who both fears and loathes Psyche, throws the following dart at her: "I cannot imagine how a repulsive handmaiden like yourself could ever allure her lovers, other than by working very hard and diligently, in order to satisfy their desires..." Erich Neumann approaches this myth using depth psychology, and he notes that "the conflict between Psyche and Aphrodite takes place within the domain of the feminine sphere", and is no longer a "conflict between individuation....and female motherhood whose chains the individual seeks to free himself of." The struggle between Psyche, who expresses a femininity that has developed to the point of equal consciousness, and Aphrodite, who wishes to imprison her within the borders established for woman in patriarchal society, is a conflict that takes place for all women. In our terms, between partzuf Rachel, which seeks to secure her position through the simple labor of her hands, and partzuf Leah and its shadow image – Lilith – which seeks to break out of the state of back-to-back relationships (which in the Psyche-Eros myth is expressed by intercourse in the dark, when it is forbidden for Psyche to see who her lover is), and to achieve equality in diversity, face to face.
4. Rachel, who was the housewife (akeret habayit – usually understood as the term for a barren wife) – was the mainstay (ikar) of Jacob's household, as it says (Gen. 46:19) "the children of Rachel, the wife of Jacob" (Bamidbar Rabbah, 14, 7).
5. See for example Jesse Rapport's book, Feminism and its Opponents, the chapter entitled "Women are Motivated by their Emotions," p. 53. After serious hesitation, we decided to use the word "intellectual" to describe someone with mohin. We feel the need to clarify that in our opinion, modern language does not have a term with a meaning as rich as that of mohin in Lurianic Kabbalah. Mohin means the light intended for the brain. In Lurianic Kabbalah, in every world, level, configuration, or point of time, there is a slightly different definition of mohin. Notwithstanding, we have chosen the word "intellectual," to describe abstract, conceptual, pure thinking.
6. R. Isaac of Homil, Chana Ariel (Berdichev 5678), Par'shat Va'etchanan, p.24
7. The Baal HaTurim, cited above, understands softness as love-talk. Soft words are words of love and kindness, so that "soft eyes" would imply eyes that express longing and desire for intimacy. The Baal Haturim, true to his usual form, is very terse. He leaves us to understand the meaning of his interpretation.

8. In her book *Women Above*, devoted to women's sexual fantasies, Nancy Friday describes how the publishers originally reacted to her manuscript (pp. 15-17). At first they were very curious to see something usually not accessible to them. They later reacted aggressively, making comments like "I threw your book on the other side of the room," or even, "I wanted to kill you." She notes that female editors did not react any differently than male editors in terms of the hate they expressed towards the accounts of the real nature of women's sexual fantasies.

9. If we re-arrange the order of the letters in her name, Rebecca comes from the root b"k"r" (cattle). On this association, see the Radak in his commentary on Jer. 46:21: "Like fattened bullocks – like calves waiting to be fattened up, so they sit and eat and drink...marbek, [like Rebecca], means fattening up...just as our Rabbis said, "they took her in for fattening up (ribka)." Rebecca is linked with animal life-force. She wants to impart this to her son Jacob, who is instinctively repulsed by this side of nature.

10. "That (people) would say: "This was the condition – the older one will go to the older one, the younger one will go to the younger one." And she would cry and pray: "May it be your will that I not fall into the lot of a wicked man" (Bereshit Rabba 70, 16).

11. Bereshit Rabba, 60, 5: "Reish Lakish said: The daughters of idol worshippers guard the place of their virginity, and are wanton elsewhere. This one, however, was a virgin in both the place of her virginity, and no man had known her elsewhere." The wantonness from which they are excluding her is anal intercourse.

12. The JPS translation of va-tipol as "alighted from the camel," misses the drama in the moment.

13. Yalkut Shimoni, ?? entry 109; "Smitten by wood" is a talmudic way of describing a woman whose hymen was injured, as Rashi says in B.Ketubot 11a: "smitten by wood – that she was struck by wood in that place... (she and others like her) if they marry, they do not lose their ketubah," i.e. they are still considered virgins. It should be noted that according to the opinion of R. Shimon and R. Yossi in the Talmud, (B. Yevamot 60a), she who was struck by wood is not considered a total virgin, as the high priest, who is obligated to marry a virgin, cannot, in R. Shimon's opinion marry her. The above-mentioned midrash concerning Rebecca's virginity also enters into a halachic discussion about she who was struck by wood, and brings the opinion of the Rabbis who held that she who was struck by wood is not considered a virgin: "'And the girl was exceedingly beautiful, a virgin...' we learned: A maiden who was injured by wood receives a ketubah of two hundred, in R. Meir's opinion. The Sages say that she receives one hundred. R. Hanina in the name of R. Eliezer says that R. Meir's reasoning is (because it is written: 'And no man knew her,' (which implies) that if she was injured by wood, she is still a virgin. The Sages base their opinion (by emphasizing the word) 'virgin' – if her hymen was broken by a piece of wood, she is no longer a virgin." (Bereshit Rabba, 60, 5). This is probably an echo of the midrashic tradition quoted in the Yalkut Shimoni which says that Rebecca was injured by wood.

14. In addition to the two points mentioned in this midrash, there are many other similarities between the cases of Rebecca and Tamar: 1. Both of them come from outside local family circles, that is, they are both "outsiders." 2. They are both assertive: (Tamar initiates the encounter with Judah; Rebecca is responsible for Jacob's deception of Isaac). 3. Both of them appear at critical points in the continuing saga of the Abraham/ Isaac/Jacob dynasty, and the story develops positively only because of their presence at the right place and at the right moment. 4. Both of them are described as seers, while the men do not see (Judah doesn't see Tamar, but thinks she is a prostitute, while she sees straight into him. And when Isaac meets Rebecca, the events that occur are described subtly – Rebecca sees Isaac, but

Isaac only sees camels: “And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at evening time, and he lifted up his eyes, and he saw camels coming. And Rebecca lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac” (Gen. 24:62-63). 5. Peretz and Zarach, Tamar’s twin children, are a recapitulation of the story of Jacob and Esau, Rebecca’s twin sons (or, to put it differently, reincarnations of them). Yair Zakovitch noted this point in his article, “The Heel of Jacob,” REFERENCE, and developed it according to his way of understanding. Zerah, who should have been the first-born, is similar to Esau in a few respects. For instance, the midwife ties a scarlet thread on Zerah’s hand (this is the reason he was named Zerah, which is derived from the word *zrihat hashani*, i.e. the rising scarlet), and Esau, too, was red (*adom*), as he is the father of Edom. Jacob, whom the dynasty develops from, is similar to Peretz, who broke forth (*paratz*) and unjustly took the birthright and went on to become the patriarch of the Judean dynasty.

15. Lit. “as the Sages awakened (our attention to)”. For more on the concept of awakening in the Zohar, see Melila Helner-Eshed, “That You Stir Not Up, nor Awake My Love, Until it Please – The Language of Awakening in the Zohar,” (forthcoming) REFERENCE. See also our later discussion of the mystery of Er, Judah’s firstborn.

16. The Zohar refers to M.Kiddushin (4:12), which says: “A man may (be alone in a room) with his mother, and with his daughter, and may sleep close to them. And if they are already grown up, she sleeps in her blanket and he sleeps in his.” The phrase, “a son may be alone with his mother,” does not appear in the mishna, but does in the Gemara (B.Kidushin 60b).

17. Nitzah Abarbanel, *Eve and Lilith* (pp. 14-15, and p. 41), touched on Freud’s analyses of the incest taboo and the Oedipus complex as the factor responsible for the schism between the two aspects of the female image: the loved one, and the one that is despised but desired. See our discussion in the introduction.

18. In the male body, the sefirah of Yesod symbolizes the genitals, and in a woman, it is the womb, as R. Hayyim Vital says elsewhere: (Etz Hayyim, Gate 1, Branch 5): “For in her, yesod is the womb, and the crown is her fleshy apple, which the Rabbis call “the lower part of the intestines.”

19. Etz Hayyim, Gate 38, chapter 2, second edition. In order to understand this subject in terms of the structure of the worlds, see the original, as we have summarized here.

20. C.G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, REFERENCE – check for quote pages 81-92.

21. Michah Ankuri, *And This Forest Has No End*, p. 199. Ankuri illustrates his point with an anecdote from his clinic:

A divorced man would occasionally tell me about a new relationship with a woman, and explain why he had left his previous girlfriend. In one of our conversations he said that he occasionally has feelings of pain and anxiety, accompanied by a hallucination of a huge spider which is holding him by his stomach with tremendous strength. (205. The anxiety and the hallucination that accompany it are the flip side of the Don Juan. He leaves the woman slightly before the spider embraces him with its hug of death. Behind the persona of the successful Don Juan there is a frightened man, whose weakness is fed by the power of the terrible woman (205). We highly recommend the chapter “Shekhina h and Malkhut,” in which Ankuri presents important guidelines for understanding the connection between Depth Psychology and the Kabbalah in the field of female symbolism.

22. Chana Rachel Werbermacher (b. Ludmir 1815 – d. Jerusalem 1892), the daughter of R. Moonish Werbermacher, a Tchnernobler Hasid, was known for her scholarship and extreme piety from the time she was a young girl. She wore tzitzit, and prayed wearing talit and tefillin. When her father died, she said kaddish in his memory and built a synagogue in Ludmir from the money she received from her inheritance. She would give discourses there from behind a curtain so as to conceal herself from her audience. The synagogue of the Maid of Ludmir existed until the time of the Holocaust. There are many legends concerning the figure of Chana Rachel which describe her as a miracle-worker, and many sought her out, including Rabbis and scholars. However, her unusual behavior outraged local Jewish leaders, and the Rebbe of Tchnernobel eventually persuaded her to marry at the age of forty. After that, the number of her followers decreased. In 1858, when she was 43 years old, she divorced her husband and emigrated to Israel. In Israel she continued to conduct a hasidic tish every Shabbat for the traditional third meal, and went to Rachel's grave every New Moon together with a group of women. Yohanan Twersky (whose family name indicates that he comes from the Tchernobel dynasty) wrote a novel about her entitled "The Maid of Ludmir" (Mossad Bialik, no mention of publication date), and the Chan Theater produced a play written by Yossefa Even-Shoshan about her in the late nineties (see the Hasidic Encyclopedia, Mossad Harav Kook, vol. one, p. 627, and the footnotes, for more about her).

23. R. Aaron of Tchernobel is cited in The Hasidic Encyclopedia for pressuring her to stop acting like a hasidic rebbe. However, in Twersky's novel (p. 70), R. Mordechai of Tchernobel, rather than R. Aaron, is credited.

24. Compare the career of Hana Hava Horodetsky of Tchernobel, the daughter of R. Mordechai Twersky of Tchnernobel, lived during almost the exact same years as the Maid of Ludmir (1810-1893). Surprisingly enough, she too is described in the Hasidic Encyclopedia as "having taught Torah interspersed with Kabbalistic teachings...both Hasidim and Hasidic Rebbes sought out her counsel...she received both pitka'ot (slips of paper with petitions and the name(s) of the petitioners that were traditionally given to Hasidic Rebbes) and pidyonot (monetary donations)...her father testified that the Holy Spirit was with her since birth, and her eight brothers said that she was as righteous as they were." If it was R. Mordechai who refused to allow the Maid of Ludmir to function as a hasidic rebbe, then the fact that he himself had a daughter (Hana Hava) whose behavior was very similar to that of Hana Rachel of Ludmir throws a very interesting light on the story.

Hana Hava of Tchernobel was the mother of the Rebbe of Tulna, the founder of a well-known Hasidic dynasty. Chana Bracha Shapira, the mother of R. Kalonomus Kelmish of Piasetsna (the author of Hovav Hatalmidim, Bnei Machshava Tova, Eish Kodesh, etc.) was also a great scholar, wore tzitzit, and also received pitka'ot and pidyonot from Hasidim (see the Hasidic Encyclopedia, p. 626). See Nehemia Polen, translation of her autobiography (forthcoming from JPS)

25. This "inverse blessing" is obviously not common practice in the Jewish world, and it can be assumed that the official Habad institutions would prefer to deny that such a practice exists at all.

The blessing "Who has not made me a woman" is also a thorn in the side of Orthodox Rabbis sensitive to feminist issues. On the one hand, a blessing like this, which is part of the standard version of the prayers, cannot be changed or omitted according to the Orthodox tradition. On the other hand, they cannot accept it. One of us once heard from a certain Rabbi who claimed that when he says the blessing "Who has not made me a woman," his intention is this: "I thank the Lord for not giving me feminine attributes as part of my nature. I am thankful for the opportunity I have received to work on myself spiritually in order that I merit to develop the female sides of my personality." It is clear that as long as

there is no inner model based on traditional sources that could offer a basic change in the way the new reality of women's lives is dealt with, we will be treated to all kinds of silly apologetics of this kind. In our opinion, in Lurianic Kabbalah we find an alternative and dynamic model for understanding the possibilities of women in Jewish culture. In his discourse on the nesira, the myth of the original hermaphroditic creation of the human (man and woman created back to back and then separated) the Ari presents a diagram of a gradual process by which we can map and analyze all the stages in the development of women's status. REFERENCE

In light of this, it seems that the present situation in which women say the blessing "Who has made me according to His will," while men say the blessing "Who has not made me a woman," is no longer acceptable. It is also very unjust, as this blessing contradicts what we said at the outset is the central divine revelation of our time, that of the female voice. It is clear that it is the task of the rabbinical establishment to right this wrong. As long as they procrastinate in doing so, it is incumbent on both men and women, as a sort of "positive commandment relevant to this time in history," to bring pressure on the rabbinical establishment by every legitimate means. It is equally important that women claim their right to serve as rabbis, thereby becoming a part of the halakhic and Torah establishments, so that change will take place within the very fabric of this framework. Until that time, it is our halakhic opinion that a person who feels that, by saying this (possibly insulting) blessing, she is being dishonest to her basic tenets of belief should either omit the blessing "Who has not made me a woman" entirely, or find a creative re-phrasing. The Conservative movement has adopted the traditional form of the women's blessing for both men and women: "who has made me according to your will."

26. R. Hayyim Vital quotes the Zohar: "Supernal Mother (Imma Ila'ah) is called male, as is written in the Zohar parshat Vayechi". (Sha'ar Mamarei Razal – tractate Shabbat).

27. B. Sukkah 52a, translated according to Rashi's commentary.

28. Boyarin, Ch. 5, esp. 165-66.

29. Tzidkat haTzaddik letter 248. See also his Resesei Lailah. letter 13, and Poked Ikarrim, letter 6.

30. B. Berakhot 20a

31. B. Ketubot 17a

32. This is the way that the author of Sefer HaHinukh understood this story (mitzvah 188). He explains that we should not learn from these sages since "they, may their memories be blessed, were like angels, and were always occupied with the Torah and the commandments, and their intentions were as clear to everyone as the sun is bright, and they had no sense of evil in anything due to their intense devotion to the Torah and its commandments. We today, however, may not disregard even a small fence (which protects) these matters, but must rather respect all the distancing mechanisms which the Sages of blessed memory taught us." The deification of the sages of earlier times is useful for the author of the Sefer HaHinukh, as it was for other rabbis, as a means of exempting these stories from the category of those teachings whose intention was to instruct the students to follow in their footsteps and to do as they did. Sefer HaHinukh and similar thinkers sought to present spiritual man as a being indifferent to sensuality. We would like to go down a different path. R. Tzaddok HaCohen of Lublin discusses this matter at length in his book Yisrael Kedoshim (entry 4, opening words "but"). He maintains that it is permissible for someone who is spiritually developed to decide for himself as to the degree of care he needs to exercise in erotic matters insofar as rabbinical decrees are concerned. King Solomon took more

wives than he was permitted to, but his mistake, according to R. Tzaddok, was that he thought that he could do so even in relation to “that which was commanded in the Torah, which applies to all souls, and can never be superceded. This is not the case with rabbinical decrees, for they did not intend their edicts for a person who knows themselves” (see the entire source from R. Tzaddok, who chose to conceal his extremely profound opinion by scholarly debate and many references. In contrast, see Rabbi Y. Hankin’s article , REFER TO TITLE, Dayot no. 3, Feb. 1999, p. 15. He understands this issue differently than R. Tzaddok, seeing it as erotic indifference, which he also attributes to other authorities such as the Ritva and the Maharshal. The truth is that a simple study of their words shows that it is entirely unnecessary to understand them in this fashion. R. Tzaddok’s interpretation is much more complex.

33. R. Wolf of Zhitomer, a student of the Maggid of Mezeritch, in his work Or Hamaier, p. 16. For the expression “most beautiful among women,” see Song of Songs 1:8; 5:9; 6:1. This could be explained in the tradition of the Hassidic contemplative schools as follows: The Shekhinah is the element of beauty that is found amongst women. See also M. Idel, “The Beauty of Woman,” REFERENCE

We will later discuss the story of R. Akiva and the wife of Turnus Rufus, who became R. Akiva’s second wife (see B.Avodah Zarah 20a). According to Lurianic Kabbalah, R. Akiva’s first wife, who was named Rachel, was part of the Eve matrix, while the seductive Roman wife is part, of course, of the mystery of Lilith.

34. Sefer Haredim, entry 99. See also entry 98. The obligation to have sexual relations is derived in the Talmud from the word “times” in Ex. 21:10. See also Shulhan Arukh, Even HaEzer, No. 76, par. 1: “What are her times? Every man is obligated (to have sexual relations) at certain times according to his strength and according to his profession.” “The times for sages” is a talmudic expression which, in its original usage, referred to the frequency recommended for sexual relations between sages and their wives. As the Shulhan Arukh stipulates (there): ‘The time for Sages is once a week, and it is their custom to have sex every Friday night.:

5. Azcari’s use of the word “times” signifies that when one is obligated to be with the first wife, i.e. the Torah, then the “times” are observed intellectually, as spiritual union. Kissing is used as a metaphor for such spiritual union with the Torah. There may also be a sense that the mouth, the bodily organ which is used for study, is also responsible for union.

“The living organ” is the name used to describe the erect male penis in Jewish sources. The source is from Yahel Or, the Gaon of Vilna’s commentary on the Zohar (Vilna 5673, p. 18, column 2). See also Y. Liebes, “On Sabbateism and its Kabbalah,” p. 351, footnote 202. The importance of this is its surprising similarity to the comment of the Maggid of Mezretch on the swaying movements of the body during religious practice, which he compares to mating with the Shechina. See also Liebes ibid. p. 99, and O. Ezrahi, “The Two Cherubs,” footnote 154.

36. As it says in Sefer Hasidim: “‘To love God’ (means) that the soul becomes full of love, and that love is connected to joy, and that joy chases away from his heart the pleasantries of the body and the pleasures of the world. And that joy is so strong and overpowering, that even (the pleasure of) a young man who has not been with his wife for many days, and is full of desire, and has intense gratification when he shoots out his seed like an arrow, is as nothing compared to the intensity of the power of the joy of the love of God.” Sefer Hasidim, No. 300

37. For a survey of the textual traditions, see David Goldblatt, “the Beruriah Traditions,” Journal of Jewish Studies 26 (1975), 68-86.

38. B. Eruvin 53b. The quote from the sages is from M. Avot 1:5, repeated in B. Nedarim 20a.

39. B. Pesachim 62b

40. Rashi on B. Avodah Zarah 18b; the tradition in question is from B. Kiddushin 80a.

41. See Rachel Adler, "The Virgin in the Brothel and Other Anomalies: Character and Context in the Legend of Beruriah," *Tikkun*, vol. 3, no. 6, 28-32, 102-05.

42. A parallel Roman story about the stoic philosopher Secundus testing his mother's virtue was in circulation in various European and Middle Eastern languages. For a description of this and other tales of faithful men and faithless wives, some couched, like this one, as a "chastity wager," see Haim Schwartzbaum, *Studies in Aggadah and Jewish Folklore* (Jerusalem, 1983), 66-71, n. 38.

43. Sha'ar Hakavanot – Drushei HaAmidah (the second discourse, commentary on the word Eloheinu). In spite of what we said here, as is often the case with Lurianic Kabbalah, this rule concerning the weak mind of women is occasionally applicable to other partzufim which are expressions of the feminine, such as Supernal Mother: "During the repetition of the silent Prayer, they both (Ze'ir Anpin and Nukva) ascend into the sefirah of Binah in Imma, but not into her Da'at...the reason being that women's minds (da'at) are weak and therefore bereft of da'at and they can therefore only ascend into the binah of Imma, as she comes from the sefirah of Gevurah of Arikh Anpin, as is well known" (Sha'ar HaKavannot – Drushei Rosh Hashanah, discourse 5).

44. Toldot Yaakov Yosef, Deut.; Keter Shem Tov 6; Sippurey Tzaddikim, Levov 5628, 11; Midrash Rivash Tov, vol. 1, 77.

45. We heard this interpretation from R. Yitzhak Ginsburg.

46. "Displeasing to the LORD" – like the evil of Onan, who spilled his seed. As it says concerning Onan, "and He took his life also" – the death of Onan was like the death of Er. And why did Er destroy his seed? So that she (Tamar) would not get pregnant, which might destroy her beauty." Rashi, based on B. Yevamot 34b. In Jewish tradition, spilling seed is therefore associated with Er as it is with Onan (the source of the word "onanism," which is also the word for masturbation in modern Hebrew).

47. Mei Hashiloah, volume one, parshat Vayeshev, source beginning with the words "Vayehi Er," commenting on Rashi, ad locum, cited above.

48. On the connection between completing or not completing the act and prostitution, consider the Hebrew word gomer (finishes, stops) as the highly symbolic name of the prostitute that God commands the prophet Hosea to marry. This was a symbol of how Israel had been unfaithful to her husband, God, and the Midrash has a very apt comment on this incident: "The Holy One, blessed be He, said, What should I do with this old man? I will tell him to marry a prostitute who will bear him children of prostitutes, and then I will tell him to send her away. If he actually sends her away, I too will drive Israel away. Immediately (it says) "the LORD said to Hosea, Go and take a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom... So he went and married Gomer the daughter of Diblaim" (Hos. 1:2-3). Why was she called Gomer? Rav said, Because everyone finished (came) in her. "Bat Divlaim" – wicked slander (dibah) the daughter of wicked slander. Shumel said, Because everyone plowed her like a ?. R. Yohanan said, Because she was sweet to everyone like a cluster of figs (d'vila). (Yalkut Shimoni, Hosea 1, entry 515).

49. C. G. Jung has supplied us with an excellent example of this in his autobiography. He describes a series of experiences occurring deep within his unconscious, events that were so powerful that they threatened his very sanity. In order to enable himself to penetrate to the depths of his unconscious without being damaged, he had to establish a few basic, definite truths about himself. See *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*, p. 181. REFERENCE: NO RELEVANT QUOTATION APPEARS ON THIS PAGE IN MY EDITION – HL).

50. Evil is ra in Hebrew, which is Er's name spelled backwards.

51. Mei Hashiloah, volume one, parshat Vayeshev, source beginning with the words "Vayehi Er."

52. As far as the Mei Hashiloah is concerned, the soul of Er derives directly from the mind of his grandfather Jacob. That which existed in the grandfather's mind as a thought and state of awareness became transformed into a soul whose saga is realized in his descendants, and brings to the surface that which previously existed only in a latent state in the soul of Jacob. See the remainder of his comments there.

53. NEED ZOHAR REFERENCE.

54. Introduction to the Zohar, 1b.

55. Later we quote the Ari who says that God wanted to destroy the partzuf of Rachel after the sin of the Golden Calf, and rebuild the people from Moses' seed, which belongs to the partzuf of Leah. In light of what we have developed here we can see that the sin of the golden calf can be ascribed to those who are incapable of living with doubt and questions. They are impatient, demand immediate answers, and want to return to the world of certainty as soon as possible. This is a psychological state characteristic of someone who comes from the partzuf of Rachel. This is why God wanted to erase them from the world of Atzilut after the sin of the golden calf. NEED REFERENCE>

56. Based on the verse in Isaiah 40:26: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things" (mi barah eileh). It is interesting to note that the first person in the Tanakh to use the two words "mi eileh" was Esau, when he encountered all of Jacob's entourage (see Gen. 33:5). There was good reason for people to think that Leah, who comes from the sefirah of Binah, the place where the unknown can be studied, was right for Esau. He too asks, "who are these?," while Jacob, at least until he is healed, is frightened of questions. Looking for definite answers, he prefers Rachel's beauty.

57. See the Introduction to the Zohar, 1b

58. In Lurianic kabbalah, this tefillin is worn by the Ze'eir Anpin partzuf. This means that Leah, the aspect of the female experience that is connected to the female image of the mother (malkhut d'Imma), is present in the consciousness of the maturing son (da'at d'Ze'eir Anpin). As R. Chaim Vital explains:

But Leah is the concealed world (alma d'itcasya), as we have explained, which is the image of the Dalet in the knot of the head Tefillin. ...since Leah emerged from the back of Ze'eir Anpin, i.e. from the malkhut of Imma which is in the Da'at of Ze'eir Anpin, this being the mystery of the (letter) dalet that is in the knot of the head tefillin

(Etz Hayyim, gate 38, chapter 2, second edition).

In the Sha'ar HaKavannot, four reasons for Leah being the secret of the letter dalet are presented: "[1] For this reason also she is called dalet: Since she emerges from in back of the four minds of Ze'eir Anpin,

which are four sections from the Torah (which are placed) in his head tefillin. [2] She is also called dalet because she is poor and destitute (dalat in Hebrew means the poor one), since she represents powerful judgment (dinin takifin), as she is the backside of Supernal Mother. [3] She is also called poor and destitute since she is not an entire partzuf like Rachel is, as she is only skin, being the mystery of the knot of the head tefillin, as previously mentioned. [4] This is also the reason that she is the large dalet (of the word echad, the last word of the shema). This is because the entire alphabet of the large letters (referring to all the enlarged letters that appear in the Tanach, e.g. the enlarged dalet in the word echad) is in Imma Ila'ah, and Leah is the backside of Emma Ila'ah, so she is therefore the large dalet." Sha'ar HaKavannot, Discourses on the Kavannot of Kriyat Shema, Discourse no. 6, on the meaning of the word echad.

In Lurianic Kabbalah – Leah is only leather, skin, while Rachel has mohin – minds, a box full of sections of the Torah. At first glance, it would seem that Rachel has an intellectual advantage over Leah, but a closer reading of R. Hayyim Vital's comments leads one to arrive at the opposite conclusion. R. Hayyim Vital deals with the difference between Rachel and Leah, in which Leah is considered to be "nothing more than skin:" "I have already told you about the two wives of Ze'ir Anpin, Leah and Rachel. Rachel was his true soul mate, because she is the mainstay of the house, the tenth of the ten sefirot of Atzilut. It therefore says that "Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah," since Leah comes from the back of Malkhut of Imma, which fell together with Jacob, at the time of the Death of the Kings. And she is not really Ze'ir Anpin's wife, only temporarily, like something borrowed. I have also told you that Leah does not take light for her mohin from the mohin of Ze'ir Anpin themselves, but rather from their garments, which are the (sefirot of) Netzah, Hod and Yesod of (partzuf) Imma. She is therefore the knot of the head tefillin, which is only leather, and she has no real portions of the Torah, as does Rachel, who is called the tefillin of the arm, and takes actual lights of mohin. Therefore, everywhere that it says leather refers to Leah, and in the Sha'ar Ruah HaKodesh I pointed this out on the verse "and after my skin is torn from this (my body)" REF, how the lights that go out to Leah have the same numerical value as the word or (=276)" (R. Hayyim Vital, Sha'ar HaPesukim, the Book of Job). Rachel does, in fact, get mohin, but they are the mohin of Ze'ir Anpin. The mohin of Ze'ir Anpin represent what he thinks, and what he thinks is that Rachel and everything she represents, is the right woman for him. This is why he loves her, because she is the housewife. Rachel's mohin are indeed mohin, but they are mohin placed as tefillin on the arm, facing the heart, not the mind. In other words, Rachel's mohin are both more pragmatic and more emotional. She is the housewife, so her wisdom is the wisdom of women, a practical wisdom that is part of her function as a woman according to the standards acceptable to Jacob, standards that do not threaten him. Leah may not be so practical (remember that her feet do not touch the "ground" of the World of Atzilut). She is positioned on a plane with the head of Ze'ir Anpin, tied to the thinking side itself, not only to its pragmatic side. Jacob, however, who is Ze'ir Anpin, does not make space for such a woman, so she cannot be his mohin, i.e. be his tefillin box. In spite of this, and possibly because of this, Leah receives her lights from the deep impression left in the soul of Ze'ir Anpin by the garments of his mohin, which he received from the partzuf of Imma-Binah. The concept of an educated, spiritual woman exists in his soul as a sort of inheritance received from above, from his mother (Rebecca), but these concepts only encase his own understanding, and he cannot accept them. It is equally difficult for him to accept Leah as a soul mate before he attains the level of Israel. ("The back of Malkhut of Imma, which fell together with Jacob, at the time of the Death of the Kings" refers to what Ze'ir Anpin can conceive of the ceaseless coupling of Abba and Emma. He understands what relates to him. The Death of the Kings, which is the mythic name for the breaking of the vessels in Lurianic Kabbalah, is sometimes in a person's adolescent traumas. In Jacob's biography this took place when he left his parent's home and went to

Aram Naharayim, to the house of Lavan HaArami. He leaves his mother Rebecca in a physical sense, but her character is deeply engraved in his soul print, as the archetype of the Great Mother. This archetypal engraving was earlier called the “back.” For a more extensive discussion of how Leah becomes the secret of the knot of the head tefillin, see Etz Hayyim, Sha’ar HaKlallim, chapter 12.

59. B. Berachot 6a: “R. Yitzhak said: How do we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, puts on Tefillin? As it says, ‘God has sworn by His right hand and the arm of His strength’ (REF). – ‘by His right hand’ – this is the Torah, as it says ‘From His right hand a fiery law was given to us’ (Deut. 33:2) and the arm of his strength – this is Tefillin, as it says ‘God will give strength to His people’ (Ps. 29:11)...R. Nahman bar Yitzhak said to R. Hiyya bar Avin, Those tefillin of the Master of the World, what is written in them? He answered him, ‘And who is like Your people Israel, one nation on earth II Sam. 7: 23)?’”

60. B. Menahot 35b. The rest of the quotation is also very interesting: “R. Yehuda said, The knot of the tefillin should be high up in order that Israel be above rather than below, and it should be towards the face, in order that Israel should be towards the face, not the back.” The parallel between the knot of the tefillin and the situation of Israel is evident from this comment, and it will suffice to say that the entire feminine partzuf, which includes both Rachel and Leah, is the partzuf of the Shekhinah, which is also called K’nesset Yisrael, the “congregation of Israel.” But what is the intention of the directive that this knot should be towards the face in order that Israel be towards the face rather than the back? Rashi, too, has some difficulty in explaining this, and suggests two ways of understanding it: “Towards the face – in the back of the neck, not on either side of the head. Another way of understanding: Towards the face – that the actual knot be inside and the shape of the dalet outside, as they said, ‘and their beauty shall be outside’ (REF). It is still rather difficult to understand the usage of front and back when describing Israel’s situation.

61. R. Isaac of Homil, the greatest thinker of the early masters of Habad Hasidut, points out in his book Hanah Ariel (Vayikra, 2a) that Moses’s personality had a definite effect on the Torah that he brought down from heaven. He comments on the following Midrash: “‘Write for you’ (Ex. 34:1; Deut. 10:1) – the ministering angels began to say to the Holy One blessed be He, You have given Moses permission to write whatever he wants! Because he will say to Israel, I have given you the Torah, I have written it and given it to you! God said to him, God forbid that Moses would do such a thing, and even if he were to do so, he is trustworthy, as it says, ‘Not so my servant Moses, in all my house he is faithful’ (Numb. 12:7). R. Isaac, who relies on an early Kabbalistic tract, the Sefer HaTemunah, explains why the Torah is called Torat Moshe (the Torah of Moses), even though the Rabbis said that ‘whoever says that even one verse of the Torah was written by Moses is a non-believer’ (REF). R. Isaac explains, “as it says in the Sefer HaTemunah, whatever God actually said to Moses cannot be fathomed by any living creature.” R. Isaac compares this to a minister in the king’s court, who has a much deeper understanding of the king’s intentions than do the other citizens, so he takes care of the country’s needs according to his understanding of the king’s will, even though the king did not go into the specific details of how he wants everything done. In order to explain the Midrash’s meaning when it says that, even if Moses were to have written ‘whatever he wants,’ it would have been fine with God, R. Isaac says: “even if (Moses’s) nature and inner order would have influenced him in any matter – he is still trustworthy, because the inner supreme will be actualized through his words, as is known concerning the matter of ‘both these and these are the words of the living God...’ (REF). The reader will note that R. Isaac is here minimizing the traditional gap between the Oral Torah and the Written Torah.

62. See illustration #REF and our discussion there.

63. Etz Hayyim, gate 38, chap. 2, second edition. According to the Talmud (B. Rosh Hashana 21b, B. Nedarim 38a), “Fifty gates of Understanding (Binah) were created in the world, and all of them were given to Moses except one, as it says, ‘You have made him a little less than divine’ (Ps. 8:6).”

R. Hayyim Vital’s words are a combination of two rabbinic sources: The first, from which the style is taken, is Y. Shabbat, 8b: “R. Yitzhak bar Elazar said: Just as wisdom (not fear) becomes a crown for her head, so humility becomes a heel for her sandal, as it says; ‘The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God’ (Ps. 111:10).. And it is also written: ‘The effect of humility is fear of the LORD’ (Prov. 22:4). See also Shir Hashirim Rabbah 1, 9. The second source, Tanhuma Bereshit REF?a, is the origin of at least some of the text, although it may be taken in the opposite sense: “....that the Torah’s sandal is humility and its crown is fear. Its sandal is humility as it says, ‘The effect of humility is fear of the LORD’ (Proverbs 22:4). And its crown is fear as it says, ‘The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the LORD’ (Ps. 111:10). Both are attributed to Moses, as it says, ‘Now Moses was a very humble man’ (Num. 12:3). Fear as it says, ‘For he was afraid to look at God’” (Ex. 3:5).

64. Etz Hayyim, gate 38, chap. 2, second edition

65. Liquey Moharan, first edition, 147, citing B. Sotah 49b.

66. “And know, that our teacher Moses, of blessed memory, about whom it says in the Zohar that he reached the level of Binah, is from this Leah, which comes from the Malkhut of Binah and becomes the dalet, the knot of the Tfillin. And this is the mystery of ‘and you will see My back’ (Exod. 33:23), as the Rabbis said in the Talmud: ‘This teaches us that he showed him the knot of the tefillin.’ It also means to say, that Leah, whose place is where the knot of the tefillin is, sees the back of Ze’ir Anpin, since she stands with her face towards the back of Ze’ir Anpin, as we explained earlier. And Moses is therefore in Leah, as it says, “and you will see My back,” and this is understood (Etz Hayyim, gate 38, chap. 2, second edition). The meaning is that since Leah is positioned in a manner that does not allow her to see the face and only the back, and since Moses is part of this aspect of Leah, it is evident that he too only sees the back, and not the face.

67. Tiquney Zohar, 29b?. REF

68. R. Hayyim Vital is quoting B. Berachot 7a. “And R. Yohanan said in the name of R. Yossi: God does not take back any word that left His mouth with good intention, even if it was conditional. How do we know this? From Moses, as it says, ‘Leave Me alone, and I will destroy them, etc., and I will make you into a great nation.’ Even though Moses beseeched God (to forgive the people) and the decree was annulled, (God’s original intention) was still realized through Moses’s children, as it says (I Chron. 23:17), ‘The sons of Moses were Gershom and Eliezer, and the sons of Eliezer were Rehavya, the chief, etc., and the sons of Rehavya were very many,’ and R. Yosef said, More than six hundred thousand.

69. Etz Hayyim, gate 38, chap. 6, second edition. Until this juncture, Leah was only one point, the malkhut of Tvunah.

70. Zohar, Introduction to Bereshit, 2b. See our discussion above.

71. Divrei Sofrim – Liquey Amarim, at the completion of the Shas, beginning with the words “v’yadua.” This is based on Shemot Rabba 42, 5: “And God said, I have certainly seen (Heb. ra’oh ra’iti) – God said to Moses, You see one seeing, and I see two seeings. You see them coming to Sinai and receiving My Torah, and I see that, after I came to Sinai to give them the Torah, and after I return to My four beast chariot,

they contemplate it and delete one of them and this angers Me, as it says 'each of the four had the face of an ox on the left' (Ez 1:10) and they anger Me through it, as it says, "And they exchanged their glory for the image of a bull" (Ps. 106: 20). R. Tzadok is reversing the import of the source concerning ox-like observance of the commandments. According to B. Avodah Zarah 5b: "It is taught from the House of Elijah: A person should always be towards the Torah as an ox to the yoke and an ass to its load."

The Fourth Gate: Reincarnations

Chapter 16: Reincarnation as a Sifting of Good and Evil

According to Lurianic Kabbalah, the holy sparks that exist inside every one of us are almost invisible to the naked eye. One ventures upon the spiritual path only in order to liberate those sacred sparks that the Ari claims are trapped inside everyday reality. Consistent with the belief in monotheism, the negative forces at work in the universe – even demonic entities – must have the sacred buried within them. These beings are in exile, or in captivity, and their divine life force inhabits a protective shell that appears to us as evil, but cannot, ultimately, be evil.

The Ari suggests how the sparks concealed in our everyday reality can be liberated by means of the 613 commandments. When, for example, someone gives a destitute person a shirt, we can say that she is revealing the divine aspect of her soul through this action. As a result, the sacred spark of the divine in the shirt is also liberated. It is no longer a simple piece of clothing; it has become a means by which godliness and holiness are expressed in the world.¹

While mitzvot can lift up objects that we think of as neutral, sacred sparks trapped within seemingly negative confines are liberated through long-term historical processes. We all can think of many examples of religious or social ideas that were denounced when they first appeared, but were later integrated by the very same society that had initially rejected them.² A revolutionary thinker risks ostracization, even excommunication, in following his heart, which may lead him down paths unacceptable to his social milieu and even to himself.³ In its turn, society needs to experience significant shifts before it is capable of being nourished by the unsuspected good the revolutionary is prescribing. Until social conditions change, both the messenger and the message are doomed to ridicule, disdain, and persecution.

One of the great Hasidic works, the Mei HaShiloah, formulates a spiritual rule of thumb describing this phenomenon. The author claims that, the greater a person's soul, the greater his need to tread the untrodden paths. "Whenever a person places himself in places of doubt in the service of God, or in places that demand clarification – if (he is successful) at clarifying (the matter at hand) in a positive way, he is greater than someone who steers clear of uncertainty and doubt."⁴ He carries a unique message against which the old world endeavors to defend itself.

We can identify Lilith in these terms as a soul requiring "clarification." Lilith, who fled from the realm of the sacred at the dawn of culture, is identified by the Midrash as a demon in Eden. Her return is therefore contingent upon two complementary processes: 1) Masculine self-images, represented by Adam in the Ben Sira legend, and by Jacob in the Zohar, must be transformed in order to reclaim Lilith; 2) Lilith, who is presently perceived as a kelippah (shell), i.e. a demonic, negative figure, also needs to be transformed in order to redeem her holiness from these trappings. Ideally, these two processes should happen simultaneously. As both men and women undergo profound transformations, that which has been dormant and repressed will be spiritually vivified, so that men and women can finally reveal their true faces to one another.

According to the Ari, Lilith needs to go through many trials from the time she leaves Eden and marries the Great Demon, to the time when she is ready to re-enter the sacred realm. It is a long and tedious journey. Lilith, for example, appears in the Ari's imagination as an incarnation of both Leah and her daughter Dinah. Lilith is Moses's wife, described as "the Cushite woman he had married" (Num. 12:1).

She is also identified with Orpah, Ruth's sister-in-law; and then Ruth after she parts ways with Orpah. Then, many generations later, we encounter her as "the wife of Turnus Rufus, the Wicked," who converted and became Rabbi Akiva's second wife.

Every time Lilith appears in a new incarnation, her rehabilitation progresses and more of her complex nature is revealed in the world. Tragically, however, it seems that the Lilith figure in Lurianic Kabbalah never completes the cycle of return.

In his work, "Treatise on the Steps of our Father Abraham," R. Hayyim Vital analyzes the soul of Leah through an exploration of her relationship with her daughter, Dinah. After the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge, Vital explains, good and evil become mixed up in one another. Adam's soul contained all potential human souls, so it follows that they too, contain this strange interfusion of good and evil that he first tasted. A "sifting" needs to take place, and this is the central movement in the book of Genesis. This process occurs within Abraham's own family: not only does Lot have to separate from him, but even his seed needs to purify itself. Abraham's soul likewise is composed of good and evil. His two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, reflect these opposites. Isaac remains, while Ishmael goes east, leaving his family. Abraham represents hesed, love, so we can say that holy hesed was separated from the hesed of the kelippah, represented by Ishmael. But the process is incomplete. Isaac, who represents the side of din, strict judgment, also has good and evil in his make-up. Again, the clarification process is realized through his two sons – Jacob and Esau. Jacob continues the family line, whereas Esau eventually⁵ heads east, to the land of Edom.

A similar process occurs among the biblical women. Dinah manifests the ambiguity of her mother Leah:

This, too, is part of the mystery of Dinah, the daughter of Leah. When the snake planted the seeds of uncleanness in Eve, all souls became mixed with good and evil. Even the patriarchs needed to (undergo) a separation process, as they too, had this mixture of good and evil. This is why Ishmael came out of Abraham and why Esau came out of Isaac. They were then purified, and separated from the dregs of the kelippah which had clung to them.⁶

The Ari maintains that the original blurring of good and evil occurred when the snake, Samael, copulated with Eve. When good and evil are mixed in this way, it is not at all easy to differentiate between them. By mentioning Ishmael and Esau, the Ari reminds us that evil is embodied in those biblical characters who are expelled from the central narrative in order to go their own way, a process which could be seen as refining the character of Abraham's family. And in mentioning Dinah and Leah, he hints that a similar sifting process is at work in their destinies.

In the beginning, all that was good and holy in Lilith was embodied in Leah, whereas Lilith's evil remained as a dangerous, dark and demonic force at large in the world.

The first Eve (Lilith) was the kelippah of Leah. Leah was not given to Adam, as she was not yet ready. Therefore Jacob, whose appearance was similar to that of Adam, was only satisfied with Rachel, who is the second Eve. Just like Adam, who said "This one shall be called Woman" (Gen. 2:23) – this one, and not Leah, the first (wife).⁷

The Ari goes on to explain that Leah, too, had both softer and harsher sides, and her daughter, Dinah, the Bible's first rape victim, acted as the filtering process between them.

Chapter 17: Dinah

Leah gave birth to six sons, after which her seventh and final child was a daughter.⁸ When Jacob and his family return to Canaan, they settle in the area of Shechem. Jacob's daughter, Dinah, goes out in search of friends. Shechem ben Hamor, the Hivvite, was the son of the local chief. He sees the girl, desires her, and assaults her in the field. Dinah is taken to his house in the township – named after its prince – Shechem. Jacob hears about the rape, but does not react. He waits for his sons to return with the sheep from the pasture. When they hear what has happened they are duly enraged. In vengeance, two of his sons, Shimon and Levi, deceive the city's inhabitants by telling them that, if all the males in Shechem circumcise themselves, they will give them Dinah and others of their women as wives. On the third day, when the males of the township are recuperating from the painful circumcision, Shimon and Levi take their swords, kill all the city's inhabitants, and bring Dinah victoriously home. When Jacob hears about this slaughter, he is so incensed that he does not forgive his sons until the day he dies.

The rabbis of the Midrash, although they do not underplay the seriousness of the rape, react in a way typical of patriarchs vis-a-vis victims of rape. They accuse Dinah of making the first move. Where else, they ask, can such provocative behavior be expected to lead? Why ever did she "go out" in the first place? We have already seen how, for the rabbis, this "going out" is fraught with hints of harlotry.

However, for R. Hayyim Vital, Dinah embodies the harsh dinnim of Leah. Leah brazenly "went out" to her husband and bought his sexual favors, but Dinah "went out" into the public domain which, in the Kabbalah, is known as the abode of the kelippot:

"'And Dinah went out' (Gen. 34:1) – for if she had remained in a place of holiness, the snake would not have been able to touch her. But after she went out to the place of the kelippah, which is the secret meaning of "to see the daughters of the land" (v.1), she was bitten by the snake, and this is the mystery of 'Shechem ben Hamor the Hivite' (v. 2): (Hivvite comes) from the word hivya (snake in Aramaic).⁹

The rabbis see Dinah's leaving the protective boundaries of Jacob's house, as eventually leading to her rape. She goes out to an abandoned place, as if to indicate that she too is abandoned, loose, at liberty. Consequently, for the rabbis, Dinah symbolizes everything that they had already found problematic in Leah:

And even though Leah was mended, and her kelippah, who was the first Eve (Lilith) was removed from her, and she remained holy and pure, even so, because of the dross that clung to her, Dinah, who (represents) severe din (judgment), came from her. This is why her name was Dinah – because of the din.¹⁰

When Leah was born, most of the Lilithian aspects of her personality had already been filtered out from her, although there was still some "dross." In Lurianic Kabbalah, dross refers to unrefined matter, such as the trace metals left in unrefined gold. The goal of history, is to refine Leah, so that she becomes like pure gold, free from dross. Dinah, in other words, is the "waste material" that has been purged from her mother's complexity. The further Dinah strays from home, the more she attracts those impure elements that had previously sullied her mother.

Ultimately, though, Dinah is not to be apprehended as a negative figure. Like Leah, she is left with no choice other than to "go out" in search of herself, imperiling herself in the process. Behind this act of rebellion, Dinah contributes toward the historical disclosure of female sensuality. For the Ari, her personal tragedy also has its part to play in the greater story of Lilith's redemption.

When the Bible introduces Dinah in Chapter 34, it refers to her as “the daughter of Leah,” rather than the daughter of Jacob.¹¹ The narrative in Genesis adopts Jacob’s perspective. Jacob would prefer to disassociate himself from Dinah’s provocative behavior. From the very beginning, Jacob was not attracted to Leah. Her daughter is likewise foreign to him, a burden for which he has no patience. To emphasize exactly how powerful was Jacob’s desire to be rid of Dinah, we can compare the story of how she was held prisoner in the house of Shechem to the story of Benjamin’s descent into Egypt.

When Shimon and Levi risk their lives in order to rescue their sister from Shechem’s house, Jacob is angry at them, claiming that they had no right to risk the well being of his entire household for the sake of one individual. By comparison, a few years later when Joseph, disguised as the Egyptian viceroy, commands that Benjamin, Rachel’s son, be brought to him, Jacob will not hear of it, even though his entire household is in grave danger of dying of hunger in Canaan. In this case, Jacob is willing to risk everyone’s life in order to save Benjamin, who is the only living memento of his beloved Rachel.

Shimon and Levi understand their father all too well. They know that Dinah repels him because she reminds him of Leah. It might even be construed that Shimon and Levi’s revenge on Shechem was fueled by Jacob’s holding their sister responsible for her own rape. When Jacob chastises them for risking the entire family’s safety, Shimon and Levi answer in one short sentence: “Will he make our sister into a whore? (Gen. 34:31). The usual interpretation of the text is “Will he – Shechem – make our sister into a whore?” It is possible, however, that the two vengeful brothers did not utter these words directly to their father, but heard his rebuke, left the tent, and then said to themselves: “Will he – i.e. our father – make our sister into a whore – as he made our mother?” The brothers feel that, when Jacob says he is only concerned for his family’s welfare, he is not telling the whole truth. In their opinion, the real reason for his estrangement from his only daughter is that he does not respect her; for him, she was a whore even from before this episode with Shechem.

From this point of view, it would appear that Jacob views an assertive woman who “goes out” into the world as a perversion of the feminine. In fact, both the rabbis and the biblical text view Dinah as a woman who, in certain respects, behaves as though she were a man. There are two instances in which the written text of the Bible refers to Dinah as *na’ar*, a “lad,” while the masoretic tradition revocalizes it as *na’arah*, meaning “girl.” (Gen. 34:2-3). Likewise, the Midrash Tanhuma uses the story of Dinah’s “going out” to strongly advise women against leaving their homes:

Let the masters teach us: Should a woman go out wearing gold jewelry on Shabbat?¹² The Rabbis said: Even on a weekday a woman should not go out in public, because people look at her and this affects her adversely. Jewelry was given to women so that they may adorn themselves in their own houses. One should not leave things unguarded around a decent person, (all the more so) around a thief. A woman should therefore stay at home and not go out into the street, so that she will not sin, and so that she will not cause others to sin by gazing at married women.¹³

Rather than making men responsible for their indecent glances that objectify women, the midrash makes women responsible for upholding patriarchy’s gendered norms. It explains that going out in public is a male privilege:

R. Yehudah bar Shalom said: This is in fact the case, as it says, ‘God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fertile and increase fill the earth and master it’ (v’kivshuha) (Gen.1: 28). It actually states *vekovsha* – a man conquers a woman, a woman does not conquer a man. Man conquers the earth, woman does not conquer the earth, so that she should not cause herself misfortune. (She should not be like) Dinah the

daughter of Jacob, who was used to going out,¹⁴ and caused herself misfortune. How do we know this? By our reading of “And Dinah went out.”¹⁵

In this reading of Dinah’s story, her “going out” implies something masculine about her, echoed in the rabbis’ comment that Dinah was originally meant to be a boy, but that Leah’s prayers caused the embryo to change from male into female:

Leah stood remonstrating with the Holy One, blessed be he. Master of the Universe!, she said, Twelve tribes will be established from Jacob. I have already given birth to six and I am pregnant with the seventh. The handmaidens have already given birth to two each, making ten. If this one is (also) a male, my sister Rachel will not (even) be equal to the handmaidens! God immediately heard her prayer, and the baby in her womb became a female, as it says, ‘And afterwards she bore him a daughter, and named her Dinah (Gen. 30:21).’¹⁶

In the Lurianic writings, these various biblical and midrashic texts are joined together to prove Dinah’s gender ambiguity:

You must already know of the rabbis’ comment on the verse: ‘And afterwards she bore him a daughter,’ that she was (meant to be) a son, and through Leah’s prayers, she was changed into a daughter ... this is also the secret meaning of Dinah being called a na’ar, a lad, because at first she was a young man, and then became a young girl.¹⁷

When Dinah “goes out,” she is “going out” from the stay-at-home fate that the patriarchal world had in store for her. She refuses to accept the suppression of her desires, as other women have done.

Given the patriarchal bias of the texts, it is surprising indeed that the rabbis point their finger at Jacob’s responsibility for Dinah’s rape. The rabbis point out that, when Jacob was preparing himself for his encounter with Esau, he moved his entire family to the opposite bank of the river. The Bible tells how he removed Leah, Rachel, the midwives and their eleven children, but where, the midrash asks, was Dinah? The surprising answer: Jacob was afraid that, if Esau would set his eyes on Dinah, then he would desire her and take her for his wife, so he hid her in a box and closes it with a lock and key.¹⁸ The rabbis know that, whenever a person avoids facing the truth, it will eventually explode in his face. Even God would have preferred that Dinah marry Esau, but Jacob is terrified by the thought. At this point in his life, Jacob is still trying to run away from his brother. Therefore, he cannot accept that anything connected to him may be intended for Esau. He represses his shadow twin, and he refuses to enter into any kind of dialogue with him. Jacob chooses to deny that there can be any kind of match between himself and Esau, and the price of his repression is very dear:

R. Huna in the name of R. Abba Hacohen Bardala said: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: ...You prevented grace from your brother, for if she had been married, she would not have prostituted herself. You would not agree to her marrying a circumcised man – and she married someone not circumcised! You would not agree to her marrying legally – so she got married in a forbidden way! As it says, “Now Dinah the daughter of Leah...went out.”¹⁹

According to this Midrash, Dinah prostitutes herself by “going out” from the harsh jurisdiction of her father’s domain. Had she been married, even to Esau, she would not have had to prostitute herself in this fashion. In this way, Jacob is held responsible for the tragedy that ensues.

In the Second Gate we defined prostitution as a situation in which a person loses touch with his or her own sense of self. Such a person chooses to participate in a story that is both inauthentic and forced. It was Jacob who compelled Dinah to leave her own story. Is it not, then, viable to assume that, when Dinah's brothers said "Will he make our sister into a whore?" They were in fact seeing their father, Jacob, as her procurer.

In Lurianic Kabbalah, the missed match of Esau and Dinah is perceived as an opportunity for a tikkun, a fixing, which was unfortunately neglected. Dinah was well suited to facilitate Esau's tikkun, since she both belongs the sacred and is connected to the kelippah of Lilith:

(Dinah) too, was holy, although she was still somewhat connected (to the kelippah), because (her holiness) had not yet been completely clarified. Dinah was intended for Esau, but Jacob hid her in a chest. We find that the rabbis, quoted by Rashi, specifically say that Jacob was punished for this,²⁰ for she was fitting for him (Esau), and he could have had his fixing through her, because there were still holy sparks within him.²¹

Remember also the midrash suggesting that family members thought that Leah, Dinah's mother, was intended for Esau. Her assertive sexuality seemed fitting for a man of the field who knew the ways of nature. Dinah inherited these characteristics from her mother.

In rabbinic thought, Esau is connected to the dark angel Samael, Lilith's soul-mate.²² In the Alphabet of Ben Sira, Lilith runs away from Adam straight into the arms of the Great Demon. The Kabbalah sometimes identifies the Great Demon as Ashmodai, the king of demons, and sometimes as Samael, the dark angel. Esau, as we will see, represents Jacob's dark angel. As the prophet reports, "After all – declares the LORD – Esau is Jacob's brother" (Mal. 1:2). These two brothers are not really the separate persons they believe themselves to be. They are twins, though they find it almost impossible to face one another. In Jungian psychology, Esau would be understood as Jacob's shadow side. This is why it is so difficult for Jacob to accept that Dinah should marry his own shadow – his brother Esau.

The Kabbalah insinuates that whatever does not come about directly will materialize in a devious way. Jacob, whose very name comes from the Hebrew root *aqov* – crooked – does not allow things to take place in a straightforward manner, so instead his stubbornness forces the relationship between his daughter and the snake to materialize in a forbidden, partial, and crooked manner. Dinah "goes out," and another incarnation of the snake, Shechem son of Hamar, bites her: "'And he that breaks boundaries will be bitten by a snake'" (REF) – this refers to Dinah. While her father and her brothers were sitting in the study hall, she went out to see the daughters of the land. She caused Shechem ben Hamor the Hivvite who is called Snake (Aram. *hivvya*) to "bite" her.²³

Lurianic Kabbalah develops this motif of a destined demonic attraction. The dark world contains both male and female entities, which are ruled over by Samael and Lilith. Samael is the mythological snake from the Garden of Eden, the evil inclination, the angel of death and so on. Lilith is his wife. Esau is controlled by the Snake, so anyone resembling Lilith is naturally attracted to Esau. The snake, however, is not represented by only one agency. Other figures also stem from the coupling of Samael and Lilith. When the high road to the consummation of this marriage is blocked by Jacob, the mutual attraction between Lilith and Samael finds other ways to materialize:

And Esau is part of the mystery of the snake, and Dinah was fitting for him, but since Jacob hid her, she was saved from him. And when she went out like a prostitute, according to the hidden meaning of 'Now Dinah... went out,' then the snake bit her, being the secret of Shechem ben Hamor the Hivite, like the

word *hivya*, which is the snake. He is also called *Hivi*, because he came from the first Eve (*Hava*), who is called *Lilith*, which is how he had the power to take her. This is why it says ‘being strongly drawn to Dinah the daughter of Jacob’ (Gen. 34:3), because from the very beginning this *kelippah* (shell) was attached to this holiness, and now, when it materialized in the concrete world, it clung to her again.²⁴

Dinah is endangered by the “dross” clinging to her soul. As long as she dwells in Jacob’s sacred camp, she is protected from the *kelippah*’s hold on her. But when she goes out to the Canaanites, she is exposed to the deep bond that she (as *Lilith*) shares with the snake, *Samael*, now incarnated in the figure of *Shechem*.

It is difficult for Dinah’s brothers to accept these circumstances. They know their sister well, and they recognize her connections to Esau, to the snake, to *Lilith*. They, however, believe that Dinah has already been healed, so there is no good reason for the snake to possess her:

And this is the matter of ‘Should our sister be treated like a whore?’: *Lilith*, the first Eve, is called ‘the wife of harlotry’... and the explanation of this is that any given prostitute is *Lilith*, because she was originally in Adam’s household, and then went out, and always abides in the desert, as is well known. This is why, in Aramaic, prostitutes are called *n’fakat bra* – she who goes out, because she was Adam’s wife, and then carried on an illicit relationship with *Samael*.

This is the meaning of the words ‘like a whore:’ Is our sister still like a whore? See, she has already been purified, and the snake in her no longer has power over her.²⁵

The brothers cannot accept the marriage of Dinah and *Shechem*, just as their father Jacob could not accept the marriage of Dinah and Esau. Jacob, however, seems to have learned his lesson. The Midrash has God tell Jacob, “You would not give her willingly to your brother Esau, so *Shechem* will come and take her against your will.”²⁶ Earlier, Jacob had tried to deny the spirit of *Lilith* in his daughter, but this time he resigns himself to it. Between the time that Jacob saved Dinah from Esau by hiding her in a chest, and the rape by *Shechem*, he had undergone a life-transforming experience. He had struggled with the angel, perhaps Esau’s angel, and he had defeated him. Between these two episodes, Jacob had successfully contended with the dark and repressed shadow-side of his psyche. He had also received a new name – *Israel*. This, then, is really why Jacob does not interfere in the Dinah episode. He has allowed the dark to enter his light.

Jacob’s sons, however, did not metamorphose like their father. They are still captives of the old, traditional world in which they grew up. They are outraged by Jacob’s seeming indifference, and when they cry out, “Will he then make our sister like a whore?” they are protesting against the marriage of Dinah to *Shechem*. How can her own father accept such a thing? Does he think of Dinah as *Lilith*? *Shimon* and *Levi* do not yet understand the profound change which transformed their father on that fateful night when he wrestled alone with his dark side.

The *Ari* goes on to say that, although Dinah and *Shechem*’s encounter was not successful in this incarnation, some good came of it nonetheless. We will consider what possible good can be said to have come out of the heinous crime of rape – in the following chapter.

Chapter 18: Dinah/Niddah

In Dinah, the Ari tells us, there is a reincarnation of the soul of her paternal great grandmother – that is, Abraham's mother, Amitlai, the daughter of Carnebo.²⁷ We are told in midrash that Abraham was conceived when Terah, Abraham's father, slept with Amitlai when she had her monthly period, an act of strictly proscribed sexual intercourse.²⁸ The Kabbalists maintain that holy souls often descend into the world through disreputable circumstances, but those souls that ascend must undergo a purification process to cleanse them of their impurities.²⁹ The children of Israel cannot evolve from Abraham until this impurity has been refined, just as the body must reject food that it cannot digest.

According to the mystical theories of the Ari, Dinah had inherited the menstrual impurity that Abraham had absorbed from his parents. This is how he explains the fact that her name, Dinah, is composed of the same letters as niddah,³⁰ the Hebrew word for a woman during her menstruation. But, when Shechem ben Hamor had sexual intercourse with Dinah, her ritual impurity was transferred to him:

And this is the matter of Dinah-Niddah before she was purified, when Shechem ben Hamor slept with her. She was then purified, as it says "her impurity is communicated to him" (Lev. 15:24), as it says in the Zohar, that she then became pure (ZOHAR REF.) (The name) Dinah is therefore composed of the same letters as niddah.

In Leviticus, the transfer of ritual impurity through sexual relations is very similar to how a disease is transmitted: the woman stays impure, and the man who lays with her also becomes impure. By contrast, in the Lurianic view as expressed by R. Hayyim Vital, we are dealing not with technical but with metaphysical impurity. In this case, the man becomes impure from their sexual contact, while the woman is purified through this deed. While this may seem counter-intuitive, especially in the case of a rape, for the Ari, Dinah's name signified menstrual impurity (niddah) until she was purged of that impurity by being raped by Shechem ben Hamor. The rape is thus powerfully re-imagined through the Ari's reincarnational reading of Scripture as an act of healing. The taint from Amitlai and Terah's forbidden intercourse was eradicated and the future nation of Israel was cleansed of this metaphysical stain. We recall that, according to the Ari's reincarnational teachings, Dinah is a reincarnation of Amitlai, meaning that Amitlai returns to this world as her own granddaughter so she can experience the purification of her own flesh:

And Amitlai, Terah's wife, Abraham's mother, was also reincarnated in Dinah the daughter of Leah...because she slept with Terah when she was ritually impure. The same event re-occurred to her when she had sexual intercourse with Shechem ben Hamor the Hivite, since a non-Jew does not keep the niddah restrictions, and she was punished this way. Another advantage of this was, as the biblical verse says "her impurity is communicated to him" (Lev. 15:24). Someone who has intercourse with a woman during her menstrual period absorbs that impurity, so Shechem ben Hamor took on himself all of Dinah's uncleanness when he had sex with her, leaving her pure and healed.³¹

In her present incarnation as Dinah, Amitlai had been born Jewish (could Abraham's mother not be Jewish?), so she certainly kept the menstrual impurity laws. The non-Jew, Shechem, however, did not need to keep these laws, so he did not need this reason to keep away from her. By having sex with her, he unintentionally absorbed her inherited metaphysical impurity into his own soul, and thereby becoming an unwitting accomplice in the redemption of Lilith.

It is no surprise that the hated figure of Lilith is associated with women's ritual impurity. In the following analysis, the Zohar refers to both higher woman – the Shekhina – and to earthly woman, who both effects and is a symbol for what takes place “above.” The earthly woman, who is impure, symbolizes the situation in which the snake has power over the Shekhina and defiles her. Lilithian traits are attributed to the ritually impure woman – unkempt hair, long and dirty nails. Any man who dares approach such a woman causes serious injury to the masculine aspect of the divinity:

“Do not come near a woman during her menstrual impurity” (Lev. 18:19). – concerning this matter it says ‘The secret of the LORD is for those that fear Him’ (Ps. 25:14)...as we learned: When the powerful supernal snake is awakened, because of the people of the world's sins, and begins to connect with the woman and defiles her, the man should separate from her. She has become impure, she is called the impure one, and it is not fitting that the man approach her.³²

Until this point, the Zohar is referring to the supernal male and female, but after this to a menstrually impure woman of our world and a man who approaches her:

Whosoever approaches her causes damage above, since this sin arouses the powerful supernal snake, who defiles a place that should not be defiled, and attaches himself to the woman. (As a result) the man becomes hairy, and the woman becomes impure... her hair and her nails grow long – and then harsh judgment prevails...When the woman wants to purify herself she needs to cut off the hair that grew from the day she was defiled, and to cut her nails, along with all the filth they contain.³³

In the Zohar, menstrual impurity is the classic example of a woman's curse. The Zohar goes on to identify menstrual impurity with the cycle of the moon. This reading is based on a talmudic legend in which the sun and moon were originally the same size, but when the moon complained, God diminished the size of the moon. In further dialogue with the moon, God promises that the people of Israel will bring an offering every new lunar month, so that God can atone for this unfairness to the moon.³⁴

R. Shimon said: The Holy One, blessed be He said, “Bring for Me an atonement-offering on the New Moon” (REF) ‘for Me,’ explicitly, in order that the snake be removed...and why? Because I lessened the moon, and it is now ruled over by someone who should not rule over it. This is why it says “Do not come near a woman during her menstrual impurity” (Lev. 18:19).³⁵

The linkage between the two biblical verses could suggest that, just as God begs forgiveness for discriminating against the moon, so too God will one day seek forgiveness for social and religious discrimination against women. Since the waxing and waning moon is associated with women's cycles, the Bible hints toward a change in women's status, in the verse, “And the light of the moon shall become like the light of the sun (Isaiah 30:26). So too in the case of menstrual impurity, there is a midrash claiming that a time will come when this type of impurity will disappear. We will then say “Blessed is He who makes that which was forbidden permissible:”

“And what is meant by ‘releases that which was imprisoned’ [in the morning blessings Heb. *assurim* means prisoners, but it can also be interpreted as ‘that which is forbidden’]. There is no greater prohibition than that of niddah, when a woman sees blood, and God forbids her to her husband. And in the future she will be permitted...(as it says) “And I will cause...the spirit of impurity to pass from the land” (Zechariah 13:2). ‘Impurity’ means that of the niddah, as it says “Do not come near a woman during her menstrual impurity” (Lev. 18:19).³⁶

In the messianic future, menstrual impurity, as one of the curses upon Eve, will be rescinded.

For the Ari, this shift in orientation occurred as a result of the tragic encounter between Shechem and Dinah. Dinah, conscious of her mother's humiliation, decided to transform the insecurities that caused such insult to her mother into a means of self-empowerment. Allying herself with the rejected (m'nudim) aspects of her mother Leah, Dinah is identified with niddah, because she chooses to use these subversive elements as a model for her own feminine identity. She actively becomes everything man fears. She realizes that, if men are so terrified by Lilith, and need to exorcise her from all social intercourse, then she must be a source of great strength and power, so she becomes a Lilith. When Jacob's family settles in Canaan, Dinah reveals this other side of herself. Dinah "goes out" of the accepted boundaries to empower herself in spite of masculine fears of assertive women. The fact that her father hides her in a chest during the encounter with her wild uncle Esau only reinforces her attitude. She knows that her father is repulsed by her, as he was by her mother. Even without his saying so, Dinah senses her father's terror that her uncle, the "man of the field" will desire her. She understands that, in her father's mind, she really should belong to Esau.

In Lurianic thought, Dinah turns her status as a niddah into a source of strength. In taking this stance, the Ari was going against a powerful misogynist tendency in medieval Jewish thought. Popular superstitions about the ties between a woman in her menstrual period and occult, nefarious powers abounded in the middle ages. Some very startling examples can be found in the Ramban's commentary on the Torah, from the generation before the Zohar.³⁷ The Zohar also sees the niddah as a threatening figure³⁸ that should not be allowed into the proximity of mother-Shekhinah, any more than "the alien fire" offered by the sons of Aaron in Leviticus.³⁹ Lurianic Kabbalah was aware of these ideas when describing Dinah as the symbol of metaphysical niddah, but with its mode of reincarnational reading and its myth of tikkun, the Ari pushed Dinah's image in a new direction.

To understand this move, it is helpful to compare Dinah's rape by Shechem to the rape of Tamar, the daughter of King David, who is assaulted by her brother Amnon. These two rapes differ from one another in one very important way: Amnon's great love of Tamar turns into hate the moment the rape is over. His first words were sexually inviting ("Come lie with me, sister"), then insensitive ("he would not listen to her,"), then physically abusive ("He overpowered her and lay with her by force"), and finally hateful ("Amnon felt a very great loathing for her;" II Sam. 13:11-15). The moment he realized that he had lost his self-control, he decides that there is something demonic in the woman that brought him to this state, and he becomes terrified of her. He casts her from him in disgust, despite her plea that she at least be allowed to remain in his house. For her, his throwing her into the street and leaving her to a life of shame and humiliation is worse than the rape itself, so she begs him not to cast her away.

Shechem, on the other hand, loves Dinah more with every passing moment. At first, he was so sexually aroused by her that he took hold of her by force and raped her. Afterwards he has a change of heart, and his feelings toward her grow tender. It is only after abusing her that he falls in love. In stark contrast to Amnon, Shechem ben Hamor's words go in exactly the opposite direction: from violence, to tenderness, to love, a movement which has not been lost on traditional interpreters.⁴⁰

These two paired, yet opposing stories continue our quest for integration. Tamar wanted to be chaste and modest. She identified herself with the Eve archetype: the beautiful, comely housewife, and she suggests that her brother ask to marry her. She tried to be the type of woman that men could appreciate and love, but in the end she was humiliated, brutally abused, and disgraced.

Dinah, on the other hand, accepted the Lilith in herself, and, though she does not imagine herself worthy of love, in the end it is she who is both loved and desired. Dinah became the niddah woman. Men will

desire her precisely because she behaves scandalously, and they will also be threatened by her, just as her father Jacob was threatened by her mother Leah's expressed sexuality. She realizes that brutal men (like her uncle Esau) may become inflamed with lust and force themselves on her. But Shechem ben Hamor showed Dinah that she could be loved - that there are men who are not afraid of their desire. The encounter with Shechem transforms Dinah. She is no longer the quintessential niddah because she has learned that the Lilith inside her need not be ostracized. Her father had tried to convince her that Lilith can never be loved. But Shechem learns to love Lilith; he loves her so passionately that he is willing to circumcise himself for her, and to convince all of his kinsmen to do likewise.

Chapter 19: Shechem ben Hamor and R. Hananyah ben Teradion

The Shechem to whom we have borne witness has two sides - one, brutal and one, loving. His kelippah side, like a porous shell, absorbed Dinah's niddah state, so that she might dispose of it. In the Ari's reincarnational scheme, Shechem's inner nature is said to have evolved over many incarnations into a great scholar from the age of the Mishnah, Rabbi Hananyah ben Teradion. The Ari makes this connection based on a verse describing how Shechem and his father Hamor persuade their kinsmen to circumcise themselves. Shechem and Hamor say to the people of their town that the land is rahavat yadayim - large enough for all of them (Gen. 34: 22). The initials of R. Hananyah ben Teradion's name are r'h'b't which form the Hebrew word rahavat; this rahavat, or largesse, hints at R. Hananyah's soul, which was already present in Shechem. As R. Hayyim Vital puts it: "And it is possible that the soul of R. Hananyah was mixed in the kelippah of the soul of Shechem ben Hamor the Hivite, which is why he had the power to take Dinah the daughter of Jacob."⁴¹

R. Hananyah ben Tradion is numbered among the "Ten Martyrs" in Jewish tradition, one of the mishnaic sages burned at the stake by the Romans. Risking his life for the study of Torah, he defied the law, even though one of his teachers demanded that he refrain from doing so.⁴² Caught performing the outlawed act of teaching Torah - sitting with the Torah scroll in his lap - the Romans wrapped him up in the Torah scroll, tied him to the stake, and, embraced by its letters, he goes up in flames. There is no doubt that R. Hananyah ben Teradion - R'h'v't' - has a certain largesse, or expansion of his soul.

The Ari teaches us that R. Hananyah ben Teradion is an incarnation of Shechem ben Hamor who raped Dinah when she was in her metaphysical niddah state. "And he (R. Hananyah) was therefore killed, in order that he be purged."⁴³ We recall the Zohar's teaching: "Concerning those who have relations with a menstruating woman, it says, 'And they offered before the LORD alien fire, which He had not enjoined upon them. And fire came forth from the LORD, and consumed them; thus they died' (Lev 10:1-2)."⁴⁴ The two halves of this verse from Leviticus describe different parts of R. Hananyah's fate. In his previous incarnation as Shechem ben Hamor, he lay with Dinah during her period, sinning by symbolically bringing a strange fire. Now he must be purged in fire and burned at the stake in order to fix his soul. R. Hananyah was a man whose passionate soul was on fire with love - either love for a woman, as in his previous incarnation, or love for God. Thus, his meta-historical image takes shape in the Ari's mind.

In his last conversation with his students and his daughter, we see how he relates to what is happening:

His daughter said to him: 'Father, must I see you thus?' He said to her: 'If I was being burnt alone, it would be very difficult for me. Now that I am being burnt together with a Torah scroll - He who will avenge the disgrace of the Torah will avenge my disgrace also.' His students said to him: 'Our master, what do you see?' He said to them: 'The parchment is burning, and the letters are flying in the air.'⁴⁵

While R. Hananyah was incensed at his fate, he nevertheless finds comfort in the fact that the Torah is being burned together with him. Furthermore, he knows that the Torah can never really be burned - it is only the parchment that is burning - the letters are being released, ascending like a sacrificial offering to heaven. In other words, only his body was being burnt, while the letters of his soul were also flying high. This image reminds us of the Lurianic process of clarification of the soul, in which the external aspect is purged, allowing the sacred, spiritual essence to unfold. Thus, R. Hananyah's soul is freed of the impurities that encased it in his previous incarnation.

R. Hananyah's tragic saga is also involved in Lilith's clarification process, which began with Leah, continued with Dinah, and passed via Shechem to R. Hananyah's two daughters.⁴⁶ The Talmud tells us that as an additional punishment for R. Hananyah, the Romans executed his wife and sent a daughter of his to a brothel in Rome. A second daughter was Beruriah, R. Meir's wife. After this edict, Beruriah persuaded her husband to travel to Rome to save her sister from this predicament. R. Meir disguises himself as a Roman cavalryman, goes to the brothel, and tries to convince his sister-in-law to sleep with him, in order to determine whether she has remained a virgin.

She answered him, "I am ritually unclean" (niddah). He said to her, "I will wait for you." She said to him, "There are many others here, more beautiful than me." He said to himself: It appears that she has not sinned. She says the same to everyone.⁴⁷

R. Meir was successful in his getting his sister-in-law out of the brothel, but that is neither the end of the story, nor the end of R. Meir's affairs with prostitutes. When the Romans heard about R. Meir's deed, they hung his picture on the gate of the city and put out a warrant for his arrest:

They put R. Meir's picture on the gate of the city and said: Anyone who sees this man should turn him in. One day he was identified by some people, who pursued him. He ran away from them, and entered a brothel...Elijah came disguised as a prostitute and embraced him. His pursuers said to themselves. This man could not, God forbid, have been R. Meir. He would never have done such a thing.⁴⁸

There are conflicting opinions in the Talmud as to whether this was the reason that R. Meir left Israel and moved to Babylon, or whether it was because of "the story of Beruriah," which we analyzed at length above.

In this extended story, R. Meir appears as a master of deception. Not every rabbi could masquerade as a Roman cavalryman, who is well versed in the ways and manners of whorehouses, nor would Elijah reveal himself to just any sage in the form of a prostitute who identifies him as a regular customer. Three times, R. Meir assumes false identities, and each time the borrowed identity has overtones of harlotry. What does this tell us about R. Meir? Is he attracted to the "other side?" Are role-playing and masquerading his means of facing it?

R. Meir's double-edged personality appears to have caused some consternation among his colleagues. The Talmud relates that, although R. Meir was regarded as the most learned man in his generation, yet his opinions were not always accepted as halakhah.

R. Ahah bar Hanina said: It is revealed and known before the One who created the world that no one in his generation could compare to R. Meir. Then why are not all halachic rulings according to him? Because his colleagues could not always fathom his intentions, since he called pure impure, and proved it, or impure pure, and proved it.⁴⁹

The Ari maintains that R. Meir is linked to partzuf Leah, which is why his colleagues could not understand him.⁵⁰ Our reading of Beruriah was that she also came from partzuf Leah, but was not able to integrate the sexual aspects of her personality or to have her intellectual side accepted by her male peers. The Ari takes what we might characterize as a long view. He sees the tragic saga of Beruriah's family as making a tikkun for that incarnation in which R. Hananyah was present in the soul of Shechem who raped Dinah, the daughter of Leah:

Therefore he (R. Hananyah ben Teradion) was killed, in order that he be purged. This is also why a decree that his wife be sent to a house of prostitution was issued, as it says, "And Dinah the daughter of Leah "went out." It was because she went out that Shechem raped her.⁵¹

For some reason, R. Hayyim Vital writes that R. Hananyah's wife was forced to become a prostitute rather than his daughter, as our edition of the Talmud states. It is possible that, just as Dinah continued in her mother's footsteps, so, too, in R. Hayyim's mind, the images of R. Hananyah's wife and daughter became interchangeable. It may also be because Lurianic thought identifies a man's wife with her husband. The women in R. Hananyah's life are thus understood as an expression of his own female side. Just as in another incarnation he raped Dinah, so too, his own feminine side must have suffered rape. This is the real significance of the tikkun that occurs when his daughter ends up in a house of prostitution.⁵²

R. Hananyah participated in the integration of Lilith, not only in death, but also in life. There are a few halakhic rulings brought in his name in the Talmud. One of them has to do with the relationship between the appreciation of beauty and the importance of forgiveness:

Both the king and the bride should not wash their faces (on Yom Kippur). R. Hananyah ben Teradion said in the name of R. Eliezer: The king and the bride should wash their faces...

Based on what reasoning did R. Hananyah ben Teradion permit kings and brides to wash their faces? Because it says, "When your eyes behold a king in his beauty" (Isa. 33:17). And for what reason did he permit a bride to wash her face? So that she should not be displeasing to her husband.⁵³

R. Hananyah has enormous respect for regal beauty. He argues that it takes precedence over the injunction against washing on Yom Kippur. This is also the case with a bride: it is more important that she be beautiful than that she keep all the laws of the fast. From a religious standpoint, this is clearly a controversial approach.

We too, have been highly controversial in this chapter. By following the lineage of Shechem ben Hamor, we have shown how the Ari understands the tikkun of the negative energy present at Dinah's rape. Such a reading of such a heinous act is undoubtedly provocative. In the following chapters, we will continue along the same lines to trace the saga of these two figures as they have been presented in Lurianic Kabbalah.

Chapter 20: Three Scripts for Dinah

What was Dinah's fate after the rape, after her brothers killed all the inhabitants of Shechem, including her would-be bridegroom? The Bible tells us nothing about the rest of her life, but the midrash offers three alternative scenarios:

Scenario 1: Dinah refuses to return home because of her shame and fear for her future. In order to set things straight, Shimon, her brother, promises to marry her. This is the version of Midrash Bereshit Rabbah.⁵⁴ According to this version, Dinah had a son from Shechem, whom Shimon raised as if he were one of his own.

Scenario 2. An opinion in Baba Batra claims that, after the rape, Dinah married Job, who was a rich and successful non-Jew. According to this opinion, it was Dinah, Job's wife, who said to him, "Bless (that is, curse) God and die" (Job 2:9).

"...and there are those who say that Job lived at the time of Jacob, and he married Dinah the daughter of Jacob. Here (when Job speaks to his wife) it says "You talk as any shameless woman would talk" (Job 2:10) (Heb. n'vailot), and there (in the story of Dinah and Shechem) it says, "because he had committed a shameless act (n'vaila) in Israel."⁵⁵

Scenario 3. The version of Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer claims that Dinah had a child from her encounter with Shechem. Her brothers almost killed the baby because of the offense to the family's honor:

..."Dinah went out"...and got pregnant and gave birth to Asnat. Israel's sons thought to kill her, saying: Now all the inhabitants of the land will say that a daughter of harlotry dwells in the tents of Jacob. What did Jacob do? He brought a golden corolla with the holy name written on it, hung it on her neck, and sent her away.

Everything is known to the Holy One, blessed be He. The angel Michael descended from heaven and took her to Egypt to the house of Poti-phaera. Asnat was worthy of being Joseph's wife, and Potifar's wife was barren, so she raised her like her own daughter. When Joseph went down to Egypt, he married her, as it says, "And he gave him Asnat, the daughter of Poti-phaera, the priest of On" (Gen. 41: 45).⁵⁶

R. Hayyim Vital comments, "All the events that took place for our ancestors, and all the Biblical stories, cannot be understood in their simple sense, and they are certainly not coincidences."⁵⁷ In our chapter "Dinah/Niddah," we quoted the Lurianic view that all of Dinah's impurity was transferred to Shechem. In the reincarnational approach that we develop in this chapter, purification happens across generations and in different marriages and sexual liaisons. This means that we have to tease out Dinah's destiny in each of these three marriages to witness how the process of tikkun takes place.

Dinah, Mother of Asnat

The midrash in Pirke d'Rebbi Eliezer links together the stories of Dinah, Joseph and Asnat, the daughter of Poti-phaera, his wife. According to this midrash, each of Jacob's sons was born with a twin sister who was intended to be his wife. Dinah's birth was something of a surprise, since she had no twin brother. This is why she was given the name Dinah, which indicates judgment and separation.

Dinah was the first to be born without a twin. Later, Joseph was born to Rachel, also without his twin wife. This was because Asnat, Dinah's daughter, was his destined soul-mate.⁵⁸ According to the midrash, Jacob's children are a unique breed who should not intermarry with the daughters of Canaan.

In this respect, they are similar to Cain and Abel. Other than their parents, who were they to marry? The rabbis maintained that Cain and Abel had twin sisters who became their wives.⁵⁹ In other words, the entire human race stems from incest. The rabbis derived divine dispensation for what we might regard as an unnatural practice from a juxtaposition of two biblical verses: 1.) "I declare, "the world is built on loving-kindness (hesed)" (Ps. 89:3) and 2.) "If a man marries his sister, the daughter of either his father or his mother, so that he sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is hesed," a word which we can suppose was used euphemistically instead of the normal word for disgrace. The Talmud understands that what became shameful to us after the Torah was given was not prior to its revelation

If the situation in which a brother marries his sister, like that of Cain and Abel or the sons of Jacob, is called hesed, then it makes perfect sense to call the first daughter to be born without a twin Dinah. The midrash also claims that Dinah's being born alone is what caused Shechem's attraction for her. Dinah is a solitary player, independent and open to change: "What did Shechem ben Hamor do? He brought girls that played on drums and Dinah went out to see these daughters of the land playing. He abducted her and laid with her. She became pregnant, and gave birth to Asnat."⁶⁰

When the Talmud lists the children who were born from improper sexual encounters, it calls them "the children of Asnat M'shaga'at" (meaning, "the Crazy") The initials of Asnat's name are an acronym created by the first letters of the words "the children of rape" (just as Asnat was born of rape), the "children of the hated one" (Leah, Asnat's grandmother, the wife Jacob despised), the "children of excommunication," and the "children of the one who was replaced."⁶¹ Asnat was the daughter of a woman who was raped, and the granddaughter's of a woman despised. As a result, she was regarded as an outsider. The midrash brings her back, by marrying her to Joseph. These two lost and hated children find each other when exiled in Egypt, wed, and have their own children.⁶²

This is a match that promises integration - a representative of the sexually assertive family of Leah marries someone who epitomizes the sexual abstinence so characteristic of her sister Rachel - Joseph "the righteous." The Rabbis view Joseph as a repetition of the Jacob figure, while Lurianic Kabbalah identifies Asnat with Leah.⁶³ The children born to the couple, Menashe and Ephraim, become virtual members of the tribes of Israel. Yet only half the tribe of Menashe enters the land, preferring instead to inherit the land of Og, king of Bashan. The Ari claims this is on account of the inherited stain: "Menashe was the son of Asnat the daughter of Dinah from Shehem, and because of this impurity he chose to stay outside of the land of Israel."⁶⁴ By the same token, the Ari claims Asnat as a "holy soul." The rest of her children (75%) were an integral part of Israel, together with the descendants of Rachel's beloved son Joseph.

Dinah, Job's Wife

The fact that R. Hayyim Vital adopts Pirke d'Rebbi Eliezer's version of the story of Asnat does not prevent his also adopting the midrashic version of the story in which Dinah gives birth to a son rather than a daughter - Shaul "the son of the Canaanite woman," who appears in the list of Shimon's sons. And Lurianic Kabbalah also adopts the version of the story in which Dinah becomes the wife of Job rather than of her brother Simon:

Know that Job and his wife are reincarnations of Terah and his wife, who were the parents of our father Abraham, of blessed memory. Amitlai, the daughter of Carnebo, who was mentioned by the Rabbis, was reincarnated in Dinah the daughter of Leah, and married Job...(Terah) slept with his wife during her menstrual impurity. You must know what the Zohar says, that a leper refers to he who has slept with a niddah.⁶⁵ This is why Job was smitten with boils, because boils is one of the types of leprosy. His (Terah's)

wife was reincarnated as Dinah the daughter of Leah (the wife of Job), since the same evil fate befell her - a Canaanite had intercourse with her (during her period), since they do not keep the laws of niddah. This is also the secret of how her impurity⁶⁶ was transferred to Shechem ben Hamor, as it says, "her impurity is communicated to him" (Lev. 15:24), for one who lays with a niddah absorbs all her impurity and uncleanness. Dinah was healed, but Job was smitten with boils. It seems to me that we also heard that Terah laid with a menstruating woman against her will. He was therefore smitten by boils, whereas she was not. She had to have sexual relations with a Canaanite in order to be purged of that impurity.

In the Zohar, as we have previously mentioned, burning fire symbolizes the niddah. We have suggested that if Dinah saw herself through her father Jacob's eyes, she must have felt herself to be a sort of meta-nidah. This self-image perpetuated an ancient saga which began at the time of Terah and his wife. The Talmudic story in which Dinah marries Job fits in well with such an approach, because boils are purported to result from an imbalance of fire. Job, according to the Ari, was a tikkun of Terah, Abraham's father. He was plagued with a fire which ravaged his body in order to compensate for the excess fire which caused him to lie with Amitlai, his wife in a previous incarnation. It must be that R. Hananyah ben Teradion, who was burnt at the stake by the Romans, was a reincarnation of Terah and Job in order to complete this cycle of tikkun. ????

(THERE WAS NOTHING ABOUT THIS IN THE HANANYAH BEN TERADYON CHAPTER. IS THERE A LURIA/VITAL SOURCE MISSING?)

What was Dinah's psychological state when she became Job's wife? Job's wife is characterized by her inability to deal with uncertainty. Her world has collapsed: her children have died, her house has been destroyed, her property has been looted, and her husband is smitten with boils. For Job's wife, a God who could act in such a way could only be an evil god, a god who deserves to be cursed, even though the punishment for such a curse might be life itself:

His wife said to him, "You still keep your integrity! Blaspheme God and die!" But he said to her, "You talk as any shameless woman might talk! Should we accept only good from God and not accept evil?" For all that, Job said nothing sinful. (Job 2: 9-10)

Unlike his wife, Job is capable of containing uncertainty. His fate is indeed bitter, but that in itself does not lead him astray. His wife and his three friends are tormented by questions that remain open, because they fear that any doubt is a negation of their religious stance.⁶⁷

If we consider Job's wife through rabbinic eyes, and identify her with Dinah, then we can better understand the story of a woman who knows only too much humiliation and suffering. Dinah was hated by her father, she knew a short-lived, brutal romance (beginning in rape) which was then severed by her hot-headed brothers, she was expelled from her family, and finally got married to a good hearted, successful man - Job. After years of living the good life, everything in her world collapses again, (with the Targum blaming Lilith).⁶⁸ Who can blame her for collapsing with it?

The book of Job, however, purports to have a happy ending. The unfortunate couple have new children and they acquire great riches. Dinah's last days with Job are pleasant and fulfilling, and the daughters to whom she gives birth after the catastrophe are the most beautiful in the world:

Thus the LORD blessed the latter years of Job's life more than the former. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand she- asses. He also had seven sons and three daughters. The first he named Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-

happuch. Nowhere in the land were women as beautiful as Job's daughters to be found. He gave them estates together with their brothers" (Job 42:12-15).

Unlike many women in the world of the Bible, including their unnamed mother, Job's daughters do have names. Furthermore, we cannot ignore the fact that, in contrast to the norms of the society in which he lived, Job bequeathed lands to his daughters as well as to his sons. If Job's wife is Dinah, the daughter of Leah, then her influence is likely to have been felt in ensuring her daughters' equal rights. We remember, of course, that Lilith had already demanded equality in the Garden of Eden. Her fighting spirit thus asserted itself first through Leah's relationship with Jacob, then through Dinah, who was independent ("born without a twin"), and eventually through Dinah's daughters who each received that which their contemporaries could only dream of - an inheritance equal to that of their brothers.⁶⁹

Dinah, Shimon's Wife and the Daughter of the Midianite Prince

We now turn to the third scenario, in which Dinah refused to leave Shechem's house until her brother Shimon promised to marry her. According to this approach, Shimon married her and raised the son she bore from her liaison with Shechem as if he were his own son.

"They took Dinah" - R. Yudin said: They dragged her out...R. Huna said: She said: Where will I hide my shame? Then Shimon swore that he would marry her. As the bible says (when numbering the sons of Shimon): "And Shaul the son of the Canaanite woman" (Gen46:10) - the son of Dinah who was impregnated by a Canaanite...R. Yehuda said: That he (Shimon) behaved like a Canaanite.⁷⁰

Lurianic Kabbalah also adopts this version of Dinah's story. In the view of the Ari, it is only fitting that Shimon marry Dinah, because he is linked to din and g'vurah, which are the sources of evil and the kelippot. This trait enables him to successfully contend with Dinah's problematic nature - the Lilithian side - which must be weaned of its addiction to evil and gradually nurtured back into Adam's arms. The sitra ahra, the demonic, "other side," is linked to the sefirah of din and gevurah. Shimon is rooted in this sefirah, and is thus a natural partner for Dinah. As R. Hayyim Vital puts it:

Afterwards, Shimon married her, as we know, because Reuben is hesed and Shimon is g'vurah, from where all the kelippot come...Shimon is sham avon (sin is there), because that is where sin, which is the sitra ahra, clings.⁷¹

Whoever enters upon a quest that leads him or her into questionable situations is in grave spiritual danger. Only greatness of soul can enable such a person to take these risks. Shimon was such a person. The greatness of his soul allowed him to marry his sister Dinah, an act which affected his descendants throughout the course of Jewish history.⁷²

In the book of Numbers we are told that, during their wanderings in the desert, Israel camped at Shittim. They were accosted by the Midianites, with whom they began to develop sexual and ritual ties, which were unacceptable to Israel's spiritual leadership. The rebels were led by the prince of the tribe of Shimon, Zimri ben Salu. Zimri is attracted to Cozbi bat Zur, a Midianite princess, and he is not willing to leave her, even though Moses, Aaron, and the elders demand that he do so. Pinhas, Aaron's grandson, takes his sword and, with one fell blow, he kills them both as they defiantly make love in the Tent of Meeting.⁷³ This action marks the end of a plague that was afflicting the Israelites (Num. 25:1-9).

As always, in order to better understand the way in which Lurianic Kabbalah relates to the biblical narrative, we first need to see how this particular story was discussed in rabbinic literature. The Rabbis maintained that Israel's fatal attraction to the Moabite and Midianite women resulted from seduction:

A (Moabite) girl would go out, adorned and perfumed, and seduce him (the Israelite man), and say to him: "Why do we love you when you despise us? Take this tool without paying! We are all the children of one father, Terah the father of Abraham! You say that you will not eat from our sacrifices and our cooking? Take these young calves and chickens - slaughter them according to your rules and eat!" She would then give him wine to drink, and the devil would burn in him, and he would err after her.⁷⁴

According to this midrash, the Moabite and Midianite women are professional seductresses. The one mentioned by name - Cozbi bat Zur - is the paradigm of a seductive women. Brazen seduction is also Lilith's primary weapon in her war against men. She takes advantage of men's weakness, and they succumb to her, becoming her bonded servants. It therefore is not surprising that the Ari reads Cozbi as one of Lilith's incarnations.

According to the rabbis, Cozbi had actually set her sights on Moses, but Zimri ben Salu, the prince of Shimon, desired her:

The tribe of Shimon approached Zimri ben Salu, and said to him: "They [Moses, Aaron and the elders] are sitting in judgment on capital offenses (see Num. 25: 4-5) and you sit in silence?" What did he do? He gathered twenty four thousand Israelites [the same number of Shimonites as died in the plague] and went to Cozbi.

He said to her, "Listen to me!"

She said to him, "I am a princess, and my father said to me, 'You must listen only to their leader.' He grabbed her by her hair and brought her to Moses.

He said to him, "Son of Amram, is she forbidden or permitted? If you say she is forbidden, who permitted the daughter of Jethro [Tzipporah, Moses's wife] to you?

Moses could not remember the halakha. As it says, "[the whole Israelite community] were weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting" (Num. 25: 6).⁷⁵

The Rabbis describe Zimri as brutal and violent. He grabs Cozbi by her hair and drags her against her will to Moses. The Rabbis view him as a rapist, since Cozbi is not interested in him, but rather in Moses. In Lurianic Kabbalah, Zimri is associated with another rapist, Shechem ben Hamor the Hivite, while Cozbi is identified with Dinah. The story of the rape thus repeats itself in a new incarnation.

Says the Ari, this act of Zimri's is directly related to the marriage of Shimon and Dinah. In order to substantiate the link between Zimri and Shechem the son of Hamor, the Ari quotes the rabbis, who state that Zimri ben Salu, the prince of the tribe of Simon, is in fact Shaul, Dinah's son from the rape by Shechem.⁷⁶ As the son of that relationship, Zimri(=Shaul) would naturally enter into a similarly illicit sexual relationship, according to the Ari's reincarnational thinking. This is how Lurianic Kabbalah represents the working out of the process of defilement and purification over several generations:

"Dinah's roots can be traced to the sefirah of gevurah – dina kashya (harsh judgment) – and this is why Shimon married her. Since she had not yet completed her purification process, the offspring of her sexual relationship with the Canaanite man – who is identified with the snake image, and who is cursed, as it says "Cursed be Canaan" (Gen. 9: 25) – was "Shaul, the son of the Canaanite woman" (Gen. 46:10). The rabbis explained that this means the son of Dinah who slept with a Canaanite. He is also known as Shlomiel ben Zurishadai, and also as Zimri ben Salu, as the rabbis have explained.⁷⁷

One would think that, by marrying Dinah, Shimon would be completely disassociating her from whatever had transpired between her and Shechem, but in the Ari's understanding of things, events are cyclical. In this intergenerational web, one of the descendants of Shimon is a reincarnation of the soul of Shechem himself. On the surface, Shimon does, of course, remove Dinah from Shechem's household and enable her to begin life anew. But she also brings all her past experiences with her – everything that occurred between her and the man who raped (and learned to love) her is still there. The story of Dinah and Shechem thus becomes Shimon's personal story.

When a person enters into a relationship with somebody who has experienced personal trauma in a previous relationship, he/she takes on the difficult role of becoming the screen upon which the image of the previous partner is projected. When Dinah is intimate with Shimon, she must certainly be reminded of her rape experience. There will almost certainly be times when all of her rage and her sense of humiliation will therefore erupt on Shimon. Shimon thus gets to be seen as the archetypal image of her original trauma. In Lurianic reincarnation theory, whenever real personalities and archetypal images overlap, there must necessarily be at least a partial connection. If the male image in Dinah's psyche contains both Shimon and Shechem, this implies that there is a profound empathy between them. Through the mythological expression of reincarnation, Shimon (in certain respects) becomes Shechem ben Hamor the moment he marries Dinah, the victim of rape. And Shimon's son finds expression in the personage of "the prince of the house of Shimon," Zimri ben Salu.

By the same token, Cozbi bat Zur embodies that Lilithness originally personified in Leah, and later inherited by Dinah. Zimri ben Salu who, in the eyes of the Rabbis and the Ari, is the spiritual son of Dinah, feels an erotic attraction to Cozbi, who represents an aspect of his mother. We have already discussed at length the Zoharic characterization of Leah as the embodiment of partzuf Leah and how, because Leah reminds him of his mother's nakedness, Jacob feels repulsed by her.⁷⁸ Here, on the other hand, in the Lurianic view, Zimri is drawn to Cozbi precisely because she reminds him of his mother. As R. Hayyim Vital puts it:

And due to the force of defilement [that of Shechem which was in Zimri's soul] he [Zimri] was drawn to Cozbi... because she too possessed residual kelippah traces from Dinah, the mother of Shaul [ben Hacanaanit, who was Zimri]. She was his true soul-mate, except that the time was not yet ripe, so she was not yet ready.⁷⁹

Zimri and Cozbi were heavenly soul-mates. These two souls are trying to put things together, but unsuccessfully. The first time around, he was a non-Jewish prince and she was Jacob's daughter; the second time around she was a non-Jewish princess, while he was already a chief of the tribe of Shimon.⁸⁰ From the point of view of Lurianic Kabbalah, Zimri's fatal attraction to Cozbi was both authentic and sincere, only untimely. This means to say that, in her non-Jewish state, Cozbi was like an unripe fruit. Zimri needed to wait until she would feel an urge to become part of the Jewish people; only then could their relationship be fully realized.

On the surface, the Torah praises Pinhas for acting forcefully, stilling the confusion by a swift blow of his sword. Pinhas was a zealot, and in return for his zeal to protect Israel's sanctity he was rewarded with eternal priesthood. Again, this is the obvious meaning of the text. If, however, the Ari is correct, and Zimri and Cozbi were in fact two unhappy souls who had been unsuccessfully attempting to become legitimately bonded for generations, how is it possible that they deserved the death sentence Pinhas meted out to them?

This question occupied R. Mordechai Yoseph of Izbetza in Mei Hashiloah. In his opinion, the deep connection between Zimri and Cozbi was that neither Moses nor Aharon did anything to stop them. The elders and the wise men saw this long-term tragedy in the making, and did not really know how to respond to it. Moses and Aharon watched and wept – “weeping at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting” (Num. 25:6). Only Pinhas, who, according to the Mei Hashiloah, was an impetuous youth, incapable of understanding deep things, could act in such a violent manner:

Pinhas...judged Zimri to be an adulterer...and he was totally unaware of Zimri’s deep inner nature, for she (Cozbi) was his soul-mate since the time of creation, as it was explained in the writings of the Ari. Even Moses, of blessed memory, did not want to intervene and decide that Zimri was deserving of the death sentence. Pinhas was therefore in this case like a youth, in that he could not comprehend the true depth of this matter. He was motivated by limited human intelligence. Even so, God loved him and could sanction his deed, since according to his limited understanding he had acted rightly in his zealotry, risking his life.⁸¹

Pinhas represents religious fundamentalism, which is often characterized by people who are incapable of seeing reality in a profound way. The more subtly you scan reality, the more you understand its multi-faceted nature. The zealot cannot. Precisely because of its superficiality, zealotry also cannot affect the deeper layers of reality. Pinhas can kill Zimri and Cozbi’s bodies, but their souls, incomprehensible to him, are not injured by his violent deed.

Zimri and Cozbi’s souls, which are actually the souls of Shechem and Dinah, descend into this plane of existence once again, in one of the most remarkable and little known stories of the Talmud: the story of Rabbi Akiva and the wife of Turnus Rufus the Wicked, discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 21: Rabbi Akiva and Turnus Rufus’s Wife

The story of Rabbi Akiva and his wife Rachel, the daughter of Calba Savua, is quite well known; her devotion and patience during the twenty-four years he spent apart from her are legendary.⁸² What is less widely known is that, according to Talmudic tradition, Rabbi Akiva also had another wife.⁸³ Since R. Akiva became a legend in his own time, it is difficult to sort out fact from fabrication in the talmudic stories about him. For our purposes, the mythic figure who emerges from the midrashic sources more than suffices to help us understand the place he assumed in Lurianic thought.

R. Akiva’s relationship with the nameless wife of the Roman commissioner Turnus Rufus⁸⁴ (the same man who would later condemn him to death),⁸⁵ appears in a talmudic discussion concerning the legitimacy of admiring the beauty of a non-Jewish woman. The discussion begins, categorically, by stating that a Jew must never praise the beauty of a non-Jew:

‘Do not show them grace’ (Deut. 7: 2) – do not impart grace to them. This supports Rav, who said “It is forbidden for a person to say ‘How beautiful is this idol worshipper.’”⁸⁶

The Talmud, however, does not immediately accept Rav’s opinion. Two stories of how great sages admired the beauty of Roman women are brought to contest it. The first story is about an encounter that occurred by the ruins of the Temple between Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel (who lived in the second generation after the destruction of the Temple) and a beautiful non-Jewish girl:

There is a story about Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel who was on a step on the Temple Mount, and saw a very beautiful non-Jewish woman. He said: “How great are Your works, O LORD” (Ps. 92:6).

R. Akiva also saw the wife of Turnus Rufus the Wicked. He spat, laughed, and cried: He spat – since she was created out of a foul drop. He laughed – since in the future she would convert, and he would marry her. He cried – at such beauty that would one day be buried in the earth.⁸⁷

In response to these two stories, the Talmud says that even Rav would agree with Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Akiva, for Rav was the author of another law stating that whoever sees beautiful people should say the blessing: “Who has created such in His world.” The stories are brought to resolve the contradiction between Rav’s two statements. Beauty, whether non-Jewish or Jewish, should be acknowledged and blessed.

The enigmatic meeting between R. Akiva and the wife of the Roman commissioner has garnered very detailed talmudic commentary, possibly on the basis of a midrash that has been lost to us. One of the standard commentaries tells us that Turnus Rufus used to debate philosophical questions with R. Akiva from time to time, as was customary for Roman nobles. R. Akiva always won these debates:

He once came home angry and in a bad humor. His wife said to him, Why are you in such a bad mood? He said to her, because of R. Akiva, who argues with me about all manner of things daily. She said to him, Their (the Jews’) God hates sexual impropriety. Give me permission, and I will cause him to sin.

He gave her permission, she adorned herself, and went to R. Akiva.⁸⁸

One wants to penetrate this terseness and ask how a Roman matron could arrange for a situation in which she and R. Akiva would find themselves alone in a secluded spot, and once there, how she might have gone about seducing him. She was obviously quite certain that no man – not even the most esteemed among the rabbis – could resist her charms. All we get is R. Akiva’s reaction, which, presumably, has been abridged by the Talmud. “When R. Akiva saw her, he spat, he laughed, and he cried.” The commentary amplifies the scene:

She said to him: What are these three things? He said to her: Two I will explain, the third I will not...I spat because you were created from an odious drop. I cried because of this beauty that will be swallowed in the earth. And he laughed, because he knew that in the future she would convert and marry him, and this he did not want to tell her.⁸⁹

Even with the two explanations he gave, R. Akiba’s behavior must have been extremely confusing – spitting in disgust, laughing in secret expectation, crying in despair. At this moment she undergoes what we can only call a break-through moment. Akiba has challenged her sense of self challenge her sense of self, of men, and of the Jewish sages:

She said to him: Is there repentance? He said to her, Yes!

She went and converted, married R. Akiva, and brought him many riches.⁹⁰

R. Akiva thus redeems the Lilithian aspect of Turnus Rufus’s wife.⁹¹ She approaches him illicitly, to seduce, and he causes her instead to come towards him in a way that is permitted by law, by means of conversion. It is no simple matter for the wife of a Roman commissioner to leave her people in order to become part of a persecuted nation. Her conversion is an emphatic expression of the spiritual metamorphosis she has undergone during this encounter with the great sage.

According to Lurianic Kabbalah, the wife of Turnus Rufus is an incarnation of the soul of Cozbi bat Zur, whereas R. Akiva is an incarnation of Zimri ben Salu: "Zimri is R. Akiva, who is his tikkun. And Cozbi's tikkun is the matron (i.e. the wife of Turnus Rufus)." ⁹²

One of the threads to tie the story of Zimri and Cozbi to the story of R. Akiva and the wife of Turnus Rufus is the number 24,000. Twenty four thousand descendants of Shimon ⁹³ died in the plague which came as a punishment for Zimri and Cozbi's illicit relationship. And 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiba died in a plague because, the Talmud says, they had no respect for each other. ⁹⁴ Lurianic Kabbalah connects these two facts and the larger stories within which they are embedded:

...And Zimri was Dinah's son from before Shimon married her...and the 24,000 that were killed from the tribe of Shimon...are the 24,000 students of R. Akiva that died because they did not respect one another, since they remembered the sin of Shittim from which they were not yet purified, until all died a second death together. ⁹⁵

In light of this, the 18th century Polish kabbalist, R. Yonatan Eibeshutz, provides an alternative explanation of R. Akiva's behavior towards the wife of Turnus Rufus. In his opinion, R. Akiva was not weeping only for the Roman matron's beauty which would one day disappear, but also because the meeting between them would lead to the death of 24,000 people:

We know what the Ari said, that Zimri was reincarnated in R. Akiva, and Cozbi in the wife of Turnus Rufus the Wicked. This is the reason that she converted and R. Akiva married her, because she was worthy of Zimri, except that she was unripe. This is why when he saw her, he cried and laughed. He laughed because he would marry her, and cried because of the previous incarnation, when there was a plague in Israel, which caused the deaths of twenty four thousand people, who were the students of R. Akiva. ⁹⁶

R. Akiva is in no hurry to get anywhere. He realizes that, though certain things may seem right at first glance, they often need to go through a lengthy process before they can be realized. This is something that Zimri ben Salu could not understand. He instinctively felt the connection between himself and Cozbi bat Zur, but he did not have the patience to clarify the nature of their relationship. In rabbinic and kabbalistic language, this over-hastiness to partake of something not yet sanctified is compared to eating unripe fruit. As R. Eibeshutz said, she was "worthy" of Zimri, but "unripe."

Among the issues debated by R. Akiva and Turnus Rufus was a discussion, quoted by the Ari, which also sheds light on the nature of the ties between R. Akiva and the commissioner's wife.

Once Turnus Rufus the Wicked asked R. Akiva whose acts are more perfect, those of humanity or those of God. He (R. Akiva) answered him; Those of humanity are more beautiful.

Turnus Rufus said to him: Behold the heavens and the earth. Can humanity create anything that compares to them?

R. Akiva said to him: Do not talk to me about things which are beyond (the reach of) created beings, over which they have no control. Talk rather about things that are accessible to people.

He said to him: Why do you circumcise?

He answered him: I knew you were going to ask me that, which is why I answered that human being's deeds are more beautiful than God's. R. Akiva brought him oats and loaves of bread. He said to him: This is God's work, and this is humanity's work. He said to him – are these not better than the oats?

Turnus Rufus said to him: If God desires circumcision, why are babies born uncircumcised?

R. Akiva said to him: And why does the umbilical cord come out attached to the infant's stomach, so that his mother must cut it? And as for what you asked, why a baby is not born circumcised, that is because God gave the commandments to Israel in order to refine them. This is why David said "The word of the LORD is pure" (Ps.18:31)⁹⁷

The Roman is in favor of things just as they are, whereas R. Akiva advocates upgrading nature for human usage. He therefore explains that the natural state of creation does not always express the most desirable situation for humanity: Wheat is only edible when it has been ground into flour, mixed with water and yeast, and baked. This is also how the Ari understands this issue:

And behold, on week-days one works, because work implies that things need to be fixed through actions. For, if the Holy One, blessed be He, had already created His world as it will be in the future...people would not have to do any work in order to eat. Now, however, we must plow and sow, etc., and separate the chaff and the straw and the bran which are all husks, and then expose it to fire, i.e. baking and cooking, and only then is it complete and fixed. And so it is with all work. As R. Akiva said to Turnus Rufus the Wicked about the tormouses that needed to be sweetened, and the wheat, etc.⁹⁸

According to the Ari, the quintessential Jewish sage is defined by his ability to understand that things are not necessarily all they they appear to be on the surface. Rather than succumb to Lilith and be seduced by her charms, R. Akiva saw immediately that she was his soul-mate, but his extraordinary patience⁹⁹ enabled him to restrain himself from acting on his impulses, as Zimri had with Cozbi. R. Akiva's self-overcoming enabled him to help her overcome herself. At first she had believed herself capable of any nefarious seduction, like Lilith – little caring for true love. Her intention had been to deploy her sexuality as a weapon with which to destroy the Jewish sage. But R. Akiva's great wisdom and patience turned her plans on their head. R. Akiva initiated Rufina into her spiritual quest.

According to the Ari, through his marriage to Turnus Rufus's wife, R. Akiva fixed all of the previous unsuccessful relationships connected to his soul-root. He was not, however, only an incarnation of Zimri. Just as every woman who has Lilith in her soul is also said to have Leah in her soul, so too, every man who has relations with such a woman has an aspect of Jacob, especially R. Akiva, whose name is composed of the same letters as Jacob's name, with the addition of only one letter:¹⁰⁰

Know that R. Akiva is similar to our father Jacob, of blessed memory. This is why Akiva is composed of the same letters as Jacob, (with the addition of) an aleph. Just as Jacob shepherded his father-in-law's sheep, so too did R. Akiva. And just as Jacob had two wives, so R. Akiva had two wives, the daughter of Calba Savua and the wife of Turnus Rufus the Wicked.

The daughter of Calba Savua parallels Rachel, while the wife of Tornosrufus parallels Leah.¹⁰¹

In Kabbalistic thought, Moses and Jacob are identified with each other. The Tikkuney Zohar explains that Moses represents the internal side of the Great Shepherd, while Jacob represents the external side.¹⁰² Continuing in this vein, Lurianic Kabbalah identifies R. Akiva with both Moses and Jacob.¹⁰³ Moses, too, according to this approach, had two wives, Tzipporah the daughter of Jethro the priest of Midian, and "the Ethiopian woman that he took" (Num. 12:1):

R. Akiva was a spark of Moses's soul. He was Calba Savua's shepherd, and what happened to him, (was like what happened to) our teacher Moses, of blessed memory, (who would shepherd) the sheep of

Jethro, and (like what happened to) Jacob, who (shepherded) the sheep of Laban. He also married the daughter (of Calba Savua), who was parallel to Rachel and Tzipporah, and then the wife of Turnus Rufus, just like Moses married the Queen of Ethiopia.¹⁰⁴

The Bible does not go into detail about the nature of the relationship between Moses and the Ethiopian woman. Among the Rabbis there is a difference of opinion as to whether this refers to a second wife taken by Moses, or whether it actually means his wife Tzipporah, who is called an “Ethiopian woman.”¹⁰⁵

A midrashic tradition exists to explain what happened to Moses between the time he ran away from Pharaoh’s palace up until the time when he reappeared to redeem Israel. This tradition tells us that Moses became an African king who married the previous king’s wife, although he never had sexual contact with her.¹⁰⁶ The Ari sees the Ethiopian woman as Moses’s first wife, who, as in the case of Adam and Jacob, was also the problematical woman, characterized as Lilith. The second woman, Tzipporah, is the legitimate wife, who parallels Eve and Rachel. For R. Akiva, who was the tikkun of both Moses and Jacob, Rachel, the daughter of Calba Savua, was Rachel-Tzipporah-Eve, while the wife of Turnus Rufus was Leah, the Ethiopian woman, and Lilith. In the Ari’s opinion, the fact that Moses refrained from sexual relations with the Ethiopian woman implied his own lack of perfection. Until R. Akiva’s time, there were either men who rejected Lilith – such as Jacob, who rejected Leah or Moses, who abstained from being with the Ethiopian woman – and there were men who wanted her immediately, such as Shechem ben Hamor or Zimri ben Salu. R. Akiva was the first to give Lilith a place in his world without taking immediate (sexual) advantage of her, thereby allowing her to first shed her negative kelippot.

Lilith’s greatest kelippah is her own self-image, imposed on her by an hostile and oppressive male-dominated society. She internalized the view that she could only be an evil woman, and this self-image was one of the tools by which that society buttressed itself against her. As long as Lilith identifies herself as Lilith, she reinforces the basic cultural assumptions of the patriarchate. R. Akiva, however respected Rufina’s Lilithian beauty, and was moved to tears by it. His tears come to prove that feminine beauty is both sacred and divine.

When martyred by Turnus Rufus’s brutal soldiers, R. Akiva said the Shema, and his soul departed when he said the word ehad – one.¹⁰⁷ Lurianic Kabbalah views this moment as R. Akiva’s final attempt to unify the two sides of the feminine within God, partzuf Rachel with partzuf Leah, Lilith with Eve. “The reason R. Akiva’s soul left his body as he said the word ehad was that his intention was to unify the secret of the higher kisses.”¹⁰⁸ In addition to Zimri ben Salu, who redeems the soul of Dinah/Cozbi bat Zur, R. Akiva had other reincarnations. In Lurianic Kabbalah, no one has only one incarnation. The Ari sees R. Akiva not only as a reincarnation of Zimri ben Salu, but also as the patriarch, Jacob, and as his son, Issachar. He is also part of the constellation of souls to descend from Cain, such as Esau, Jacob’s brother.¹⁰⁹ The focus on R. Akiva as a climax of previous reincarnations and tikkunim had special significance in Lurianic Kabbalah, because a spark of Akiva’s soul, according to the Ari, was contained in that of his chief disciple, R. Hayyim Vital.¹¹⁰

In Lurianic Kabbalah, then, each person is invited to see himself or herself as an accumulation of various souls – which we can see as psychological processes bound together in a unique pattern at a specific point in time and space. A variety of different attributes of souls are involved in any one individual. In the example of R. Akiva, every aspect of his personality is a continuation of a different narrative line, a different incarnation, combined in the one-time conglomeration known as R. Akiva. Below, we summarize this part of our investigation by listing those aspects of R. Akiva that are related to Lilith’s clarification process:

1.) R. Akiva, an extremely influential leader of rabbinic Judaism, is considered the father of the Oral Torah.¹¹¹ In this role he is an incarnation of the patriarch Jacob. His first wife, Rachel, is a reincarnation of the matriarch Rachel,¹¹² while Rufina, his second wife, is a reincarnation of Leah-Lilith.

2) As a great and wise sage, he is capable of penetrating to the core of any specific issue. This is symbolized by Issachar, the son of Jacob, whose tribe was peopled by “possessors of understanding.”¹¹³ If R. Akiva is Issachar, the son of Jacob and Leah, and Rufina his wife is a reincarnation of his mother Leah, then their marriage is a clear case of the oedipal motif, in which the son marries his mother.¹¹⁴

3.) R. Akiva successfully encounters a foreign seductress¹¹⁵ and heals the soul of Zimri ben Salu.

4.) The courageous, assertive *din* aspect of R. Akiva’s personality is associated with the fact that he also descends from Cain, the son of Adam and Eve. Cain, the first murderer, is considered by the Zohar to express the shadow side of Adam and Eve’s marriage.¹¹⁶

5.) Since he descended from converts,¹¹⁷ R. Akiva is also identified with Esau, Jacob’s brother, the quintessential non-Jew for rabbinic Judaism. Using our Lurianic understanding, we can say that he is associated with the sacred in Esau, which, by virtue of his being the first-born, was considered qualitatively greater than that of his twin.

Despite being so intimately involved in Lilith’s long-term clarification process, R. Akiva alone could not complete her *tikkun*. He was still one man with two wives – Rachel and the wife of Turnus Rufus. Redemption would require one man with one wife, who could uni in herself these two opposing faces of women. In Lurianic Kabbalah, this ideally unified figure is best represented by Ruth the Moabite, whom we treat in the final section of this work.

FOOTNOTES

1. In technical Kabbalistic terminology, the realm of the secular is known as kelippat noga. This is a thin shell located between the fruit and the outer peel, like the white skin of an orange. It can be related to as part of the fruit, or it can be peeled off as part of the rind. In his famous work, Tanya, R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady went to great lengths in order to emphasize that, whenever the “elevation of sacred sparks” is discussed in Hasidut, it refers to those sparks hidden from the secular world. The hard outer shell, which symbolizes evil and sin, cannot be “eaten,” i.e. liberated by man. He thus distinguishes between Hasidic theory and the Sabbatean Kabbalistic thought of Nathan of Azza and Frankist ideas that were current around the same time that Hasidism was developing in Poland. Sabbateanism explicitly sought to elevate those sacred sparks held captive in the realms of evil, sin, and unholiness. Hasidism, according to R. Shneur Zalman, gives no sway to such ideas. Man can only elevate to the realm of the sacred “that which was originally under the influence of kelippat noga and received its life-force from her. By this we mean all things that are pure and permissible, and which may be used for the performance of the mitzvot, like animal skins which are made into parchment in order to write tefillin, mezuzot, and Torah scrolls. As the Rabbis said, ‘Only those things which are pure and permissible for you to eat may be used for the heavenly work’ (REF.) The etrog fruit (used on Sukkot) also falls into this category, as long as it is not orla (orla – fruit which is less than three years old and therefore forbidden by the Torah – comes from those three kelippot that are totally unclean and can never be elevated, as it says in Etz Hayyim. This is also the case with a mitzvah that is observed through sin, God forbid). (Another example would be) money given for charity, etc., etc. When a person uses them to do God’s will, their essential life-force is released and becomes a part of the Infinite Light” (Tanya, section 1, chap. 37).

2. Take, for example, today’s mitnagdim (those who oppose/d the Hasidic movement), who have already taken on many of the basic precepts of Hasidism. They cannot really understand why the Baal Shem Tov and his vision were so problematical for their precursors. Another example is the fate of the teachings of Jesus within Judaism. R. Nahman of Breslov may have consciously decided to adapt certain aspects of Christianity, writing, for example, that “by telling everything to a wise man one is forgiven for all of one’s sins” (Liqutei Etzot, Tzaddik, 7), a comment that is clearly reminiscent of Christian theology.

3. In psychological terms, we could say that cultural mores compose the superego of a revolutionary, but his greatness is expressed by the fact that he does not identify God’s voice with his superego. There is therefore an inner conflict between the religion of the masses, whose spokesperson is the super-ego, and the religion of the heart, which speaks in the still small voice of the innermost self. A person’s ability to integrate these two opposites determines how difficult it will be for society to assimilate his message. If he successfully expresses his inner vision through the conceptual tools of the super-ego, society can hear his voice, and he can heal his own inner schism. If, on the other hand, he is incapable of doing so, his own conflict will intensify. The gap between the cultural language of his time and the radical new concepts he presents grows to the point wherein he may even be perceived as an “enemy of the state.” He becomes his own worst enemy, torn by intense inner turmoil. (See the article “Souls from the world of Chaos” by Rabbi A. Y. Kook, in his book Orot. He understands the tension between the way Jewish tradition evolved in the Diaspora on the one hand, and the need to “renew the people’s spirit” in modern times on the other). For more on the Self as the source of authentic religious experience, see Ezrahi, Two Cherubs, p. 100.

4. R. Mordehai Yoseph of Ishbetz, Mei Hashiloah, parshat Toldot, entry beginning with the words “And Isaac loved Jacob.”

5. “Eventually,” because this is not how things began. At first, Esau remained at home with his parents, while Jacob went east, to Padan Aram, to the house of Laban of Aram.

6. R. Hayyim Vital, Ma’amar P’siyotav shel Avraham Avinu

7. SAME REFERENCE?

8. This is another one of the symbolic motifs linking Leah to partzuf Imma in the Kabbalah. Leah has six sons and one daughter, exactly like those sefirot born of the womb of mother Binah. They are the six male sefirot (from hesed to yesod) and one female sefirah, malhut (see for example R. Haim Vital, Sha’ar Ma’amarei Razal on tractate Shabbat, 34/a).

9. R. Hayyim Vital, Ma’amar P’siyotav shel Avraham Avinu

10. R. Haim Vital, Ma’amar P’siyotav shel Avraham Avinu.

11. The midrash asks “Is she not the daughter of Jacob,” and goes on to say that the biblical verse links her to her mother to emphasize their similar behavior as “prostitutes.” See Tanhuma Vayishlach, Ch. 7, quoted above. See also Y.Sanhedrin 13b (free translation from the Aramaic): “What is the meaning of the verse (Ez. 16:44). ‘Behold, anyone that uses proverbs shall use this proverb against you, saying, Like mother, like daughter?’ Was our mother Leah considered a prostitute?, as it says, ‘And Dinah went out’? He answered him: Since it also says ‘And Leah went out’, we derive one ‘going out’ from the other.”

12. Lit. “a city of gold,” which was a very expensive piece of gold jewelry, worn by women during Mishnaic times, as we find mentioned at numerous points in the mishna (Shabbat 6:1; Eduyot 2:7; Kelim 11:8). R. Akiva, for example, said to his wife Rachel: “If I were able, I would buy you a Jerusalem of Gold” (B. Nedarim 50a.) See also Ezrahi, Two Cherubs, pp. 66-67.

13. Midrash Tanhuma, Vayishlach, Ch. 8.

14. The word used here is padranit. This appears to be similar to pazranit, which implies dispersion.

15. Midrash Tanhuma, Vayishlach, Ch. 8.

16. Midrash Tanhuma, Vayetze, chap. 8. Note that the JPS translation, “Last, she bore him a daughter,” provides no occasion for the midrash. See R. David Luria (Radal), in his commentary on Pirke d’Rebbi Eliezer (chap. 38,4), who maintains that a trace of masculinity was left in Dinah’s soul, which is why she ‘went out’ like a man: “Because she should have been a male, and through Leah’s prayers she became a woman...there was a man’s nature in her, that is why she went out to the marketplace.”

17. Sha’ar HaPesukim – parshat Vayetze, with a comment that this quotation comes from someone other than the Ari.

18. “‘He (Jacob) arose and took his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven children...’ (Gen 32:23): Where was Dinah? He put her in a box and locked it. He said: This wicked man has a sharp eye (for women). He may see her and want to take her away from me.” (Bereishit Rabba, 76, 9). The rabbis (in B. Sanhedrin 64a and also in B. Yoma 69b) offer a similar description of the attempt made by the men of the Great Assembly to weaken the power of the evil inclination – they describe the corralled inclination as a young lion made of fire who is put in a leaden barrel” (see Ezrahi, Two Cherubs, pp. 2-3).

19. Bereishit Rabba, 76, 9.

20. See Rashi on Gen. 32:23, based on the previously quoted midrash: “‘And his eleven children’ – where was Dinah? He put her in a chest and locked it, so that Esau would not see her. Jacob was therefore punished for withholding her from his brother, because she might have caused him to repent. Instead, she fell into the hands of Shechem.” Note that the rape of Dinah is regarded as a punishment for Jacob, and not for Dinah, the victim of the rape.

21. Sha’ar HaPesukim – parshat Vayetze. “And this is the reason for ‘Isaac favored Esau because he had a taste for game’ (Gen. 25:28) – a side of him had holy sparks of gevurah from his father Isaac, which were in his mouth and ‘digested’ by him. Isaac’s intention was to mend these sparks, which were parts of his own soul, and were only in Esau’s head, not in the rest of his body. This is why Esau’s head was buried in the cave of Machpela together with Isaac. Understand this well.”

22. See Tanhuma, Vayishlah, chap. 8. Sefer Habahir, 60, and Rashi on tractate Sotah, 29a, entry beginning with the words “ein leha.” See also Margoliot, Malahei Elyon, p. 259, and I. Pintel, REF.

23. Kohelet Rabba, 10, 9. There are erotic undertones here, as in the story of the Snake and Eve in the Garden of Eden – “the serpent duped (hisiani) me, and I ate” (Gen.3:13; the word hisiani can also be translated as “married me,” like the word nisu’in. As the Rabbis said in B. Shabbat “the snake copulated with Eve” REFERENCE

24. Sha’ar HaPesukim – parshat Vayetze.

25. Sha’ar HaPesukim – parshat Vayetze. For “The wife of harlotry,” see Zohar, Parshat Vayetze, 148a, based on Hosea 1:2; the idea that “any given prostitute is Lilith” underpins the identification of the two prostitutes who came to Solomon to be judged (I Kings 3:16: ‘Later two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him’) as Lilith and her good friend Mahlat. In the book Kehillat Yaakov, in the entry on ‘two women prostitutes,’ it says that: “Mahlat is responsible for joy, laughter, and dance...and Lilith wails (m’yalelat)...in the days of Solomon these two female prostitutes were subdued.” Prostitution has two faces: that of hilula (partying) and y’lala (wailing). Hilula is externally focused, while y’lala is a broken-hearted cry. Lilith represents the inner face, the hidden side, the prostitute who cries alone in her bed at night.

26. REFERENCE

27. “R. Hanan bar Rava said in the name of Rav: Amitlai the daughter of Carnebo was the mother of Abraham. Amitlai the daughter of Orvati was the mother of Haman, which is hinted at in the words ‘Impure, impure, pure, pure’” (B. Baba Batra, 91a). Rashbam explains these associations: Since the mothers of Isaac and Jacob are mentioned, we should also know the name of Abraham’s mother. Since their names are similar, the Rabbis also tell us Haman’s mother’s name. Carnebo comes from the word karim (pillows) made of lamb’s wool which are pure, just as Abraham is pure. Ravens (orev, like Orvati) are impure, just as Haman was impure. REFERENCE FOR RASHBAM.

28. NEED REFERENCE.

29. The secret of this matter is explained by R. Haim Vital in his book Likutei Torah, where he explicitly relates to Abraham’s soul and the time of his conception: “When a very holy soul is in captivity amongst the external powers, they receive life-force through it, and do not allow it to leave. Only when they see a very damaged place do they allow that soul to enter it, so that it will become even more damaged due to

its stay there, and return to them in even worse shape than it was, so that it will remain with them for a long time. Guard this secret, as it says 'It is glory for God to conceal matters' (REF). Terah had sexual intercourse with Amitlai during her period. When the kelippot saw such an impure situation – Terah, an idol worshipper and his wife, an idol worshipper too – and as if this was not enough, he also slept with her during her period, the kelippah said, I will certainly find no better place and it then allowed Abraham's soul to leave its domain, and it entered there (into Amitlai's womb). For Abraham's soul was originally in their power, which is why he is called a righteous convert, since his roots are in the kelippah and impurity... This is the explanation for the fact that there are very great people who are children of wicked people..." (VITAL REF.) We were told by the Rebbe of Belz in 1984 that Jews who returned to their religion were great souls that had been conceived while their mothers were menstrually impure.

30. R. Haim Vital, Likutei Torah, parshat Vayishlah.

31. R. Haim Vital, Sha'ar HaPesukim, the book of Job.

32. Zohar III, 79a.

33. Zohar, III, 79a cont.

34. See B. Hullin 60b

35. Zohar III, 79a.

36. Midrash Tehillim, psalm 146.

37. The Ramban writes in his commentary on the Torah (Lev. 18:19), that the offensive attitude caused by a nidah was the opinion of the non-Jewish scholars of his era: "Menstrual blood...is poisonous; it will kill any animal that eats or drinks it...and true experience was described, and this is a natural phenomenon, because a menstruating woman, at the beginning of her period, if she looks into a mirror for an extended period of time, red drops of blood will appear on the mirror, because the damaging, evil forces of nature in her are negative, and the evil air gets stuck to the mirror, and she is like a viper who kills solely by virtue of his gaze. It goes without saying that she causes damage to a person who sleeps with her, when both her body and mind cling to his. This is why the Torah states 'And her menstrual impurity shall be on him' (Lev. 15), because this evilness is a contagious evilness ... And she is forbidden to the holy seed (of Israel) all the days of her ritual uncleanness, until she bathes in water, when even her mind will be purified, and she becomes completely cleansed." In the Ramban's opinion, (in his commentary on Gen. 31:35), these facts were known to the ancient masters, which is why they ostracized the menstruating woman: "It appears to me that in former times menstruating woman were sent very far away, as they are called niddah which means distanced (or ostracized), so that they will not come close to any man or speak to him. The ancients knew that their breath is injurious, their gaze is also dangerous, and leaves a negative impression, as the philosophers have explained... and they would sit alone in a tent into which no man enters. Just as the Rabbis said in a breita in tractate Niddah: 'A wise man should not inquire as to the health of a menstruating woman. R. Nehemia said: Even the words that come out of her mouth are unclean. R. Yohanan said: A man should not walk after a menstruating woman and step on the ground she walked on, as it is unclean, just like a dead person. It is also forbidden to derive any benefit from anything she does.'" (REF).

38. "A man should be wary of a woman during her menstrual flow, because she is connected to the spirit of impurity. If she performs sorcery during that time, it will be very successful, since the spirit of impurity dwells within her, and therefore anything or anyone that approaches her becomes unclean" (1 126b.)

39. Since concerning the matron (the Shehina) it says "You are entirely beautiful, my beloved, and have no blemish," (REF) someone with a defect should not approach her ... This is the reason for the commandment "Do not come near a woman during her menstrual impurity" (Lev. 18:19). And concerning those who do approach her then it says "And they offered before the LORD alien fire, which He had not enjoined upon them. And fire came forth from the LORD, and consumed them; thus they died (Lev 10:1-2). Raya Mehemna, Zohar III parshat Tzav, 33b. The author goes on to describe man and woman's sexual energies as descending fire and ascending fire that meet in the temple on the altar: "Man and woman are ascending and descending fire. The holy fire of the altar wood, which is holy wood and holy limbs. And the heavenly fire descends, which is the holy of holies. And because of these two fires it says 'We will bring God's glory with brands of flame' (REF), which refers to the fire of the shekhinah."

40. In order to appreciate the degree of intimacy expressed in the words "he spoke to the young maiden tenderly (lit. "spoke to the heart"), it is worthwhile to compare them to the words of the prophet Hosea: "Assuredly,/ I will speak coaxingly to her/ And lead her through the wilderness/ And speak to her tenderly ("speak to her heart"... And in that day/ declares the LORD, you will call me Ishi, my husband, and no more will you call Me Baali, "my Baal," punning on the word for husband and the name of a prominent Canaanite deity (Hos 2: 16, 18). A midrash describes Shechem's relationship to Dinah as an example of God's loving relationship to Israel: "MY son Shechem longs for your daughter... R. Simon ben Lakish said: God expressed His love of Israel through three expressions of love: d'veikut, hashika, hafitza (attachment, desire/longing, want). D'veikut as it says "And you that cling (d'veikim) to the Lord your God" (Deut. REF),. Hashika as it says "God desired (hashak) you" (REF), Hafitza as it says "And you will be to Me the land I want" (hafetz; REF). And we also derive this principle from the section which deals with that wicked man. D'veikut as it says "and his soul clung to the soul of Dinah bat Yaakov. Hashika as it says "Shehem my son longs for your daughter." Hafitza as it says, "For he wanted the daughter of Jacob." R. Aba ben Elisha added on two more (expressions of love): ahavah (love) and dibbur (speech). Ahava as it says, I have loved you, says the Lord. Dibbur as it says, Speak to the heart of Jerusalem. And we derive this, also, from the section dealing with that wicked man. Ahava – "And he loved the young girl." Dibbur – "And he spoke to the young girl's heart" – words that comfort the heart (Yalqut Shimonei Gen. chap. 34, remez 134).

41. The passage begins: "I heard from my teacher of blessed memory, that the letters of the word rahavat – are the initials of R. Hananyah ben Tradion. VITAL REFERENCE.

42. "The Rabbis said: When R. Yossi ben Kisma was sick, R. Hananyah ben Teradion went to visit him. He said to him: Hananyah my brother, do you not know that this nation (Rome) was appointed by heaven to rule? It destroyed His house, burned His temple, killed His followers, destroyed His possessions, and it still exists! And I have heard say that you sit and study Torah in public with a Torah scroll in your lap! He answered him: Heaven will have mercy on me. He said to him: I speak logically with you and you answer me that heaven will have mercy? I wonder if in the end they will not burn you together with the Torah" (B. Avodah Zarah 18b).

43. R. Haim Vital, Sha'ar HaPesukim, parshat Vayetze.

44. See citation above, from Raya Mehemna, Zohar III parshat Tzav, 33b.

45. B. Avodah Zarah 18a

46. See Goodblatt, "The Beruriah Traditions," cited above, who argues that the Beruriah traditions and the traditions of a daughter of R. Hananyah ben Teradyon were originally separate and combined together in the Babylonian Talmud.

47. B. Avodah Zarah 18a

48. B. Avodah Zarah 18a, cont. Contrary to this sanctimonious opinion of R. Meir, see the story of R. Meir in Midrash Aseret Ha-Dibrot, which portrays him as putting himself in a suggestive situation, where he was made drunk and then raped by a married female admirer, a story which functions as the tradition's "answer" to the misogynist fable of the "Beruriah incident." It has been translated in *Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature*, ed. David Stern and Mark Jay Mirsky (JPS, 1990), 107-10.

49. B. Eruvin 53a; The fact that R. Meir was a student of Elisha ben Avuya, a Talmudic sage and mystic who left conventional religion, must have also affected the opinions of his colleagues as to the acceptability of his halachic rulings. See the talmudic saying that encapsulates R. Meir's attitude to his teacher – "R. Meir found a pomegranate. He ate the fruit, and threw out the shell" (B. Hagigah 15b).

50. "Know that R. Meir's soul was from the back of the neck of partzuf Leah ... which is the place of attachment at the end of Ze'eir Anpin's neck... This is what is meant by the statement that the Rabbis did not understand R. Meir (lit. "did not descend to the end of his knowledge")... This means... the back of the da'at of Leah." R. Hayyim Vital, *Likutei HaShas* – tractate Eruvin, in the Ari's name. Partzuf Leah is located in the back of the partzuf of Ze'eir Anpin, parallel to his upper torso, from the top of his head until his navel. From that point down, Rachel is located. The soul of R. Meir emerges from the spot where Leah and Ze'eir Anpin meet. The back of Leah's neck connects to the bottom of Ze'eir Anpin's neck. This is how the Ari understands the talmudic tale about R. Meir, in which R. Judah the Prince said that he achieved his high level because once, as a child, he saw R. Meir's back: "Rabbi said – The reason that I am more dignified than my colleagues is because I saw R. Meir's back. Had I seen his face, I would have been even more dignified" (Eruvin, 53a). A person's face is a reflection of his innermost soul, while his back symbolizes his disguise. Thus, R. Judah saw R. Meir's back.

51. R. Hayyim Vital, *Sha'ar HaPesukim*, Parshat Vayetze.

52. In this Lurianic reading of the legend, it seems, that R. Meir's verbal test of his sister-in-law was not conclusive and that he saw her as indeed a fallen woman.

53. B. Yoma 78b. If we were to read this section from a Kabbalistic perspective, we would say that the king and the bride in this instance are the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Shekhina.

54. *Bereshit Rabbah*, 80,11.

55. B. Baba Batra, 15a.

56. *Pirke d'Rebbi Eliezer*, chap. 37; We have used the wording chosen by the Radal in his commentary on *Pirke d'Rebbe Eliezer*, and also by the *Yalkut Shimoni*, Gen. 34,134.

57. R. Hayyim Vital, *Ma'amar P'siyotov shel Avraham Avinu*.

58. Pirke d'Rebbi Eliezer, chap. 37. A similar opinion is expressed in Bereshit Rabbah (82,8) in the name of R. Yehoshua, who lived at the same time as R. Eliezer: He (a Roman officer to R. Yehoshua's two students) said to them: This is not what your teacher R. Yehoshua taught. Each and every son was born together with a twin, as Abba Halfoi ben Koria said: An extra twin was born together with Benjamin.

59. B. Sanhedrin 58b. See also Pirke d'Rebbi Eliezer (chap. 21): R. Miasha said: Cain was born with a twin sister, and Abel was born with a twin sister. R. Ishmael said to him: But it says "The nakedness of your sister – your father's daughter or your mother's, whether born into the household or outside – do not uncover their nakedness" (Lev. 18:9). However, know that there were no other women to marry, so they were permitted, as it says "For I declare, the world is built on hesed. Until the Torah was given, the world was built on hesed." In B.Yevamot the Rabbis relate this verse to the disagreement between the house of Shammai and the house of Hillel concerning the minimal amount of children a person should have in order to fulfill the commandment of procreation.

60. Pirke d'Rebbi Eliezer, chap. 37, see also Radal's commentary.

61. See B. Nedarim 20b: "'I will remove from you those who rebel and transgress against Me' (Ezek. 20:38) – R. Levi said: These are those born of nine qualities – the children of Asenath M'shaga'at – b'nei Aima (children of terror), b'nei anusah (children of rape), b'nei s'nuah (children of the hated one), b'nei n'dui (children of excommunication), b'nei t'murah (children of the one who was replaced), b'nei merivah (children of strife), b'nei shikrut (children of drunkenness), b'nei gerushat halev (children of she who was divorced from the heart), b'nei eerbuvia (children of confusion), b'nei hatzufa (children of the brazen one)." The acronym includes the word "m'shagaat."

62. We have noted above that in the Kabbalah, Leah is identified with the sefirah of Binah, which gives birth to the six male sefirot and one female sefirah, just as Leah gave birth to six sons and one daughter. This is played out in R. Nahman's story "The Lost Princess," "a king who had six sons and one daughter. That daughter was very precious to him, He loved her very much and was delighted by her. Once he was angry with her, and he yelled, "The no-good should take you" ...The viceroy, who saw that the king was very upset...went and looked for her." If Dinah is the one daughter, whom the no-good took and raped, we wonder if the king in the story is Jacob, who causes Dinah, his seventh daughter, to be raped by Shechem. Additionally, the "viceroy" who goes to redeem the lost princess could be Joseph ("the righteous"), who was a viceroy in Egypt, and married Asenath, Dinah's daughter. Asenath continues the story of the lost princess, taking over the role of the problematic child from Dinah. She is lost to her family until Joseph comes and brings her back to Jacob's family.

63. "Understand also the reason why Joseph married Asenath, the daughter of Poti-phera, because Asenath was a holy soul, the soul-mate of Joseph, and she is the aspect of the second Leah of katnut" (R. Hayyim Vital, Sha'ar HaPesukim, parshat Vayeshev). The difference between "Leah d'gadlut" and "Leah d'qatnut" is also explained there.

64. R. Hayyim Vital, Sha'ar HaPesukim, parshat Matot. See there concerning the other tribes.

65. Zohar III, 33b, in the Raya Mehimna: "A leper is one who was conceived during the menstrual period." For the Raya Mehimna, both menstruation and the plague of leprosy are a result of the element of fire in the human body (see also Raya Mehimna, Bamidbar, Zohar III, 152b).

66. R. Haim Vital, Likutei Torah, the book of Job.

67. For a detailed analysis of five spiritual positions relating to uncertainty and faith in Job, see O. Ezrahi, "Worlds in Doubt" (Hebrew, 5754).

68. According to the Targum Yerushalmi, it was Lilith who caused the destruction of Job's world. The messenger who comes to Job to tell him that his children were killed says that "Shva" came, plundered his property, and killed his children (Job 1:15): "A messenger came to Job and said, 'The oxen were plowing and the she-asses were grazing alongside them when Sabeans attacked them and carried them off, and put the boys to the sword; I alone have escaped to tell you.'" The usual explanation is that soldiers from the land of Sabea, which is Ethiopia, came and wrecked this havoc. The targum, however, suggests that the army of Sabea refers to Lilith: "And Lilith the queen of Zamargad attacked them by force and destroyed them." For the targum, Lilith is the Queen of Sheba or Sabea. Here again we see that Lilith finds her way into the story of Job. Lilith, the killer of infants, also kills Job's children.

69. The parallel to this is of course the story of the five daughters of Zelophehad ben Hefer – Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Tirzah, and Milcah, who ask for an inheritance in Israel from Moses. Zelophehad had no sons, only daughters. Job's move is therefore even more radical, even by present day halakhic standards, which still prefer a son to a daughter in matters related to inheritances. It would be quite fitting for the Ari to view Zelophehad's daughters as reincarnations of Job's three daughters, since their stories appear to be mirror images of one another. Zelophehad's five daughters are divided into two distinct categories (Sha'ar HaPesukim, parshat Pinhas): Three daughters are the "sweetened gevurot" (Hoglah means hag la – (she has a holiday) – because she is sweet; Milcah's name also reflects her nature, and Tirzah is from ratzon, good will and kindness). The remaining two daughters are "the unsweetened gevurot" (Mahlah and Noah are not sweetened, Mahla is mach la – like "All existence on earth was blotted out (vayemach; Gen. 7:23), Noah, as it says "The earth is swaying (noa) like a drunkard" (Isa. 24:20) Hence, the "three sweetened gevurot" could be linked to the three daughters of Job and Dinah.

70. Bereishit Rabbah, 80, 11; the final line suggests that marrying his sister was frowned upon, but see above Pirke d'Rebbi Eliezer (chap. 21) on brother-sister incest, which claims that the other sons of Jacob also married their twin sisters.

71. R. Hayyim Vital, Ma'amar P'siyotav shel Avraham Avinu.

72. The Mei haShiloah, parshat Toldot, contrasts the descendants of Shimon with those of Levi, known for their purity and holiness as "a tribe of priests," while the tribe of Shimon was required to experience many tribulations over the course of history before its sacred spark could be fully realized and redeemed: "The tribe of Levi (represents) fear and evading doubt... and this is the reason why the priests come from this tribe... and this is why their lives were clarified immediately... But Shimon entered into doubt... and married Dinah, thereby putting himself in a place that would need to be clarified... This is why the entire tribe of Shimon needs clarification process in these matters, like Zimri... In the future, when the tribe of Shimon is fully clarified, his level will be higher than that of Levi."

73. Rashi on Num. 25: 8 – "He aimed for Zimri's sexual organs and her sexual organs, so everyone saw that he killed them for good reason."

74. Bamidbar Rabbah, 20, 23.

75. B. Sanhedrin 82a.

76. The talmudic sage, Rabbi Yohanan, explains that we are talking about one person called by different names. "Rabbi Yohanan said: He had five names: Zimri, ben Salu, Shaul, ben HaCanaanit, and Shlomi ben Tzurishadai. He was known as Zimri because his seed was like a scrambled (m'z'r") egg. Ben Salu, because he caused his family to be measured (salu) by its sins. Shaul, since he lent (sha'al) himself to iniquity. Ben HaCanaanit, since he acted like a Canaanite. And what was his real name? His real name was Shlomi ben Tzurishadai. (B. Sanhedrin 82b).

77. R. Hayyim Vital, Ma'amar P'siyotav shel Avraham Avinu, ??? commenting on R. Yohanan in B. Sanhedrin 82b. Compare R. Hayyim Vital, Likutei Torah, parshat Vayishlach: "Dinah had an unclean side to her, as in the mystery of the snake who copulated with Eve. This is the reason that the Hivite Hamor had relations with her ("Hivi" is like the Aramaic word for snake, hivya). As a result of their liaison, all of her uncleanness was transferred to him, as it says 'her impurity is communicated to him' (Lev. 15:24). She was then purified from the source of defilement. For this reason Simon could marry her, as she was already pure."

78. Both as Rebecca and as partzuf Imma.

79. "Unripe" is also a talmudic expression used by R. Ishmael to describe the marriage of David and Batsheba: "It is taught from the house of R. Ishmael: Bat Sheva bat Eliam was fitting for David, but unripe" (B. Sanhedrin 107a). On the matter of destined "soul-mates," See Mei Hashiloah, parshat Pinhas, beginning with the words "Behold I give him my covenant of peace."

80. In the Book of Numbers, Zimri is one of two chieftains from the tribe of Shimon who are mentioned. The other is Shelumiel ben Zurishaddai (Num. 7: 36) R. Hayyim Vital goes on to draw the web of Shimonite connections even tighter by claiming Zimri and Shelumiel are the same person and then showing the deep associations between their names and ancestry and that of Cozbi's father, Zur. "For this reason he was known as Shelumiel ben Zurishaddai, and her name was Cozbi bat Tzur. Tzur [i shaddai], Shlomi's father, was in fact Shimon, who was Tzuri-Shaddai, from the word shod, he who robs the kelippot of their power and subdues them. This is the meaning of bat Tzur – the sitra ahra (other side), Cozbi's father.

81. Mei HaShiloah, vol. 1, parshat Pinhas, beginning with the words "and Pinhas saw." He goes on to say that, since Pinhas saw things in a superficial manner, the damage he caused to Cozbi and Zimri was equally superficial. He hurt their bodies, not their souls. Were Moses to have acted in a like fashion, he would have deeply injured their souls. So, Moses did not intervene. The Mei HaShiloah claims that this is why God said: "Therefore I grant him My pact of friendship" (Num. 25: 12). He was rewarded for not perpetrating deep damage.

82. See B. Ketubot 63b, B. Nedarim 50a, Avot de Rabbi Natan, Version A, Ch. 6. For a comparison of R. Akiva and Rachel's relationship to the marital relationships of the three other men who entered the Secret Garden, see Ezrahi, Two Cherubs, pp. 62-66.

83. In addition to the story treated below, see the legend about R. Akiva's second wife in Haggadot Ketu'ot (HaGoren, ed. S. A. Horodezky, 1922), 34-38.

84. Her husband Rufus may have called her Rufina, as indicated in the following story. "Turnus Rufus asked R. Akiva: Why does God hate us, as it says "And I loathed Esau?" He (R. Akiva) answered him: I will answer you tomorrow. The next day he said to him: R. Akiva! What did you dream about tonight? He said to him: In my dream I had two dogs. One was named Rufus and the other was named Rufina. He

immediately became very angry. He said: You named your dogs after me and my wife! You are condemned to die! R. Akiva said to him: What is the difference between you and them? You eat and drink, and they eat and drink. You procreate and they procreate. You die and they die. Since I named them for you, you became angry. God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, gives life and takes it away. You take a piece of wood and call it "god" just like His name. Is it any wonder that He hates you? This is why it says "And I loathed Esau" (Tanhuma, Terumah, 3).

85. Kohelet Rabbah, 3, 21.

86. B. Avodah Zarah 20a; The injunction against appreciating the beauty of someone connected to idol worship is expressed in later halakhic literature; "'Do not impart grace to them' – To the point where it is forbidden for us to say about an idol worshipper that he is beautiful, or his face is beautiful..." (Rambam, Sefer HaMitzvot, negative commandments, commandment 3). See also Sefer HaHinuch (mitzvah 426, "not to show grace towards idol worshippers"): "We should not have compassion towards idol worshippers, and nothing about them should be pleasing to us. We should distance any thought and not speak about (the possibility) that any good could come from an idol worshipper, and they should not find favor in our eyes in any way. The Rabbis of blessed memory said (B. Avoda Zara 20a) that it is forbidden to say how beautiful this non-Jew is, or how nice and pleasant he is, as it says (Deut. 7:2): 'Do not show them grace,' which means, do not impart grace to them, as we have already explained. Some of the roots of this mitzvah: By avoiding finding good or beauty in idol worshippers either in thought or speech, we avoid contact with them, and do not pursue their love, and do not learn their evil behavior... This applies only to an idol worshipper, not to someone who does not worship idols even though he is not Jewish... and a person who violates this prohibition, and praises either idol worshippers or their deeds....will receive a great punishment, for he is the cause of a catastrophe which cannot be remedied, because sometimes such talk penetrates into the gut of those who hear it, and anyone with any sense understands this."

87. B. Avodah Zarah 20a; The Temple Mount even after the Temple was destroyed was apparently preferred by many sages for meditative contemplation and ascension to the supernal realms – since the earthly tabernacle parallels the heavenly one, even if the physical edifice had been destroyed. If Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel was engaged in such practices as he walked amongst the ruins of the temple, it is significant that this is when he chose to praise the divine beauty of "that extremely beautiful idol worshipper;" see discussion of the Temple Mount and sacred eros in Ezrahi, "The Two Cherubs."

88. The commentary of the Ran on B. Nedarim 50b.

89. The commentary of the Ran on B. Nedarim 50b.

90. The commentary of the Ran on B. Nedarim 50b.

91. The Kabbalistic literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries brings this tradition in the name of the Ari, although we did not find any explicit sources for it in the Lurianic writings we presently possess. R. Hayyim Vital identifies Turnus Rufus's wife as one of the incarnations of Lilith, who is the kelippah of Leah and R. Akiva as an incarnation of both Jacob and his son Issachar. In the writings of students of the Ari, we find that R. Akiva is an incarnation of Zimri, while the Roman matron is an incarnation of Dinah. In the book Hesed L'Avraham by R. Abraham Azulai (5, 25), this tradition is quoted in the name of his teacher, R. Hayyim Vital.

92. R. Menahem Azaria of Fano, Sefer Gilgulei Neshamot, the letter kaf. See also his book Asarah Ma'amarot, ma'amar hikur hadin.

93. See Rashi on Num. 26:13.

94. B. Yevamot 62b.

95. The Talmud maintains that Pinhas, who killed Cozbi and Zimri, is the prophet Elijah, who was known as a great zealot in the book of Kings (Talmud REF). R. Menahem Azariah of Fano (the Rama) adds another detail in the Ari's name to this matrix: "Cozbi is Jezebel. And her tikkun was the wife of Turnus Rufus, who became the wife of R. Akiva. And it is known that Jezebel persecuted Elijah, who was Pinhas, wanting to take revenge on him." In other words, because of her connection to Cozbi, Jezebel, King Achav of Israel's foreign wife, persecuted Elijah and sought to kill him. She wanted vengeance on him for killing her in their previous incarnation. (RAMA REF).

96. R. Yonatan Eibeshutz, Ya'arot D'vash, vol. 1 – discourse 2 (continuation). For useful background on this controversial figure, see M. A. Perlmutter, R. Yonatan Eibeshutz and his Relationship to Sabbateanism (Hebrew), Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, 5707. As for the Kabbalistic writings themselves, see Y. Liebes, "New Sabbatean Kabbalistic Writings from the Circle of R. Yonatan Eibeshutz," in The Secret of the Sabbatean Faith (Hebrew, 1995, pp. 103-193).

97. (NEED TO CHECK IF THIS IS THE PS. QUOTED) Midrash Tanhuma, Tazria chap. 5. They also debated socio-economic issues. Turnus Rufus held that, if God had not desired class division in the world, He would not have created poverty. The fact that poverty does exist reflects divine will, so the Jewish commandment to give charity undermines God's intention. R. Akiva, on the other hand, maintains that people are poor in order to enable our giving charity: "Turnus Rufus the Wicked asked R. Akiva a question: If God loves poor people, why doesn't He take care of them? R. Akiva answered him, So that we, in their merit, be saved from hell" (B. Baba Batra 10a).

98. Sefer Ta'amei Hamitzvot, parshat Behar. The tormous fruit is extremely bitter and needs to be cooked for a long time in order to become edible. In Kabbalistic literature it represents a person's hard shell. The ability to sweeten the tormous is one of the traits of King Solomon, the master of esoteric wisdom.

99. The secret behind R. Akiva's ability to penetrate to the essence of things is patience. It is a secret that R. Yehoshua ben Hananiah, R. Akiva's teacher, learned from a young boy:

R. Yehoshua ben Hananiah said...I was once walking down the road and I saw a young boy sitting at the crossroads. I asked him which way leads to the city. He answered me, This way is short, but long, while this way is long but short. I took the short but long route. As I approached the city, I found that it was surrounded by gardens and orchards. I had to turn back. I said to him, My son, you said this way was short. He said, Did I not say long (also)? I kissed him on his head, and said to him, "Happy are you, o Israel, that you are all wise, both the old and the young" (B. Eruvin 53b).

The city in this story symbolizes any personal goal. An aim can be reached in one of two ways: by the short, long path, or by the long, short path. The short, long path seems the easiest at first, but it only leads to the surface of the goal. It takes us as far as the gardens and the orchards that surround the city, that which envelops whatever it is we seek. The long way goes by a more circuitous route, but is the only way to get inside. R. Akiva, who knew this secret, we remember, was the one who "entered the

(mystical) garden in peace, and came out in peace” (T. Hagigah 2: 4). He thus understood that the path to Rufina’s heart demanded patience. An unripe fruit is bad for you. If he would have been tempted to go the short way – i.e straight to bed – he would have missed the opportunity for a long-lasting, real marriage. He therefore chose to ignore his immediate desires and go laughing down the long way because, paradoxically, it is only through his pushing away the object of his desire that he eventually attains it. Similarly, R. Akiva taught his son not to enter his house suddenly” (B. Pesahim 112a). See O. Ezrahi, “Two Cherubs,” for discussion on the connection between the ability to gradually enter a house, a woman’s heart, and the secret mystical garden. See, by contrast, the story of R. Akiva’s student, R. Hanina Ben Hakinai, who entered his house suddenly and caused his wife to die of a heart attack (B. Pesahim 112a; B. Ketubot 63a).

100. In greater detail, his full name, “Rabbi Akiva” is an exact rearrangement of the biblical words abir Ya’akov (“the Mighty One of Jacob;” Isa. 1:24, 49:26 etc.). As R. Hayyim Vital said: “Abir Ya’akov is the same letters as Rabbi Akiva. This is the meaning of what the rabbis commented on “the Mighty One of Jacob.” ‘When R. Akiva died, the Arms of the World were no more,’ (RABBINIC REF) since R. Akiva was the left arm of Ze’eir Anpin. Understand this well” (Likutei Torah – parshat Vayehi).

101. R. Hayyim Vital, Likutei Hashas, tractate Yevamot. Also see Sha’ar HaPesukim parshat Vayetze, Likutei Torah, parshat Vayehi, and others.

102. Tikkuney Zohar, tikkun 13, 29b: “Moses from the inside, Jacob from the outside.”

103. And the case of R. Akiva was similar to that of Moses of blessed memory.

104. Likkutei HaShas, tractate Yevamot.

105. For example, the opinion in Midrash Tanhuma, (parshat Tzav, 13) is that “Ethiopian woman” (cushit) has the same numerical value as yefat mareh, beautiful. Thus, “‘Ethiopian woman’ means that everyone recognizes her beauty just as they recognize the blackness of an Ethiopian.”

106. “And it came to pass, that when there was a siege against Ethiopia, Moses ran away from Egypt and came to the encampment of Kokanos the king of Ethiopia. Moses was eighteen years old when he ran away...And the king and his ministers and the entire army loved this young man because he was dignified and impressive, tall like a cedar, face radiant as the sun, strong as a lion, and he became an advisor to the king. At the end of nine years the king grew ill with a fatal disease. On the seventh day of his sickness he died...And everyone said...Let us inaugurate a new king...And they hastily took off their garments and threw them on the ground, making a great pile, and they sat Moses on it, blew trumpets and proclaimed, Long live the King! Long live the King! And all the ministers and all the people swore to give him the Ethiopian queen who was the wife of Kokanos for his wife. and they declared him king. Moses was twenty-seven years old when he became king of Ethiopia... And they sat him on the throne and put a crown on his head and gave him the Ethiopian queen for a wife. But Moses feared the God of his fathers, and did not come to her, for he remembered the oath which Abraham caused his servant Eliezer to take, saying ‘You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of Canaan.’...And he reigned over Ethiopia for forty years...In the fortieth year of his reign, he was sitting on his throne and the queen was to his right, and the queen said to the ministers and the people, Behold, he has been king over Ethiopia for forty years, and has never come close to me and he does not worship the gods of Ethiopia...And they rose the next morning and made Monahem, the son of Kokanos, king. And the people of Ethiopia feared to do any harm to Moses for they remembered the oath they had taken to him, so they gave him many presents and sent him away with great honors, and he left there and was no longer king of Ethiopia.

Moses was sixty-seven years old when he left Ethiopia. This was God's plan, for the time that had been promised in days of old to redeem Israel had now arrived." Yalkut Shimoni, Ex. 168. See also Sefer Yashar Shemot 132-36, 138, Shemot Rabbah 1:27, 31; Devarim Rabbah 2:29, Divrei HaYamim l'Moshe Rabbeinu (Beit HaMidrash, ed. Jellinek II), 5-7.

107. B. Berakhot 61b. In general, the Sh'ma expresses the Higher Unity – that of partzuf Leah – while the verse which is not a verse – “Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever” – expresses the Lower Unity, that of partzuf Rachel: “This is how you should understand the unification of Sh'ma and Baruch Shem – they are the unity of the two women. The unification of the Sh'ma is the mystery of Leah, paralleling the verse “Timna was a concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz” (Gen. 36:12) and Baruch Shem parallels Rachel. Understand this well” (Liquitei HaShas, REF.). The reason that R. Hayyim Vital mentions the verse, “Timna was a concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz,” has to do with another midrashic/kabbalistic description: “Timna was a princess....and wanted to convert. She came to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and they would not accept her. She then became the concubine of Elifaz the son of Esau...and gave birth to Amalek, the enemy of Israel. Why? Because they should not have sent her away” (B. Sanhedrin 99b). In Lurianic terms, the verse “Timna was a concubine” expresses the rejection of Lilith by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Timna is therefore associated with Leah, who was also rejected. Since the “Shm” is identified with the kabbalistic unification of partzuf Leah, it follows that the verses “and Timna was a concubine” and Shma Yisrael must express the inner connection between Leah and Timna. There is such a connection. When the halakhah wants to express the idea that the entire Torah is sacred it uses these two verses – “Timna was a concubine” and Shma Yisrael. The Rambam, for example (Commentary on the Mishna, Sanhedrin 10) writes: “And there is no difference between...‘And Timna was a concubine’ and ‘I am the Lord your God’ or ‘Shma Yisrael,’ because they are all divine, and all God's perfect, holy, true, and pure Torah.” In the Ari's opinion, this is the reason that R. Akiva, who was a reincarnation of Jacob, was happy to be reciting the Shma at the moment of his death. By reciting the Shma, R. Akiva was fixing the spiritual imbalance he had caused when, as Jacob, he had rejected Timna, along with the entire Lilithian caste of woman: “And his (R. Akiva's) saying of this verse (Shma Yisrael, as a martyr), and his saying ‘When this mitzvah presents itself to me, should I not fulfill it?’ (is connected to what) the rabbis said, that the verse concerning Timna has as many secrets in it as the Shma’. For he sinned in his incarnation as Jacob by not wanting to take her, as the Rabbis said (Liquitei HaShas, REF).

108. Sha'ar Hakavanot, D'rushei N'filat Apa'im, drush 5. we find that in the Zohar and in the Lurianic writings the secret of kissing is linked to the connection between the two female archetypes of Leah and Rachel/ Eve and Lilith: “R. Shimon opened up and said: ‘Who is she that looks out like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners: ‘Who’ and ‘this’ – the mystery of two worlds that are connected as one ...]that looks out – (nishkafa – nashak pe – the kiss of the mouth) when they are united as one ...]Jacob, who was complete, spread love in both worlds [...] Other people who do likewise are causing spiritual incest above and below, and cause dissension between the two worlds. They cause separation, as it says, ‘Do not marry a woman as a rival to her sister’ (Lev. 18:18) – because they will become enemies of each other (Zohar, II, 126b). And as R. Hayyim Vital writes: “The unity of the Sh'ma and Baruch Shem is the mystery of kissing... and he (R. Akiva) wanted to perform the unification of kissing at the moment of his death (Sha'ar HaKavanot, REF.). This implies that, according to R. Hayyim Vital, even in his last moments, R. Akiva attempted to heal the schism between the two faces of woman – Leah and Rachel – and to unify them.

109. REFERENCES

110. SY. Liebes, "The Two Ewes of the Doe," on the Ari's final and secret discourse to his students, maintains that Lurianic Kabbalah is a profound, introspective discussion about the mysteries of the souls of the Ari and his circle. When R. Hayyim describes the trials and tribulations of R. Akiva, he is actually talking about himself. In fact, the problems created by the Eve/Lilith duality affect his own relationships with his wives: "Concerning my wife, he (the Ari) told me that in all of the sparks of my soul, there is none so close to me as that of R. Akiva. He is closer to me than anyone else. Everything that happened to him happened to me. He said to me that my wife Chana is a reincarnation of Calba Savua, R. Akiva's father-in-law. Because he was lain with like a woman, he was reincarnated as a woman...and later as my wife Chana. Since she is the reincarnation of a man, I can only have girls from her, not male children. She cannot even give birth to girls (since she is a male) unless another female soul is spiritually impregnated in her. He said to me that she was spiritually impregnated with the soul of Turnus Rufus's wife, who eventually married R. Akiva. This is all because of the close relationship R. Akiva has with my wife, who is a reincarnation of my father-in-law, as I have already mentioned. Then she became pregnant with my daughter Angela, and when she (Angela) was born, Turnus Rufus's wife was incarnated in her, and departed from my wife. And after my daughter Angela died, this soul will have to enter my wife again, and she will give birth to another daughter, who will be an actual reincarnation of Turnus Rufus's wife. And if that daughter lives, she will need another female soul to spiritually impregnate her, and she will give birth to another daughter, and the soul will be incarnated in that daughter. And if that soul remains with my wife as an ibbur (spiritual impregnation) and does not leave her, then it is possible that she will give birth to a male child. And he said to me that this one (his wife Chana) will die, and I will marry another woman, someone very rich, just like R. Akiva and the wife of Turnus Rufus. Riches will come to me through a woman just as they did for him. Another time he said to me that, after I merit the completion of my nefesh (first level of soul), I will receive my ruah (spirit, second level), and just as I shared my nefesh with R. Akiva, so I share my ruah with him, and then I will merit to receive my true soul-mate. And just as my nefesh and ruah are shared with R. Akiva's nefesh and ruah, so, too the nefesh of my true soul-mate will come, sharing the nefesh of R. Akiva's true wife, the daughter of Calba Savua. And since the daughter of Calba Savua has an advantage, since she waited for twenty four years for her husband to learn Torah, so my wife who shares a common root with her, is on a very high level, and I cannot merit her, until I complete my nefesh, and my ruah comes to me." (Footnote by R. Shumel, R. Hayyim Vital's son): Shumel said: "My father of blessed memory said to me that his true soul-mate is my master, my mother."

111. In B. Sanhedrin 86a, the entire halakhic tradition of the Oral Torah is attributed to R. Akiva's students – "R. Yohanan said: An unattributed mishna is R. Meir, an unattributed Tosefta is R. Nehemiah, an unattributed sifra is R. Yehudah, an unattributed sifri is R. Shimon, and they all go according to R. Akiva."

112. "He (R. Akiva) had another wife (parallel to Rachel, Jacob's wife), the daughter of Calba Savua, who was also named Rachel, as is mentioned in Avot d'R. Natan. Her daughter, the wife of Ben Azzai, was also named Rachel, like her mother. As the Rabbis said, "this is what people say, 'one Rachel takes after the other,' and understand this well" (Sha'ar HaPesukim, parshat Vayetse, the entry beginning with the words "And he lay with her that night."

113. When identifying R. Akiva's soul with that of Issachar, the Ari bases himself on a Zoharic source (Zohar Hadash, Midrash Hane'elam Ruth, the discourse on the Ten Martyrs), but he develops the motif more extensively: "Because Issachar was spiritually impregnated into R. Akiva himself... it was then that he merited wisdom... as it says 'so he ascended in thought.' And know that all the souls of the twelve

tribes are (soul) branches of Jacob. This was not the case with Issachar, for he was the very essence of his father Jacob, not one of the branches that emerged from him. This is why Akiva and Yaakov are composed of the same letters ..." (Sha'ar HaPesukim (REF). Concerning the tribe of Issachar, the talmudic sage, Rava, said: "You will not find a sage that teaches Torah that does not come either from the tribe of Levi or from the tribe of Issachar. Levi, as it says, "They shall teach your laws to Jacob" (Deut. 33:10), Issachar, as it says, "And from the children of Issachar, possessors of understanding of the times, to know what Israel should do" B. Yoma 26a, based on (REF in CHRON.)

114. "Just as the birth of Issachar was caused by a woman('s intervention), his mother Leah, as the Torah says, 'for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes' (Gen. 30: 16), so also all of R. Akiva's riches came to him through a woman, the wife of Turnus Rufus, the Wicked. The matter can be understood through the case of Adam ... Adam had two wives. The first Eve, who was Lilith, and the second Eve ... Jacob, too, had Leah and Rachel. Leah is all din, and from her dregs the first Eve, Lilith, came out ... Among those dregs was a holy soul, from the root of Leah, Jacob's wife, who was married by Turnus Rufus the Wicked, who was descended from Esau. R. Akiva saw by virtue of his holy spirit that she would convert, and he married her, for just as R. Akiva was Issachar, who was the essence of his father Jacob, so too the wife of Turnus Rufus, the Wicked, when she converted, the soul of Leah, Jacob's wife, Issachar's mother, entered her. And it was through her that she merited all this honor. It therefore follows that Jacob and Leah entered into R. Akiva and his wife, the wife of Turnus Rufus, the Wicked" (Sha'ar HaPesukim, REF.)

115. Concerning Akiva's connection to the soul of another foreign seductress, Potiphar's wife, consider the following: "The reason that R. Akiva was an ignoramus for forty years is because he came from a drop of semen that was spilled in vain, which came out from under Joseph's nails, as is mentioned in Tikkuney Zohar, tikkun 70" (Sha'ar HaPesukim, parshat Vayetze). R. Akiva, as one of the Ten Martyrs, is considered to be one of the ten souls that came out of the ten drops of semen that were expelled from Joseph's fingers when Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him." See the following footnotes from Sha'ar HaGilgulim, introduction 36.

116. See Zohar I, 19b, 28b, etc. Also Sha'ar Hagilgulim, introduction 36.

117. "This is also a reason why such a holy and excellent soul entered R. Akiva, who was descended from converts, and not from Israel: It is because his soul emerged from a drop of semen that was spilled in vain by Joseph, when he was tempted by the wife of Potiphar, who was not Jewish. And the truth is, that R. Akiva's soul is not like those of other converts ... It is in fact a very great soul, but because of the sin of Adam and his son Cain, it fell into the depths of the kelippot ... It therefore needed to enter a foreign body when it descended into this world." R. Haim Vital, Sha'ar HaGilgulim, introduction 36.

118. "When Jacob and Esau were born, they were like Cain and Abel, as it says 'And his hand held the heel of Esau, 'meaning that the firstborn part of good that was in Cain, which was mixed with evil, as we already said, and was now in Esau, was taken from him by Jacob, and because of that heel that he took from him, he is called Jacob. In the previous discourse we explained how it happened that the firstborn of the good fell into the heel of the kelippot, and understand this well. And when Jacob begat Issachar, he gave him the good part of Cain's birthright that he had taken from Esau, which is the secret of the verse "And he lay with her that night" (Gen. 30: 16) concerning Issachar. It says balaila hu (on his night) , rather than balaila hahu (on that night) to hint to us that it was Jacob himself, who was so named because of the heel he took, and he gave that heel to Leah when he slept with her, and that is where Issachar emerged from. And this is the secret of what it says in the Zohar on Ruth, that R. Akiva came

from Issachar. The secret of the matter is that he is the mystery of the heel, as we have already explained.” Sha’ar HaGilgulim, introduction 36; see also 33.

The Fifth Gate: Completing the Circle

Chapter 21: Ruth, the Moabite

When Boaz decides to marry Ruth, the Moabite, the elders of Bethlehem, who sit by the gates of the city, bless him with an exceptional blessing:

All the people at the gate and the elders answered, “We are (witnesses). May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built up the House of Israel! Prosper in Ephrathah and perpetuate your name in Bethlehem! And may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah – through the offspring which the LORD will give you by this young woman” (Ruth 4: 11-12).

According to the Ari, “Ruth was included in both Rachel and Leah. This is why the verse says: “May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah,” who were two separate people, while this one (Ruth) included them both, as we have already said.¹ He does not mean to say simply that Ruth included elements of both Rachel and Leah, but rather that she is both of them – that is, a reincarnation of them. Ruth’s story therefore implies the possibility of integrating the two differing types that Rachel and Leah represent.

Traditional sources tell us of a Ruth who possessed both modesty and assertiveness. When she comes to gather the shafts of wheat left over by the harvesters in Boaz’s fields, Boaz immediately asks the harvesters about this woman. Rashi comments on the phrase:

“Whose girl is that?” (Ruth 2:5): Was it Boaz’s habit to ask about women? It was because he saw in her both modesty and wisdom: She gathered two shafts of wheat, not three. And she would gather standing shafts as she stood, and fallen ones sitting, so as not to bend over.²

Other women apparently bent down in order to pick up the shafts of wheat that were lying on the ground, perhaps revealing their breasts in the process, whereas Ruth gathered the standing shafts from an upright position, and she modestly picked up those lying on the ground while kneeling.

It is somewhat ironic that rabbinic commentary calls our attention to Ruth’s modesty, since the Bible itself tells us of her sexual forwardness. Following her mother-in-law, Naomi’s, advice, Ruth goes at night to the granary, finds the place where Boaz is sleeping, lifts up his blankets to expose his “legs,” and lies down beside him:

Boaz ate and drank, and in a cheerful mood went to lay down beside the grain pile. Then she went over stealthily and uncovered his feet (m’raglotav) and lay down. In the middle of the night, the man gave a start and pulled back – there was a woman lying at his feet!

“Who are you?” he asked, And she replied, “I am your handmaid Ruth. Spread your robe over your handmaid, for you are a redeeming kinsman” (Ruth 3: 7-9).

There is no doubt that this is both a sexual and a betrothal scene. Rachel Adler notes that in the Bible it is “usually the man who ‘goes ‘ to a sexual partner, who uncovers nakedness, who lies with the woman.” Here, in a daring reversal, it is Ruth who exposes Boaz’s meraglot, meaning the area “around his legs;”³ as Adler notes, legs can “describe an unspecified amount of the lower body.... all the way up to X-rated regions.”⁴ Furthermore, spreading one’s robe over a woman is likewise a biblical figure for

consummating a sexual and covenantal relationship. Both dimensions are clearly implied in this even more vivid passage in Ezekiel:

I let you grow like the plants of the field; and you continued to grow up until you attained to womanhood, until your breasts became firm and your hair sprouted. You were still naked and bare when I passed by you [again] and saw that your time for love had arrived. So I spread my robe over you and covered your nakedness, and I entered into a covenant with you by oath – declares the LORD God; thus you became mine.” (16: 7-8)

Just as God betrothes Israel, so Ruth goes to where Boaz sleeps and she expresses in the clearest possible terms exactly what it is that she desires, a covenant of marriage. Like, Leah, she is sexually assertive with the man that she is choosing for her husband. Given this unconventional reversal of expected gender roles, is it any wonder that Boaz is startled? In Midrash Tanhuma, the Rabbis create a dialogue that expresses Boaz’s fear at the strangeness of the encounter – so strange that he wonders if she may be a demon:

“[He] pulled back” (Ruth 3: 8) – she wrapped him up like lichen. He began to feel her hair, and said: “Demons do not have hair.”⁵

He said to her, “Are you a demon or a woman?”

She said, “A woman.”

“Are you single or married?”

She said, “Single.”

“Are you pure or impure?”

She said to him, “Pure.”

And behold, the purest of women lies at his feet, as it says, “‘Who are you?’, he asked. And she replied, ‘I am your handmaid Ruth.’”

R. Berahia said: Cursed be the wicked ones! Elsewhere it says, “She caught hold of him by his garment and said, ‘Lie with me’” (Gen. 39: 12). But here, (it says) “Spread your robe over your handmaid.” (Ruth 3: 9)⁶

Ruth’s sexual assertiveness was obviously problematic for the rabbis, so R. Berahia creates a context that makes her forwardness look modest, by comparing Ruth and the wife of Potiphar, two women who attempted to seduce the man next to them. The curse, “Cursed be the wicked ones!” despises the coercive, explicit style of Potiphar’s wife, and praises the tender way in which Ruth speaks. By emphasizing the tremendous difference between the way Ruth goes about seduction on the one hand, and the aggressive way in which others, such as Potiphar’s wife, go about it, the rabbis can maintain Ruth’s tenderness and her modesty, even as she seduces.

This tenderness and modesty may have been lost on Boaz, however, who thought that either a spirit or a demon must be lying by his side.⁷ It is fear of Lilith that causes him such anxiety. According to the Ari, Ruth received her Lilith side from her sister Orpah, who went back to her home, choosing not to enter the land of Israel together with Naomi and Ruth. After Elimelech and his two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, die, only the women remain. Naomi wants to go back to her home in the land of Judah. Her daughters-

in-law, Ruth and Orpah, go with her, but she begs them to go back to their homes and build a new life for themselves among their own people. Ruth refuses, insisting on staying with Naomi and becoming a part of the Jewish people. Orpah, however, takes Naomi's advice and leaves. The Bible refrains from criticizing Orpah, but the rabbis are considerably less benevolent. One midrash comments that the name Orpah comes from the Hebrew word *oref* (the back of the neck), and so voices the opinion that she turned her back on Naomi.⁸ Playing on another meaning of "back," there is also a talmudic argument between Rav and Shmuel that expresses a deep revulsion toward Orpah. One claims that she is the mother of Goliath, named Harafah (II Sam. 21: 18).⁹ But the other claims that she is called Orpah, "Because everyone takes her from the back."¹⁰ Rashi's commentary spells out the nuances of this charge: "She is taken from the back – she abandoned herself like an animal, face to back." Incapable of a face-to-face encounter, she is treated sexually as a whore, or worse, an animal. In rabbinic eyes, Orpah is clearly a Lilith-like figure.

For the talmudic sages, the real turning point occurred for Orpah the night after she left Ruth and Naomi. The midrash tells us that, on that night, a hundred men lay with Orpah, and one sage adds a dog to this unholy congregation:

R. Isaac said: All during the night after Orpah left her mother-in-law the nakedness of a hundred people entered her. As it says, "And he (Goliath) stepped forward from the Philistine ranks" (17: 23). It is written *mima'arot* – indicating *mime'ah aralot* – from a hundred foreskins of non-Jews that poured into her the entire night. R. Tanhuma said: A dog also (was among them), as it says, "And the Philistine called out to David, Am I a dog [that you come against me with sticks]?" (I Sam 17: 43)¹¹

The rabbis may have found sufficient cause to refer to Orpah so scathingly in the resemblance of her name to Harafah, Goliath's supposed mother. In the Zohar, a connection is drawn between Orpah and Lilith by means of her husband's name, Kilion, which means destruction, and who is therefore interpreted to be the evil inclination or the Great Demon, who is married to Lilith, and brings destruction to the world.¹²

Building on the discomfort with Orpah in these midrashic traditions, we can approach her as a person who does not live out her own story. At first she follows the lead of her sister, Ruth,¹³ who is on a quest to find her spiritual roots. As the quintessential convert in Jewish tradition, Ruth's story is the story of returning to the source. Orpah, though, has no such drive – conversion is not her path. Thus, when Orpah realizes that she has not been living her own story, but rather that of Ruth, then she no longer knows who she is and must leave.

We have already argued that prostitution is defined by sexual encounters which lack personal context. In Hebrew, prostitution is termed "going out," because a prostitute is someone who leaves his or her own narrative in order to live vicariously through others. This is how we understood the rabbis' conviction that Leah and Dinah acted like prostitutes. It also aids our understanding of Orpah's story.

The Ari was certainly familiar with the midrashic traditions of Orpah's possessing a wild and bestial sexuality leading her to beget the monstrous Goliath and his three brothers.¹⁴ Bestial sexuality, wildness and whoredom are all notable characteristics from the Lilith archetype, associated, in Lurianic Kabbalah, with *partzuf* Leah:

And the secret of this matter is that Orpah parallels Leah, as her name indicates that she emerges from the mystery of the neck, just like Leah, who is the knot of the tefillin, does on the side of holiness.¹⁵

According to the Ari, Ruth absorbs the positive in her sister Orpah. It is true that, originally, Orpah was associated with Leah, while Ruth was associated with Rachel. However, the moment Orpah turns her back to return home, there is a major shift in the history of Lilith; her negative side separates from her positive side. "Orpah, however, when she did not convert, (caused) the good part of her to leave her and be given to Ruth, while the evil part of her caused her to return to her people and her god."¹⁶ Thus, the shell separates from the fruit. Ruth absorbs everything that is positive in Lilith – the independence, boldness and sense of equality; but she leaves behind Lilith's cruel, demonic and devious face, which causes harm to both her surroundings and to herself.

From this moment onwards Ruth symbolizes the two faces of woman unified into one female figure. She is the first biblical woman to become whole and have the capacity to heal the damage caused by our ancestors in Eden:

And it is also possible to say that Ruth now fixed what Eve had damaged in the time of Adam...It says here "May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house (like Rachel and Leah) (Ruth 4: 11) ... and it said before¹⁷: "This one at last/ is bone of my bones/ And flesh of my flesh./ This one shall be called Woman" (Gen. 3: 23).¹⁸ This is why at the time of King Solomon of blessed memory it says, "he had a throne placed for the mother of the king" (I Kings 2: 19) – for the mother of kingdom, malkhut, as the rabbis of blessed memory said, This refers to Ruth.¹⁹

During the golden era of King Solomon, in which the sefirah of Malkhut (which represents the feminine side of the divinity) is said to have achieved perfection, Ruth was considered the mother of (the sefirah of) Malkhut. What was it about Ruth that enabled her to reach this height? The Ari's answer is quite surprising:

And this is the secret of "May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built up the House of Israel!" (Ruth 4: 11). And the meaning is, that at the time of Rachel and Leah they were separate, because the Torah had not yet been given...However, at the time of Ruth, the Torah had already been given, and she was the only one who contained both of them together. This is why it says "both."²⁰

This is not just a matter of Ruth's being fortunate to live after the giving of the Torah. Sinai, the Ari implies, transformed the range of possibilities available to Ruth and to all humanity. What had to be held separate before can now be brought together by way of Torah, the interface wherein the divine and the human meet. The Ari's vision of the Torah is therefore critical; its goal is the unification of Eve and Lilith. How the Torah facilitates such a process will be the subject of our next chapter.

Chapter 22: The Liberating Torah

The Hebrew word Torah has all the letters of Ruth's name in it, with only one letter different – an added 'heh.' Jewish mystical tradition has regarded this letter as the second 'heh' of the Tetragrammaton, symbolizing the sefirah of Malkhut, which is the Shekinah, the female reality within God. "The letter heh attached itself to Ruth, making it into Torah. Concerning her it says, "The song of the turtledove is heard in our land""(Song 2: 12)²¹ According to the Ari, Torah is what enables Ruth to complete herself, to unite within herself the modest and the assertive, the intellectual and the sexual, Rachel and Leah, Eve and Lilith.

To understand how Torah plays this transformative role in the Ari's thought, we can return to our earlier discussion on the relationship between Torah and Moses's spiritual outlook:²² "Moses from the inside, Jacob from the outside."²³ Because Moses's soul is rooted in partzuf Leah, he could perceive the mystery of Leah's holiness, which Jacob could not. Moses consequently gave the Leah-oriented Torah to Israel: "For humility is the aspect of Leah, and since Moses achieved it... he is called "very humble" (Num. 12: 3).²⁴ Humility is the essence of the liberating Torah. Humility enables men to let go of their need to control and dominate women, allowing men and women equal space in the unfolding of human history.

The need to control, as we have said earlier, stems from fear of the unknown. The Zohar says that Jacob, the symbol of patriarchal culture, is afraid of anything or anyone he cannot understand. Finding Leah-Lilith incomprehensible, patriarchal man calls her a prostitute and rejects her as a demon.

The Baal Shem Tov, a spiritual heir to the teachings of the Ari, taught human beings to develop to the point where they no longer need to fear what they do not know. In a famous story, he teaches what we might call the Torah of liberation. Before he became too well known, he used to wander about dressed as a peasant and tell stories. Once he came to the town of R. Yaakov Yosef, where he began to tell stories to the townspeople who were on their way to prayer. Word came to the worthy rabbi, who ordered that the peasant be brought before him in order that he might rebuke and punish him. The Baal Shem Tov replied, "It is not fitting for the holy rabbi to get so upset. Better allow me to tell him a story." And the Baal Shem Tov told R. Yaakov Yosef about a certain rabbi, who was traveling in a carriage harnessed to three horses. One horse was white, one horse was black, and one horse was spotted. The carriage got stuck in the mud and the rabbi could not get it out. He whipped the horses mercilessly, but nothing seemed to help. Finally, a non-Jewish peasant came and said to the rabbi "loosen the reins." The rabbi loosened the reins and the happy horses ran out of the mud, pulling the carriage after them.²⁵

In the Baal Shem Tov's story the rabbi lacks any feelings for animals or their instincts. All he knows how to do is to tighten the reins, whip the horses, and try to achieve greater and greater control over them. Tightening control over the instincts only causes the carriage to sink deeper and deeper into the mud. Try instead to free the reins, to give up the need to control. The horses must be given the freedom to express their positive life force, to do what we cannot do for them. This is the advice of the simple peasant. The peasant is in touch with nature, whereas the rabbi, sitting high in his chariot, is totally alienated from it.

Loosening the reins does not mean unharnessing; it simply means trusting more, and in the process, gaining humility. Humility, which has its roots in partzuf Leah, allows a person to give space to the unknown and it frees him of his obsessive need to control things. The Mei HaShiloah brings a profound spiritual insight to bear on why we should undertake this struggle to gain humility and let go of control:

Because God desires man's deeds. Because in this world one must act out of love, and (do) deeds which are not so crystal clear [...] (Because) in all cases a man must trust God...²⁶

Radical Hasidism seeks to elevate human beings from the underdeveloped state that we have termed "Jacob" to a more sophisticated level, that of "Israel." It demands that human beings trust God, and that they loosen their control over the horse's reins. In what follows, we will see that there are very significant implications for the liberation of women in the two states we are calling Jacob and Israel.

Chapter 23: From Jacob to Israel

The liberation of women from the stereotypical roles to which patriarchal culture has assigned them cannot be completed without a parallel liberation of men from the oppressive, dominating roles to which they have assigned themselves. In the previous chapter, we focused on humility as a liberating spiritual tool. In this chapter, we will deal with a parallel emotional and intellectual tool – an openness to uncertainty, which can give one the courage to encounter one’s shadow side. For without integrating the shadow, patriarchal Jacob remains stuck as the limited, conniving Jacob and never can attain the self-mastery and generosity that comes from being Israel.

To follow out the implications of this argument, we need to focus on the relationship between Jacob and Esau, who are two male archetypes. Hairy Esau goes out into the field, fights wild beasts, and brings home game. Jacob, on the other hand, has all the characteristics of a civilized person, and what’s more, of a woman: he is a “smooth-skinned” man who sits home in his tent and cooks. Esau represents the animalistic male, whereas Jacob symbolizes the civilized, and thus weaker man. In the Babylonian epic tradition, they are represented by the pair Enkidu and Gilgamesh.

From the moment of his birth, Jacob has difficulty accepting himself. He is born holding onto his brother’s heel – attempting to build his own identity by latching onto the strong figure of his older brother. He can only accept the divine blessing by becoming someone else, as if only his older brother could be worthy of such a blessing. This is why he tries, at every opportunity, to become part of his brother’s story and to usurp his place by becoming what he is not: Esau. When a propitious moment presents itself, Jacob takes advantage of Esau’s weakness – that he is a man of instinct who is only concerned with the here and now – and purchases his brother’s birthright in exchange for a pot of lentils.

This archetypal struggle is intensified by the fact that “Isaac favored Esau” (Gen. 26: 28). When a parent loves one child more than the others, he cannot hide it, try as he might. The child will always know. At no point does the Bible say that Isaac and Rebecca tried to hide their preferences from their children, so Jacob must certainly know that he is his father’s rejected son. Unlike Jacob, Esau is closer to his father in continuing the rebellious tradition of his father’s house. Abraham rebelled against Terah and began to serve the One God. Isaac, too, did not go in his father’s footsteps, but made changes and innovations. His father had several wives; he had only one. His father left Israel; Isaac stayed in one place. Isaac created the vessel capable of containing the blessing. While Jacob stays narrowly within the structure of the paternal home, Esau comes and goes and, despite this freedom, behaves respectfully toward his father, and probably toward tradition also. Given these patterns, Isaac might well think that, if Esau receives Abraham’s blessing, he is likely to add elements of fortitude and determination to the spiritual inheritance he received from his father.

Rebekah grew up in a very different environment from her husband. Raised in the household of Laban and Bethuel in Aram Naharayim, she needed someone like Jacob to help her further along her spiritual path. “Rebekah favored Jacob” (Gen. 26:28). She had had her fill of men like Esau in Laban’s house. Typical of someone who leaves one culture for another, she had no desire to see her children embody those values from which she herself had been so keen to run away.

When Rebekah manipulates Jacob into usurping Esau’s identity in order to steal Isaac’s final blessing, his reality is saying to Jacob, if you really want to be Esau, it is not enough to abstractly buy his birthright.

You must actually feel how it is to be Esau, how it is to wear his clothes, how it feels to be called by his name – in short, you must go all the way with this stolen identity. You must say “I am Esau.” It is clear that this costume causes Jacob great distress. We can almost hear the rapid beating of his heart. Jacob, who does not take risks on his own initiative, would never have dared to perpetrate this deception, unless his mother had put him up to it. He says to his mother: “Perhaps my father will touch me, and I shall appear to him as a trickster” (Gen. 27: 12). This “perhaps” (ullay) – the presence of doubt – frightens Jacob more than anything else. He prefers the more hygienic situation in which he “buys” Esau’s identity, without needing to dirty (or disguise) his hands. The Mei HaShiloah notes that Isaac saw Esau’s soul as greater than Jacob’s, because Esau was willing to expose himself to such doubtful and uncertain situations, while Jacob was afraid to deviate from that which was known and certain.²⁷ Isaac prefers someone who has the courage to deal with dubious moments, someone who is unafraid to challenge boundaries, someone who, at least theoretically, is prepared to expand them and add new territory according to need, with the power of his father’s blessing supporting him.

The moment that Jacob fully realizes how devious he had been in using Esau’s identity to receive a blessing, he is full of fear and runs away, convinced that Esau wants to kill him. At first glance, it seems that Jacob is only running away from Esau, but soon we see that he is also running away from his mother, who constantly manipulates him, and from his father, who does not want him anyway.

Jacob sets out, running away from home, while Esau stayed at home with Isaac and Rebecca. Jacob’s journey led him eastward, and, as a general rule in the Bible, when someone goes east, he is making his exit from the main line of the biblical story.²⁸ We would not be wrong to therefore assume that it is Jacob who is being rejected in favor of Esau, when he goes east to Haran. In this light, the rabbis pointed out the similarity of Haran to the phrase *haron af*²⁹, God’s wrath, as if Jacob were being exiled, punished by a “day of the LORD” as dark as that envisioned by the prophets.³⁰

To stop being haunted by his shadow, Esau, he embraces the darkness of Haran. It is this very darkness that brings him, quite involuntarily, to a real and sustained encounter with what the Zohar calls “the other side,” for it is Leah-Lilith who guides him on this journey: “‘Jacob left Beer-sheba’ – (he left) the secrets of the faith. ‘And he went to Haran’ – to the wife of harlotry, to the wife of adultery.”³¹ Jacob innocently thinks that by leaving home “for a few days” (Gen. 27: 44), he will temporarily escape from his father’s influence and from the overbearing and domineering figure of his mother Rebekah. As it turns out, the twenty years he spends in Haran offer him, according to the Zohar, the type of spiritual experience that come straight from the heart of the world he left behind:

The deepest of all secrets: From out of the intense clarity of Isaac, from the dregs of the wine, came out a tied knot, composed of both male and female. Red like a rose...The male is Samael, and his female counterpart is always with him...She is called the wife of Samael the snake, the wife of harlotry, the end of all flesh, the end of days.”³²

Samael and Lilith are waiting for Jacob in the house of Laban. Both are born of “the intense clarity of Isaac.” A SENTENCE OR TWO ON THE INTENSE CLARITY OF ISAAC WOULD BE IN ORDER HERE. Lilith is embodied in the figure of Leah, and Samael, her bridegroom, is the angel responsible for Esau. Together they symbolize everything dark and forbidden that Jacob has been assiduously trying to escape.

According to the Zohar, Jacob must pass this test so as to become worthy of being a patriarch. Only those patriarchs who successfully contend with the other, demonic side become great. The following Zoharic story of testing is modeled on the well-known legend of R. Akiba and three fellow students who

were tested through their encounters in the secret garden of mystical contemplation. Like R. Akiba in that story, the Jewish patriarchs “entered in peace and came out in peace:”

When Jacob attached himself to the secret of the faith, he needed to be tested in the same place as his parents. They entered in peace and came out in peace.

Adam entered, was not careful, and was seduced by her. He sinned with the wife of harlotry, who is the primal snake.

Noah entered, was not careful, and was seduced by her. He sinned, as it says “He drank of the wine and became drunk, and he uncovered himself within his tent.” (Gen. 9: 21)

Abraham entered and came out (in peace), as it says, “Abram went down to Egypt” (Gen. 12: 10), and it says, “Abram came up from Egypt” (Gen. 13:1).

Isaac entered and came out (in peace), as it says, “and Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, in Gerar” (Gen. 26: 1), and it says, “And he went up from there to Beersheba.” (v. 23)

When Jacob entered into the faith, he should have brought a present to the other side, since whoever is delivered from it is God’s special beloved.³³

The Zohar says in a phrase we have already quoted, “Jacob did not want to attach himself to anything incomprehensible to him.”³⁴ He prefers those things and people that fit his cultured life as one “who stays in camp” (Gen. 26: 27). Thus, he is attracted to Rachel – precisely because she did not challenge him in any way. Leah, on the other hand, radiates passion, fuelled by her desire to break free of the sexual restraints traditionally placed on women. In moving to the home of Laban, Jacob finds himself in the thick of the very problem of uncertainty and sensuality that he had been aiming to avoid. He does not plan to “bring a present to the other side.” But, it seems, that God had planned things differently. Jacob was tricked into marrying Leah and learned a great lesson about the dark side. Living with someone so like his brother – instinctual, passionate, determined – it became possible for him to understand why his father had preferred Esau and to open up to what Esau represents. Leah-Lilith thus readied him for his encounter with her husband, Samael, the angel of Esau.

On his way home to Canaan, Jacob hears that his brother Esau is coming to meet him with four hundred men. Jacob is uncertain whether Esau is coming in peace, or whether he is prepared for war. How will he treat him after so many years? Will Esau forgive him for his original deception? For stealing the blessing? For the devious way in which he stole his older brother’s identity? It is quite possible that Esau has not forgiven him, and Jacob’s worst nightmares may be about to materialize. Once again Jacob must face the unknown. When he was getting ready to trick his father, he cringed at imagining the uncertainty of the situation -perhaps his father would touch him and discover his deception. But now he is willing to accept the uncertainty of his situation.³⁵ The whole time that Jacob was in Laban’s household, he did not use the word *ullay* – “perhaps” – but now, as he readies himself to meet Esau, he once again wonders – *ullay*. He is willing now to be discovered for who he is. “Perhaps he will accept me” (Gen. 32: 21).

After preparing himself for all eventualities, Jacob seeks solitude in order to prepare himself for the confrontation. He returns, alone, to the other side of the river, and there, through introspection, he encounters the man/angel, whom we can see as the shadowy twin buried inside of himself: “Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn” (Gen. 32: 25). Based on what Jacob says to Esau when they meet the next day – “For seeing your face is like seeing the face of an angel (lit.

God)" (Gen. 33:10), the rabbis conclude that the angel with whom Jacob wrestled was Esau's personal angel, later identified by the Zohar as Lilith's husband, Samael.³⁶

This time Jacob is prepared for the encounter. He is even ready to embrace Esau, rather than running away from him, as is implied in this interpretation by Rabbenu Bahya: "And a man wrestled (va-ye'avek) with him" – the simple meaning is similar to "and he embraced (va-yehabek) (since according to grammar) the letters aleph and het are interchangeable. Just as in rabbinic Hebrew, we say avuka' (torch) which comes from the word havuka, because the brands of wood are tied together as if in an embrace."³⁷ This wrestle that turns into an embrace leads Jacob to demand a blessing of the "spiritual Esau" whom he discovers hidden away inside of himself. Having long since felt the discomfort of receiving his father's blessing through deception, Jacob is now asking this shadow Esau to accept that blessing.

The angel's response strikes squarely at Jacob's central problem – the question of his identity: "What is your name?" (Gen. 32: 28). The first time Jacob wanted a blessing, he approached his father, and when his father asked him what his name was, he answered, "I am your son, Esau, your firstborn." (Gen. 27: 29). Jacob hid behind an identity that was not his. He felt that it was really Esau who deserved the blessing, not Jacob, which is why he tried so hard to be who he was not. This time, when asked for his name he is forthcoming with the answer – "My name is Jacob" (Gen. 32:28). It has been hard for him to admit that his name is Jacob, because the name Jacob hints at crookedness and unfair play.³⁸ When Jacob finally acknowledges his true identity as Jacob, he is also admitting that he has not been straight his entire life. A person who is incapable of seeing in the dark cannot walk a straight path. He will need to make detours, walk crookedly. Jacob's admission of his name (and, by implication, of its meaning) is the point in his life when he accepts his own deviousness – his own dark side. Until now, he had sought to repress it and ignore its very existence. Paradoxically, when Jacob admits that he is "crooked," he immediately becomes "straight."³⁹ This is why Esau's angel gives him the name Israel, which can also be read as yashar-el – "the straight one of God." Jacob has become Israel, the symbol of straightness, because he is successful at contending with God and man – with light and darkness, with the apprehensible and the mysterious, with consciousness and unconsciousness.

When Jacob does finally meet with his brother Esau, he discovers that Esau bears him no grudge. Esau never thought for a moment to attack Jacob: "The Holy Blessed One said to Jacob: (Esau) was simply going on his way, and you send him a message saying, "So says your servant Jacob,"⁴⁰ the prelude to his elaborate attempt to propitiate him with gifts. All of Jacob's fears had been unjustified. They were projections of nightmares caused by the unresolved conflict between the two sides of himself – the weak and cultured man on the one hand, and the primal, instinctual man on the other. This is why, when Jacob sees Esau's face, he comments that it reminds him of the face of the angel with whom he had struggled the night before. Unlike Jacob, Israel can see his twin brother as an angel: "For seeing your face is like seeing the face of an angel (lit. God), and you have received me favorably" (Gen. 33:10).

Jacob is worthy of becoming Israel once he has contended with and embraced his shadow. We have said that the tikkun for women is represented by Ruth, whose figure integrates both archetypal images, Leah and Rachel. The tikkun for men likewise depends upon Israel's ability to accept the dark side and contain both Jacob and Esau.⁴¹ He does not surrender to it, but he does not ignore it either. Now Jacob is no longer the patriarch who will love Rachel and hate Leah. By admitting his Jacob-ness, Jacob is also recognizing his own femininity, which, conversely, also allows his masculinity into the picture. We recall that Jacob was described initially in the terms of a feminine, cultured man of "the camp," but he did not

accept this side of himself and wanted to be like his brother Esau, the man of the field. This is why he tries to steal Esau's identity. By accepting his female side, Jacob can now understand Leah-Lilith – the wild woman. R. Hayyim Vital says that the name Israel includes the initials of the names of all the patriarchs and matriarchs, including Leah, and even Jacob's own name:

Behold, this name which he now received, Israel, indicates that he now included all the patriarchs and the matriarchs. For this name Israel is the initials for Issac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel. Abraham, Leah.⁴²

Jacob, however, does not leave this integrative encounter unscathed. Jacob was wounded when wrestling with Esau's angel, who hurt "the thigh muscle that is on the socket of the hip" (Gen. 32: 33). The price of Jacob's spiritual transformation was an injury to the inside of the thigh. The Zohar sees this thigh muscle as related to the genitals, symbolizing the animal instincts in man:

And why is it called "gid hanasheh" – the thigh muscle? Because it is the muscle which causes a man to forget (nashe) the service of his master, and is the seat of the evil inclination.

And when (the angel) wrestled with Jacob, he could find no place where he could prevail over Jacob, since all of Jacob's limbs helped him, and they were all strong, and none of them were weak. What did he do? He touched the hollow of his thigh, the muscle there – (that is), he touched his sex, the seat of his evil inclination, from where the evil inclination comes to people. This is why the Torah said that the children of Israel should not eat the thigh muscle.⁴³

The price Jacob paid for higher understanding was the loss of his sexual impeccability. As long as he distanced himself from the Esau in himself, he could view himself as faultless in this area. But now, after giving space to the darker side of his personality, he must shed his image of sexual perfection. From now on, Jacob is Israel; he limps, i.e. has a blemish, and this blemish is directly connected to the spiritual rung he has ascended.

R. Tzaddok Hacohen of Lublin voices the opinion that there are two ways in Torah to contend with the evil inclination. One is the way of suppression and rejection. A human being concentrates on the spiritual life, and banishes from his or her consciousness any thought to do with the temptations of the flesh. He does not fight his instincts, but simply avoids them. This path enables a person to lead an intensely pure and spiritual life. It is the way of Jacob, who avoids the encounter with his shadow.⁴⁴

But there is another way: that of confrontation. This is the way of the "warrior who conquers his inclinations" by first inviting them into his consciousness. This may be the holier path, even though it entails a certain renunciation of a pure life, in which a person behaves as if he had no body at all. He becomes instead someone who lives both the life of the senses and the life of the soul, each to their fullest, allowing the corporeal to have its place in his reality.⁴⁵ This is the way of Israel, who does not detour any mountain which may lead him to a of peak experience. It is what makes him "straight."

When Jacob becomes Israel, he no longer needs to sustain a demonic image of Leah-Lilith. She, in fact, becomes his true beloved, replacing Rachel. After Jacob's encounter with Esau, as soon as he enters Israel, Rachel dies, giving birth to Benjamin. Her whole purpose in life was to bear children and, as soon as her full complement of children has been born, her function has been fulfilled.⁴⁶ Jacob buries her by the side of the road, and does not even stay for the prescribed period of mourning, but leaves with Leah – not the threatening and seductive demon she once was – because Jacob has become Israel. We can infer this change from the following. When it is Jacob's time to die, he calls Joseph, Rachel's son, and

apologizes to him for hastily burying his mother, Rachel, by the side of the road. He asks him to make certain that his own body be buried in the cave of Machpela together with Leah and thereby rejects the possibility of being buried beside Rachel, the love of his youth.

In Lurianic Kabbalah, the mysterious coupling of Israel and Leah is facilitated by the power of da'at:

And know that I once heard from my teacher, of blessed memory, that when the aspect of Leah couples with Ze'eir Anpin himself, the coupling occurs through the da'at itself, and this is the secret of "Now the man knew (yada) his wife Eve." (Gen. 4:1) This union was made possible through da'at, and it is in a very hidden place, which is why it was concealed from Jacob at first, and he did not know that she was Leah until day came. Understand this well.⁴⁷

For, in order to truly recognize Leah, one must wait until the morning, until enlightenment dawns.

Chapter 24: The Taste of Sex

We have been moving towards a synthesis between light and darkness, Jacob and Esau, Rachel and Leah, Eve and Lilith. The movement we have been tracing enables us to understand certain rabbinic comments concerning sexuality and the sacred.

Said R. Isaac, "From the day the temple was destroyed, the taste of sex was taken away, and given to the sinners (i.e. those engaged in illicit sex), as it says, "Stolen waters are sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." (Prov. 9:17)⁴⁸

In the context of this passage, illicit sex refers specifically to adultery, and the taste of sex is an idiom meant to refer to the highest pleasures of orgasm. According to this eyebrow-raising passage the difference between Temple and post-Temple spirituality is that after the destruction, the fullest erotic joy of sex was very difficult to experience with our partners. The yearning for the Temple is understood, in effect, as a yearning for eros of the most intense kind.

The second rather shocking text is a description of the innermost sanctum of the Temple. In the holy of holies, relates the Talmud, were two angelic cherubs locked in embrace. A careful reading of the Hebrew phrase indicates that they were in fact erotically intertwined.⁴⁹ Furthermore, according to the Bible, the walls of the first temple were covered with erotic pictures of these sexually intertwined cherubs (I Kings 6:29). This indicates the close association between holiness and eros. The primary image in the holy of holies – the innermost precinct of holiness in the Temple – is a symbol of eros. To realize how far we have strayed from this conception, one has only to imagine the reaction of contemporary congregants upon walking into their synagogue and finding the walls covered with pictures of figures in explicit sexual embrace.

To understand what eros means in the religio-cultural context of the ancient Temple we need to unpack another source. The Talmud describes a mythic dialogue between the rabbis and God.⁵⁰ An internal reference of the text locates the dialogue at the close of the era of prophecy. The rabbis entreat God to nullify the power of the drive toward idolatry. God grants their wish, allowing them to attempt to slay the inclination for idolatry. But where to find this drive? Immediately a fiery lion emerges from the holy of holies. This lion who resides in the innermost sanctum of the Temple is identified by the prophet as the primal urge toward idolatry. The rabbis realize that it cannot be slain so they weaken it instead. Apparently feeling that it was a moment of grace, the rabbis entreat again. Allow us, they say, to slay the drive for sexuality. God grants their wish and again a fiery lion of fire emerges from the holy of holies; this second lion is understood to be the primal sexual drive. When they attempt to slay this lion, however, the world simply stops. Chickens don't lay eggs, people don't go to work; all productivity and, according to the hasidic reading of the text, all spiritual work, grinds to a standstill.⁵¹ The rabbis understand that they have gone too far and retract their request. This drive as well is weakened and not slain.

This strange and holy mythic tale is trying to teach us that the seat of eros and the seat of holiness are one. The first lion to emerge from the holy of holies personifies the drive for idolatry, the second, the sexual drive. Both however are but expressions of one common underlying reality – that of Eros. Idolatry at its core is not primitive fetishism. It is rather a burning lust for the holy. Under every tree, in every brook, courses primal divinity. The idolater, like the prophet, experiences the world as an erotic manifestation of the God force. It is therefore only the prophet who is able to identify the lion as the

drive for idolatry. One nineteenth century kabbalistic writer suggests that this passage is about the end of the prophetic period and that the idolater and prophet were in fact flip sides of the same coin.⁵² The symbolism of the lions emerging from the holy of holies is the text's way of teaching that Eros is Holiness.

Eros includes sexuality as a primary manifestation, but it is clearly not limited to sex. It rather refers to the primal energy of the universe. Eros is where essence and existence meet. The existentialists who viewed them as opposites were therefore overcome by ennui and emptiness. Eros is to taste essence in every moment of existence. To experience the world erotically is to be plugged in to the divine erotic essence of reality. As this passage indicates, the drive to uncover the divine sensuality of world is not without its dangers. The erotic may overwhelm us to the point that our ethical sensitivities are swept away and our sacred boundaries overrun. And yet the need to experience the world in all of its divine eros remains a primal human need and according to this text the Temple of Jerusalem was organized in response to that need.

The destruction of the Temple then heralded the fall of eros in two distinct ways. First eros came to be limited to genital sexuality. When we seek the realization of our full need for eros in sex we are bound to be disillusioned. Sex cannot by itself sate us in our lust for essence. Sex itself cannot re-enchant our world with the magic of eros. When we mourn the destruction of the Temple, we yearn to live erotically in all the facets of our lives once again. The Talmud relates that at the time of the destruction, fruits lost their taste. Laughter vanished in the life of the people, and the vitality of sexuality, teaches R. Isaac, was reserved for those seeking illicit adulterous thrills.⁵³ When fruits lose their full erotic taste, when laughter becomes mechanical and only in response to sexual humor, then true eros, the Temple, has been destroyed. It is therefore not surprising to experience its displacement into the illicit. The passionate centuries-long, Jewish yearning for rebuilding the Temple is the longing to redeem eros from its distortions. We need to move from the eros of longing, which symbolized the exile, to an eros of fulfillment. We need to experience the full intensity of erotic relationship with our partners. Put succinctly, rebuilding the Temple is to touch the passion of illicit sex within the holy and ethical context of one's primary relationship.

This is the deep intent of Akiva, the mystic sage who witnessed the destruction of the Temple. "All the books are holy," taught Akiva "but the Song of Songs is the holy of holies."⁵⁴ Akiva is doing more than extolling the virtue of the God – Israel relationship allegorized in the Song of Songs in terms of passion and sensuality. Akiva is witnessing to future generations that the essence of the temple, the holy of holies, is the experience of passion and sensuality as the guiding force in all of our relationships with the world.

This high valuation of eros as the goal of the spiritual life will allow us to look at a variety of texts that speak of the unredeemed world in which we currently find ourselves, and how a more constrained and unequal sexuality functions within it. In the course of a halakhic discussion about a man who desired a beautiful Jewish maiden, R. Yitzhak Nafha is of the opinion, as we said above, that, since the Temple was destroyed, there is no longer any real pleasure in permitted sex, but only in forbidden relationships. R. Yitzhak's comment is brought in a halakhic discussion about a particular man sexually obsessed with a young virgin:

R. Yehuda said in the name of Rav: There is a story about a man who saw a certain woman, and grew heartsick. They asked the doctors what to do, and they said, Nothing can help him, unless he has sex with her!

The Rabbis said, Better he die, and not have sex with her!

(The doctors suggested) that she stand before him naked.

(The Rabbis said): Better he die than she stand before him naked!

- Maybe she should talk with him from behind a fence?

- Better he die, than she talk with him from behind a fence!

R. Yaakov bar Idi and Rav Shumel bar Nahmani disagreed: One said that she was married, and the other said that she was single.

(The Talmud goes on to ask): According to the opinion that she was married, we can understand (why the rabbis forbid any sort of contact with her). But according to the opinion that she was single, what was the problem?

R. Poppa said: (It is forbidden) because of (not wanting to) hurt the family (as no one will want to marry her afterwards).

R. Aha the son of R. Ikka said: So that the daughters of Israel not become promiscuous in matters of forbidden sex.

(The Talmud suggests) – Let him marry her!

(and answers) This will not help him! As R. Yitzhak said -

Since the day the Temple was destroyed, the taste of sex was taken away, and given (solely) to sinners, as it says, Stolen waters are sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”⁵⁵ (Prov. 9:17)

The final word in this talmudic debate is given to the proverbial statement of R. Yitzhak and the anonymous view that if this man were to marry the girl, his desire, because of its obsessional nature, would not be curbed. In the language of Rashi, he has become one of the sinners who want the taste of forbidden fruit, of bread eaten secretly. “The evil inclination attacks them and magnifies their desire.”⁵⁶ Marriage can no longer satisfy such a person’s erotic longing.

The Talmud is here dealing with the relationship between the legal wife and the mistress, between Eve and Lilith. The Talmud does not view this state as an ideal situation. Quite the contrary – the de-eroticization of marriage is utterly catastrophic. The optimal situation is symbolized by the spiritual rebuilding of the Temple. The Temple functions in the Talmud in much the same way as Ruth does in Lurianic Kabbalah: they each represent the meeting between eroticism and ethics.

The next Talmudic passage we bring also de-eroticizes marriage, by attempting to constrain what is permissible in a licit sexual relationship. A talmudic sage tells us about four things told to him by the ministering angels, all pertaining to the question of why babies are born with defects. The ministering angels (whom we later learn are stand-ins for the Babylonian sages) blame all such problems on the sexual misconduct of the parents:

R. Yohanan ben Dabai said: Four things were told to me by the ministering angels: Why are there people who limp? Because (their parents) turned the tables. Why are there people who are dumb? Because they (their parents) kissed that spot. Why are there people who are deaf?

Because they (their parents) talked during sex. Why are there people who are blind? Because they (their parents) looked at that spot.⁵⁷

One might imagine that the Talmud would immediately forbid doing any of these things. Instead, the Palestinian sage, R. Yohanan, declares that halakhah is not decided by ministering angels. According to the halakhah, everything is permissible.⁵⁸

R. Yohanan said: This is the opinion of R. Yohanan ben Dabai, but the Rabbis said that the halakhah is not like R. Yohanan ben Dabai, but rather – anything a man wants to do with his wife, he may do. This may be compared to meat that comes from the slaughterhouse: If he wants, he can eat it salted; (if he likes) roast – then roasted; cooked – then cooked; boiled – then boiled. The same is with a fish that comes from the fisherman.

A man can do just as he likes with his wife, but what of her desires? At first glance, one might assume that R. Yohanan is talking about a case in which the woman is delighted by her husband's openness to different forms of sexual pleasure. The section that follows, however, does not allow us to entertain any such fantasies. The Talmud tells us about two women who came to complain to the rabbis about the unpleasant way in which their husbands were using them:

There is a story about a woman who came to Rabbi (Yehudah Hanasi) She said to him: "Rabbi, I set the table for him, and he turned it around!" He said to her, My daughter, the Torah permitted you to him. What can I do?⁵⁹

There is a story about a woman who came before Rav. She said, Rabbi, I set the table for him, and he turned it around! He said, In what way are you any different to a fish?⁶⁰

In this entire discussion, all the sages who express an opinion agree that a woman has no right to determine the sexual nature of her marriage. Husbands' preferences and wills dominate in this de-eroticized realm of their shared private life, and so unhappy wives must come to rabbis to complain about having to endure an abusive form of sex against their wills.⁶¹ Not only is there no recourse within halakhah, but these women are sent back home, having been humiliated by their comparison to a piece of meat or fish, which a man can enjoy in whatever way he wants, be it cooked or be it roasted. R. Yehuda Hanasi's words reveal him to be sympathetic to the woman's suffering. He calls her "my daughter," and expresses how powerless he feels against the Torah's indiscriminate permissiveness. This is not the case with his student, Rav, who dismisses her as being no different from a fish in a frying pan. Since when does a fish complain if the chef fries her one way instead of another?

This de-eroticized attitude sexual concerns is consistent with that of the "ministering angels" of our text who are concerned with maintaining modest, indeed repressive, norms for sexual behavior. In order to distance themselves from their pronouncements, rabbis from a later stratum of the Talmud decided that these were not real angels, but Babylonian sages, who wore white clothes and therefore had the appearance of angels. We find in tractate Shabbat that the Babylonian rabbis wear distinctive white clothes, while the sages of Israel wear regular clothes, like everyone else, because "they are not locals," and the Talmud cites a popular proverb: "In my own place – I (am known) by my name. Elsewhere – by my clothes."⁶² This implies that in my hometown my name suffices in terms of identity. Everyone knows me and honors me. When, however, I am in foreign terrain, I need to dress in a more respectable fashion, so that I will be noted and respected for it.

R. Tzaddok HaCohen of Lublin explains that the Babylonian sages are not “at home” in a spiritual sense. They are not in Israel, which is their true home, so they must wear clothes which remind them of who and what they are. The Israeli sages, however, have no need of such external reminders. They are where they belong, and they do not feel the need to distinguish themselves from everyone else. R. Tzaddok goes one step further. He says that we are not talking about material clothes here, but rather, the garments of the soul:

Because a man is composed of body and soul, the body is the clothing of the soul...and all of man's failings are the result of the physical body being a garment for the soul...And therefore heavenly angels, who have no physical bodies, are metaphorically known as “(he) who dresses in white,” meaning a white linen garment...which indicates the purity and importance of the garment.⁶³

An angel is incorporeal, but in manifesting to people, appears as a person wearing pure, white, linen clothes. It therefore follows that, if the Babylonian sages are called “angels,” they have surpassed the physical in terms of their purity:

And the Torah is the spice of this garment (= the body), giving (a man) white clothing, (so that he seems) like the ministering angels. This happens when a man becomes noteworthy in halakhah. Halakhah is what marks and points out the way, and he is noted by his proper dress.⁶⁴

According to R. Tzaddok, a life led according to the dictates of halakhah can transform a man into an angel. His material existence is enveloped by beautiful, dignified clothing, radiating purity and refinement. But this can only be accomplished, unfortunately, by channeling sexual desire into highly repressive norms. R. Tzaddok notes that the way in which the Torah and the mitzvot refine physical existence is aptly described by the Rambam:

The Rambam explained that “(the Torah) turns the heart away from the thoughts, pleasures, and desires of this world”...and enables (the students of the Torah) to forget all the garment's uncleanness, so that it (the garment, i.e. the body) becomes pure and clean, like the ministering angels who have no dirt whatsoever. For him (i.e. the Babylonian sage), also, the (uncleanness) is forgotten as if it were non-existent.⁶⁵

The Torah “turns the heart away” from all physical desire, to the point wherein it seems as if the body, ideally, would do much better not to exist at all. To become like an angel, the Babylonian sage sublimates and represses his bodily desires as much as possible.

Now, we understand why the “ministering angels,” i. e. the Babylonian sages, objected to any sexual act that was not intended solely for purposes of procreation.⁶⁶ Any deviation, whether it be a look, a conversation, a deed, or an unusual position, may cause a person to experience lust, thereby sully their “garments.”

R. Tzaddok, however, mentions another path in the service of God. This is the way of the hero or warrior, described in the famous passage of Pirkey Avot: “Who then is called a hero/warrior? He who conquers his inclination!”

Conquering means tribulations and war, which is the way of successful warriors, rather than turning the heart away, which is not considered being victorious, since nothing is there for him to contend with. Such a man (i.e. one who contends with his inclination) is not similar to the ministering angels, since they have no evil inclination to conquer, and they wear snow-white clothes...This is not the case with

someone victorious at war, who has an evil inclination. This means that his garments are not clean, because the garment is the inclination...which is why angels do not have an inclination, since they are not corporeal beings. This is also the case with a person totally devoted to Torah and service – it is as if evil and physicality are forgotten, as if there is no one that desires. A warrior, however, experiences the evilness of the physical, but he elevates the soul over that which enclothes it (i.e. the body), and does not allow himself to be dressed by it. It (this soul) therefore does not have the pure dress of the ministering angels.⁶⁷

The way of the warrior is not based on denial or fear of the physical, but rather on an acceptance of it as an integral part of the human being. Knowing himself to be fully human, the warrior is certain that he will be able to confront his “evil inclination” without surrendering to it. The struggle of the spiritual warrior to integrate sexuality is expressed in the personal confession of R. Baruch of Kosov, a 19th century hasidic master, about how he sanctifies intercourse with his wife:

“(At first) I thought that holiness means that one should sanctify his thoughts – distance from his thoughts any intention to experience physical pleasure, and to feel pain over the fact that this act entails the feeling of physical pleasure, and would that this were not the case! Later on, however, God granted me undeserved grace, and allowed me to understand the truth about sanctifying oneself at the time of intercourse. I realized that holiness is experienced because of the sensation of physical pleasure. This is a wondrous and awesomely profound secret.”⁶⁸

R. Tzaddok states that once a man embarks on this path, he can no longer be considered an angel, for angels are not physical by definition. Someone whose goal is to be ethereal cannot revel in his contact with the sensual world. The warrior will not be bound by the norms of the “ministering angels,” but will be prepared to take what they might regard as risks in his appreciation of the goodness of the erotic life.

We can see our array of texts in light of the moment of Jacob and Esau’s encounter. Before he became Israel, Jacob was like those repressed and repressive Babylonian sages. But after becoming Israel, he realizes that spiritual labor is rooted in the conviction that both Lilith and Esau have their place in the sacred realm. Such a spiritual approach is not threatened by the fact that the body may lose some of its purity, because it recognizes that whatever has been defiled retains its place in God’s world. R. Yohanan, who is of this camp, favored sexual freedom, though expressed within his patriarchal framework: “Anything a man wants to do with his wife, he can do.” Today, after the significant changes wrought by feminism, we must re-phrase R. Yohanan’s comment: Whatever a couple wishes to do with each other – they may do.

Marital relations between a Jacob and a Rachel – i. e. between the patriarch and the housewife only allow only for a certain, very rigid, code of sexual behavior. Deviate a little from that context and you find the Esau or Samael archetypes, who are alternately having liaisons with either the she-devil Lilith or with the wifely Eve. What they lack is what it takes to develop a relationship such as can only occur between Leah (when she and Rachel are unified in one partzuf) and Israel (who contains both Jacob and Esau).

Routine sexuality in a patriarchal framework easily becomes goal-oriented and phallogentric.⁶⁹ Its mode is linear, reinforcing patterns of ownership, domination and control. It aspires to release tensions, so it often suffers the loss of mutual interest. On the other hand, when couples move towards liberating Lilith, another form of sexuality develops. A woman discovers her masculinity (as we saw, Lilith was associated with many masculine motifs) and a man discovers his femininity. Both genders will open to long-repressed instinctual urges. If this pursuit of liberation is posed as a power struggle, then men and

women will be cut off from both eros and their emotional lives. But if entered into as an opportunity to explore the unconscious archetypes and allow them to evolve beyond the negative cultural images under which both men and women have suffered, then the result can be a remarkable expansion of consciousness. In this framework of liberation, individuals can model themselves on the true warrior, whose goal is not conquest or war, but rather the subtle and gradual transformation that occurs through integrating the different and sometimes opposing sides of the human psyche.

The liberating Torah of the Ari and his hasidic disciples that we have been developing in this book is bolstered by the celebration of the erotic dimension of life in contemporary feminism. The erotic, writes Judith Plaskow, is a primary source of empowerment. “When we turn away from the knowledge the erotic gives us, when we accept powerlessness or resignation, we cheat ourselves of a full life.”⁷⁰ Seeing sexuality and spirituality as intimately related, as we have tried to do in this work, offers “the power to give and receive meaning,” writes Beverly Harrison. “The moral norm for sexual communication in a feminist ethic is radical mutuality – the simultaneous acknowledgement of vulnerability to the need of the other, the recognition of one’s own power to give and receive pleasure and to call forth another’s power of relation and to express one’s own.”⁷¹ Jessica Benjamin’s view is that the freedom to know one’s own desire is developed through the mutual attunement that is enacted in the erotic space that two people create who recognize each other as subjects. This activity offers a paradox of “our simultaneous need for recognition and independence: that the other subject is outside our control and yet we need him.” Overturning centuries of domination, she takes the image of “bonds” in a new direction, advocating that we make our ties to others “not shackles, but circuits of recognition.”⁷²

Feminism has accelerated the process of change for how we view gender. By taking the lead in liberating Western culture from patriarchal arrangements, feminism has set the stage for a parallel transformation among men. A close contemporary of Luria in Safed, R. Moses Cordovero, describes a similar process taking place on a cosmic level:

“The feminine began (to emanate) its stature before the completion of the stature of the masculine, and they were emanated together, this one (according to) its stature and the other one (according to) its stature, and they were face-to-face...For if the masculine had completed the entire emanation of its limbs and afterwards the feminine would have begun, she would always have been (regarded as) as a stool under his feet.”⁷³

The ideal of a face-to-face relationship between men and women and within the Godhead has been a guiding metaphor in this book. Moses was the only one of the prophets, we are told, to see God face to face (Deut. 34:10), and in so doing, he is partaking, in Cordovero’s terms, of the primal unity in the universe. When men and women today aspire to a kabbalistic face-to-faceness, they are participating in the work of tikkun, restoring the cosmos to the equality and unity it had before its fall into division and chaos.

An encouraging image for this transformational process is the mikveh, the ritual immersion bath, whose waters cleanse one of one’s impurity, or, indeed, of one’s closed heart. The amount of water necessary to purify a person was established by a midrashic interpretation of a biblical verse describing how the waters of the Shiloah spring flowed — that is, slowly: “How do we know that a mikveh needs forty se’ah (a liquid measurement) of water?” — “The waters of Shiloah flow slowly — the word le’at (slowly) has the numerical value of forty.”⁷⁴

What is really needed to channel the transformational energy of eros is the ability to internalize the quality of slowness, of moderation. A relationship proceeding towards the liberation of Lilith and Esau must have great humility; a sense that there is no need to arrive at anything. One must only be – like the waters of the Shiloah spring, which flow slowly, but surely.

Chapter 25: The Light of the Moon will be like the Light of the Sun

In kabbalistic thought, the sun and the moon symbolize the masculine and feminine respectively.⁷⁵

Woman, represented by the moon, has both a revealed and a hidden face. Man, represented by the sun, can shed light on only one of her two faces at any time. Thus, the moon is always partly hiding herself from the interrogating rays of the sun. In the Kabbalah, straight lines and circles are also masculine and feminine symbols. The female is round and the male cleaves her in two with his “straightness.” These two halves are, of course, the bright side and the dark side of the moon; or, in different terms, Eve and Lilith. The tikkun of gender relations will only be completed once these two halves have been united, when any woman can be both Eve and Lilith at the same time. On that day, the female descendants of Eve will negate the curses which have been on their head ever since her exile from Eden, especially those inhibitions and constraints that have held them back in terms of their intellectual, political and sexual freedom of expression.

When we speak in terms of the sun and moon, we also encounter the hope expressed by Isaiah when he envisioned that, in the future, the light of the moon will be equal to the light of the sun:

And the light of the moon shall become like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall become sevenfold, like the light of the seven days, when the LORD binds up his people's wounds and heals the injuries it has suffered (Isa 30: 26).

The sun has its own light and so it is not dependent on any other source. The biblical verse expresses the hope that a day will come when the moon, too, will be an independent light source. Lurianic Kabbalah, as we have tried to show in this book, envisions the feminine aspect of the Godhead attaining a stature equal to that of the masculine Godhead. However, it is not enough that the moon attains her own light. The biblical verse declares that this development is dependent on male evolution. The light of the sun must also increase, returning itself to the intensity with which it glared during the seven days of creation:

R. Eliezer said: A man could see from one end of the world to the other with the light that God created on the first day. When God looked at the generation of the flood and the generation of the tower of Babel and saw that their actions were evil, He concealed it from them...Who did God hide it for? For the righteous in the world to come.⁷⁶

As long as men limit themselves to what Hasidism calls small consciousness, they will see women as being split into two. That is, as long as the sun's light is partially hidden, then it causes the moon to have both a light side and a dark side. Lurianic Kabbalah offers us the hope that the Godhead will become one again through the healing of the divisions in both its male and female elements. A change in our perception of the divine reflects, or may even effect, a change in the Godhead itself. It therefore follows that, when Jacob ascends and achieves his higher self, which is called Israel, his understanding of God also grows, and the Great Name is glorified and sanctified. Through the integration of Esau and Jacob into Israel, men will be able to ascend spiritually and see “the light that is concealed for the righteous.” And women too will reach a point where, not limited by men's perceptions of them, they are able to navigate freely between Rachel and Leah, Eve and Lilith. These integrative images of God exist within us all. That is why the final tikkun must ultimately take place within our own hearts, for our hearts have the most profound influence on who we are, on each other, on the whole planet, and even on God Herself.

FOOTNOTES

1. R. Hayyim Vital, Sha'ar Ma'amarei Razal, Ma'amar P'siotav shel Avraham Avinu.
2. Rashi on Ruth 2: 5.
3. Margelotav – his feet, means around his feet, like m'rashotav, around his head (see the commentary Da'at Miqra on this verse).
4. Adler, Engendering Judaism, p. 154.
5. See R. Reuven Margoliot, Malakhey Elyon, 87, on Lilith. Boaz obviously believes that demons have no hair (see Zohar Bereishit 54b, while the rabbis describe Lilith as someone “with long hair.” In footnote no. 3, Margoliot cites Kabbalists who noted this contradiction and attempted to resolve it. One approach maintains that Lilith is no ordinary she-devil but rather a kelippah, i.e. a more primal and impure entity, so she is not restricted to the code of hairstyles permitted to devils. The question nonetheless remains as to why Boaz feels relieved at the touch of her hair? How reassuring can it be to know that the being lying next to him is not a devil (based on the evidence of her hair), when the possibility nonetheless remains that she might be Lilith?
6. Midrash Ruth Rabbah, 6,1. See also Tanhuma, Behar, 3.
7. Ruth Rabbah, 6,1. The Tanhuma (Behar, 3) adds that Boaz screamed from fear, and Ruth grabbed him in order to prevent his causing a major uproar: “That righteous man began to scream, so she grabbed him. He said to her, Who are you? And she said, I am Ruth your handmaiden. He said to her, What have you come here to do? She said to him, To keep the Torah...”
8. Ruth Rabbah, 2,9.
9. The JPS translation reads this as “Rafah,” the name of a race of giants.
10. B. Sotah 42b. The dialogue goes on; “The other one said, Her name was really Orpah. Why then was she called Harafah? Because everyone threshed her like crushed wheat.” (harifot).
11. Ruth Rabbah, 2, 20. See also Midrash Zuta, Ruth 1: “They said that on that night a hundred Philistine foreskins came into her, and Goliath the Philistine from Gat came from her.” See also B. Sotah 42b: “Goliath of Gath was his name – R. Yosef said: Because everyone threshed his mother in Gath.”
12. See Tikkuney Zohar 75b: “Orpah is the mother of the Mixed Multitude, about whom it says, ‘For they are a stiff-necked people’ (REF), because she went back to her unclean origins, and turned her back on her mother-in-law. Kilion the husband of Orpah, is the evil inclination, who sends destruction to the world, he is Kilion and his wife is Lilith-Kilia.
13. In the opinion of the midrash, (Ruth Rabbah, 2,9): R. Bibi in the name of R. Reuven said: Ruth and Orpah were the daughters of Eglon (the king of Moab), as it says: “Ehud said (to Eglon the king of Moab): I have a message for you from God,” whereupon he rose from his seat” (Jud. 3: 20). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: You got up from your throne to honor Me. I swear by your life that I will put a son of yours on God’s throne!” (David, the great-grandson of his daughter Ruth). This is also used by R. Hayyim Vital to reinforce the tie between Ruth and Orpah and Rachel and Leah: “Rachel and Leah were sisters of the children of Laban who converted. So, too, Ruth and Orpah were sisters who converted. We will not go into this at length, since it is a great secret” (Ma'amar P'siyotav shel Avraham Avinu).

14. "Once again there was fighting, at Gath. There was a giant of a man, who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in all; he too was descended from the Raphah (or Harafah)...These four were descended from the Raphah in Gath" (II Sam. 21:20-22).

15. R. Hayyim Vital, Ma'amar P'siyotav shel Avraham Avinu. Above, we discussed the fact that, in Lurianic Kabbalah, partzuf Leah is parallel to the back of the neck, where we find the knot of God's head tefillin. See the Third Gate, the chapter on Leah's Tefillin.

16. R. Hayyim Vital, Ma'amar P'siyotav shel Avraham Avinu. He continues: "If she had merited to convert, she would have been fixed, like Leah, who received her tikkun because of her tears and the turn of heart, and she was therefore not given to Esau."

17. When referring to the book of Genesis, the Ari/Vital uses the word lehalan – lit. further on, after Ruth. This may be because of the cyclical way in which the kabbalists read the bible.

18. Flesh and bones are two images that the Ari, following the lead of Tikkuney Zohar, uses to describe Eve/Lilith Rachel/Leah. Leah is the hard (inner) bone, culturally difficult for a man to digest. Rachel is the soft flesh, more tender to the touch, more easy on the eye: And in Tikkuney Zohar (99) they said that there were two wives, one of bone and one of flesh. Leah is called bone, as she is dinim, which are hard, like bone. Also she is the aspect of the rib, because Leah's place is in back of the ribs which are bones. But Rachel is flesh of his flesh, softer din, in the place where hesed is revealed. And the rest can be understood in this way: He had two wives, one was bone of his bones and one was flesh of his flesh. However, only the second one who is called flesh is called woman, and not the first one, who is bone, and not yet sweetened, as we previously mentioned. She was sweetened later, at the time of Jacob, through the mystery of Leah, as mentioned above" (Etz Hayyim, gate 38, chap. 2). See also Sha'ar HaPesukim, Vayetze, and Likkutey Torah on parshat Bereshit.

19. R. Hayyim Vital, Ma'amar P'siyotav shel Avraham Avinu. The rabbinic comment referred to is from B. Baba Batra 91a: "This refers to Ruth the Moabite, who (lived to) see the kingdom of Solomon, her grandson's grandson, as it says, "He had a throne placed for the mother of the kingdom." See also the Radak on this verse: "He (Solomon) commanded that a throne be set up for his mother, so that she could sit next to his right. And some say that the mother of the king means the mother of the kingdom, who is Ruth, because she was still alive. This is a bit far-fetched." The final sentence was added by R. Shmuel Vital, R. Haim Vital's son and the editor of his writings. AM I UNDERSTANDING YOUR NOTE CORRECTLY?

20. R. Hayyim Vital, Ma'amar P'siyotav shel Avraham Avinu.

21. Tikkuney Zohar, 75b

22. See above, the third gate, the chapter on Leah's Tefillin. Also see the fourth gate, the chapter on R. Akiva and his soul-connection with Moses, in contrast to Jacob.

23. Tikkuney Zohar, tikkun 13, 29b

24. Etz Hayyim, gate 38, chap. 2. See also above, on the mystery of Leah and the tefillin.

25. This story made a profound impression on R. Yaakov Yosef, who began to weep. He eventually became one of the Baal Shem Tov's students, known as R. Yaakov Yosef of Polnoyeh, the author of such books as Toldot Yaakov Yosef and Kutonet Pasim. The story can be found in Toldot Yaakov Yosef (GIVE THIS FOR SCHOLARLY REFERENCE) or in Buber's Legends of the Hasidim, p. 78. For an excellent

psychological analysis of this story, and of the transformation experienced by R. Yaakov Yosef, see Ankuri, *The Heart and the Spring*, pp. 88-94.

26. Mei Hashiloah on parshat Vayeshev. Throughout his comments, the Mei Hashiloah contrasts the outlook of Jacob, who wants to “live in quiet,” with God’s view as to how a person should live and to what he should devote his life. Jacob wanted to control his life and avoid any “unclarified issues,” i.e. matters in doubt. God maintains that this service is based on fear and it therefore lacks faith.

27. Mei HaShiloah, parshat Toldot, the entry beginning with the words “And Isaac loved Esau.”

28. When Adam is banished from the Garden of Eden, he is sent east. This direction implies spiritual deterioration. Later on, Abraham and Lot come from the east to the land of Canaan, and then separate from one another. Abraham remains in Canaan while Lot and the nations that descend from his daughters – Ammon and Moab – inhabit the mountain area on the eastern bank of the Jordan. In the next generation, Isaac and Ishmael are a pair. Isaac remains in the land of Canaan, while Ishmael is sent to the deserts of Arabia in the east. The children of Abraham from his concubines were also sent far away to the east.

29. See Bereshit Rabbah, 68, 13: ‘Jacob left (va-yetze) Beer-sheba, and set out for Haran’ – R. Yehoshua ben Levi understood these verse as describing exile: ‘Jacob left Beer-sheba,’ as it says “Dismiss them from My presence, and let them go forth (va-yetze’u; Jer. 15:1). ‘And set out for Haran’ – as it says, “When the LORD afflicted me/ On His day of wrath’ (haron apo); Lam. 1:12).”

This is how the Zohar deals with the topic: “R. Shimon said: Jacob left Israel, as it says, And Jacob went out of Beersheba. And he went to a different sphere of influence, as it says, And he went to Haran...a place of harsh judgment and wrath...i.e haron af...And what is the Holy Blessed One’s wrath? The level of evil, the land of the other” (Zohar, parshat Vayetze, I,147a). See also the following quote from the Zohar.

30. See Pirkey de R. Eliezer, 36, for an interpretation of Amos (5:19) in terms of Jacob: “As if a man should run from a lion/ And be attacked by a bear;/ Or if he got indoors,/ Should lean his hand on the wall/ And be bitten by a snake! ” The lion is Laban the bear, Esau, and the snake in the house, Shechem ben Hamor.

31. Zohar, parshat Vayetze, 148a. We have cited this verse before as the textual source for the Ari’s identification of Leah with Lilith. What follows in the Zohar is the issue of Jacob’s hate for Leah.

32. Zohar, parshat Vayetze, 148a.

33. REF.

34. REF. – HL: CHECK THIS. I don’t remember it’s being quoted.

35. In the words of the midrash: “He prepared himself for three things: for prayer, for a gift, and for war (Pesikta d’Rav Cahana, 19,3).

36. Bereishit Rabbah, 77, 3: “R. Hama the son of R. Hanina said: He was the angel responsible for Esau. As (Jacob) said to (Esau): ‘For seeing your face is like seeing the face of an angel, and you have received me favorably’ (Gen. 33: 10).”

37. Rabbenu Bahya on Gen. 32: 24.

38. See the commentary of Ibn Ezra: “Va-ya’akveni – like (the word for) deception: as it says, ba’akava. And it may also be related to akov halev – the crooked of heart. And that which was crooked became straight.”

39. See the commentary of Rabbenu Bahya (on verse 26): “‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel’ – that is, no longer (shall it be said) that you received the blessings by deception, (but rather, from now on it will be considered) just and righteous. (No longer) will it be said that you cheated Laban, because you did what you did innocently and justly. This is why he was associated with the attribute of truth, to say that he is truthful in all his words and actions. As it says “You give your truth to Jacob” (Mic. 7: 20).”

40. Bereishit Rabbah, 75, 3.

41. In both Sabbatean and hasidic literature, this theme of Esau’s integration into realm of the sacred is extensively developed. Esau is rooted in the highest lights – the “lights of chaos” – while Jacob has very capable vessels – “the vessels of tikkun” – which, although they are good and efficient, lack the power and determination that Esau receives from the lights of chaos. The optimal situation is one in which the lights of chaos are in the vessel of tikkun, which is the unification of Jacob and Esau in the one being called Israel. See, for example, R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, in Likkutey Torah, parshat Vayishlah. In the Sabbatean book Va-yavo Hayom al Ha’ayin (in manuscript), Esau symbolizes the highest level of the divine (see M..A. Perlmutter, R. Yonatan Eibeshutz and his Attitude towards Sabbataenism, pp. 90-91). In his article Concerning the Figure of R. Naftali Katz and his Attitude towards Sabbataenism, Y. Liebes traces a Sabbatean idea (found also in the writings of R. Naftali, the author of Smihat Ha’ahmim, and also by R. Yonatan Eibeshutz, his student), according to which Leah is identified with the highest level of the divine, the Ein Sof, or the keter. These theologians thought the name Leah comes from the word leiut, which means tiredness or weariness. This is an apt description of the Ein Sof, either because thought becomes weary of attempting to perceive the Infinite, or because it is a place of non-action, not involved with the actions of the lower worlds. Jacob Frank, who converted to Christianity, dealt extensively in his writings with the unique holiness peculiar to Esau.

42. R. Hayyim Vital, Likkutey Torah, parshat Vayishlah.

43. REFERENCE LOST – orig, note 550.

44. R. Tzafok Ha-Cohen, Sihah Malakhei Hasharet, chap. 1.

45. In Lurianic Kabbalah there is a lengthy explanation as to why Leah can face Ze’ir Anpin, without fear that the external forces will suck life force from her back, while this is impossible in the case of partzuf Rachel. It is not that they do not suckle at all, R. Hayyim Vital says, but rather that because Leah is positioned so high, this nursing is not so dangerous. In fact, we want the external forces to receive a certain amount of sustenance from a high and powerful source like Leah, for she represents a dimension where it is understood that the dark side has a place in the world, because it fulfills a real need: “...But the matter is dependent on intention, since Leah stands in a high place, above Rachel, and therefore the external forces cannot hang on to her so strongly. Quite the opposite, we want to give them a small hold, because if not, death would have no more dominion, and there is a higher purpose for the kelippot in the worlds. As the Bible says, “and found it very good” and the Rabbis said ‘good’ – this is the angel of life; ‘very good’ – this is the angel of death.” REF. This is why the face of Leah faces the back of Ze’ir Anpin, and her backside is exposed, so that the external forces can take their portion. We are not concerned that they will take too much, since this is a very high place. Rachel however, who is the basis

of the house...we do not want the external ones to cling to her, especially since she stands underneath Leah. If they were to cling to her, they would have a very strong hold on her and evil would increase, and the world would be destroyed, God forbid. (Sha'ar HaKavvanot, drushei haPesach, drush dalet).

In our opinion this is one of the sources used by R. Tzadok HaCohen of Lublin in his writings when he distinguishes between the immobile, fragile nature of Rachel and her children, and the dynamic and flexible nature of the children of Leah, like Yehudah or Shimon, who are capable of dealing with failure without shattering into pieces. See also his book Takanat HaShavim.

46. In his book The Star of Redemption (p. 109), Franz Rozenzweig discusses the singularity of man whose raison d'être is not only propagation of the species, but the life of the spirit.

47. Etz Hayyim, gate 38, Ch. 2.

48. REFERENCE, TRACTATE X, 75a.

49. REF. Give Hebrew

50. REF to Holy of Holies and Yetzer text

51. REF to Hasidic reading

52. REF to kabbalistic reading

53. REF. to R. Isaac etc.

54. REF. to Akiva on Song

55. REF. TRACTATE X, 75a

56. Rashi on "given to sinners" in B. XXXXX, 75a.

57. TRACTATE REF. On the phrase, "They turn the tables" – the Tosafot comment "that they have sexual relations in an unnatural way. And since they have sexual relations in a way which is associated with the thighs, their children are afflicted in their thighs. In Tractate Kallah, CH. 1 (FULLER REF?), the following is added: "that they turn the table and do like animals." It also goes on to say: "Rava said: All of God's actions are deed for deed (i.e. exact karmic retribution) – he turned his table around, so his children's legs were turned around."

On the phrase, "Since they kiss that spot," they comment, "their children are afflicted in their mouths."

The Mussar movement accepts the recommendations of the ministering angels. For example, see the comments of the Menorat HaMa'or (entry 179): "Those who have sexual relations modestly, and choose the proper times for it, have children who are decent, pleasant, and charming...and as for those who have sexual relations in a lewd manner, one can see the negative results of that intercourse in their children."

58. This is the Rambam's halachic decision on the matter (Hilchot Issurei Biah, chap. 21, halacha 9): "A man's wife is permitted to him. Therefore, anything that a man wants to do with his wife, he can do. He can have sexual relations with her whenever he wants, he can kiss any part of her body that he so desires, he can have sexual relations with her in both a natural and an unnatural way, as long as he does not spill his seed in vain. Even so, it is more pious not to be light-headed about these matters, and a man

should sanctify himself at the time of intercourse...and he should not deviate from the way of the world and its customs, because the primary purpose of intercourse is procreation.”

59. TRACTATE REF. Rabbenu Nissim comments: “The Torah permitted you to him – as it is written, ‘When a man takes a woman’ – he takes her to do anything he wants with her. And Rambam writes (chap. 21 in Hilchot Issurei Biah, halacha 9): “as long as he does not spill his seed in vain.”

60. SAME TRACTATE REF?. The Ran comments: “A fish, which he roasts or boils, according to his fancy.”

61. In the text dealt with above (NO REF), turn the tables seemed to imply rear-entry vaginal sex, since it produced offspring. The Tosafot explain that here we are talking about anal sex, and not the instance where “she is above and he is below,” as tractate Kallah puts it (see ref. above). It is clear that these women complained about the physical pain they suffered: “...this is not the case where she is above and he is below” because what does she lose in this situation? But it is unnatural, because it causes her pain, as it says there: “If you cause my daughters pain” – in an unnatural way. And it says “and he laid with her – in a natural manner, and he caused her to suffer – in an unnatural manner” Tosafot B. Sanhedrin 58b, and also B. Yevamot 34b.

62. B. Shabbat REF

63. See Sihah Malakhey Hasharet, XXX.

64. Sihah Malakhey Hasharet, XXX.

65. Sihah Malakhey Hasharet, XXX. The Rambam reference is in Mishneh Torah, Hikkhot Issurey Bi’ah, Ch. 22, end.

66. The classical example of this is the debate on a subject that represents an obsession in rabbinic literature – the issue of spilling seed in vain. What is a man to do who desires anal sex but is concerned about spilling his seed in vain? R. Tzadok HaCohen of Lublin offers the following answer: “And there are those who say (this is the opinion of the Tosafot quoted previously) that it is permissible for a man to have intercourse with his wife in an unnatural way in the rear orifice, even though he spills his seed in vain, as long as it is only occasionally and not a habit. There are others who argue that even occasionally it is forbidden to spill seed in vain. What is permissible is not to spill the seed, but when he is about to spill his seed, he should quickly come in her womb. At any rate, he should not make a habit of this, as he may spill his seed in vain. And whoever sanctifies himself even in those matters which are permitted is called a holy person” (Sefer HaZikhronot, positive commandment no. 1, – chap 2, which begins with the word aizehu). What is sorely missing in this discussion is even the tiniest hint about the feelings of the woman. It is only necessary to make certain that the drops of semen not be wasted, and to make certain that men be sexually satisfied. At the same time, a more puritanical state is preferable, in which “he is called holy.”

67. Sihah Malakhey Hasharet, XXX. The source of this Hasidic interpretation, which demands that a true warrior conduct a face to face war with his evil inclination, rather than repressing it, can already be found in the teachings of the Maggid of Mezritch: “Who is strong? He who conquers his inclination. [We should note that the word 'who' (lit. 'which') implies that two people are being discussed, and he asks which of them is strong] ... There are two types of tzaddikim – one who does not allow the evil inclination to come anywhere near him – he chases it away before it can even approach him. And there is a tzaddik who does allow it to approach him, but conquers it, so that he not be tempted to sin...”

(Likutim Yekarim, 43, see the examples he brings). For a psychological analysis of these two ways of contending with inner evil, see Micha Ankuri, *The Heart and the Spring*, pp. 127-140.

68. Amud HaAvodah, Tchernowitz, 5614, and Jerusalem 5728 p. 29b. On the sanctification of intercourse, see also O. Ezrahi, "Two Cherubs," pp. 32-33.

One Habad tradition has it that the Baal Shem Tov compared the development of sexual relations to the climbing of a spiral staircase. "The Baal Shem Tov (explained this) by means of a profound parable, which sheds light on one of the secrets of the Torah, which was explained by R. Hayyim Vital in Etz Hayyim. The Baal Shem Tov described this as (being similar to) a spiral staircase. When someone stands by the central column, he looks up...and when he needs to climb up to the second step, which is higher than the first step, he gets closer to the form which is at the top of the column, (but to do so) he must first go around the central column, so it seems that he is going further away and hiding...so the Etz Hayyim explains that this is the case with how malkhut ascends...(that in order) to become face to face it first needs to be back to back" (note in Keter Shem Tov, in the additional notes, the letter mem). This is part of a teaching that explains that the secret of the original nesirah (separation) of the male from the female is a process of drawing closer and going away, much like a dance: "In the name of the Baal Shem Tov: 'Then the virgin will rejoice in dance' (BIBLICAL REF). – that after being face to face, and very close, there must be concealment, so that there can be an even greater level of face to face. Just as during a dance, when (the dancers) come closer and then further apart" (see also: the Tzemah Tzedek, Or Torah, parshat Ekev, p. 422. Also R. Shalom Ber, Hemshekh Ta'arav, vol. 2, pp. 522-3).

69. See Mordecai Roteberg, Yetzer, PAGE REF.

70. Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai*, p. 196.

71. Beverly Harrison, *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics*, pp. 149-50.

72. *Bonds of Love*, p. 221.

73. Cordovero, Elimah Rabbati, 95a, Jerusalem, 1974. In the original, the two sentences are in reverse order.

74. Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah 18,21, based on Is. 8:6, which compares the Kingdom of David and the Messianic line to the waters of Shiloah which flow slowly but penetrate deeply.

75. In this discussion, we follow in the footsteps of a few hasidic Kabbalists who followed the Ari's lead (see especially "Avodat Yisrael," likkutim, Ketuvot 115??; and the Siddur of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, his commentary on the last blessing of the seven marriage blessings; and the Leshem Shvo v'Achlama, on the diminishing of the moon, and others). They developed the myth of how the female side of reality will grow to the point when male and female are equal. In light of these sources we can view the lowly status of woman in the halakhic world as an expression of the Shechinah in exile. As the world advances towards its ultimate healing, and as the Shechinah re-claims its full stature, this state of affairs will be remedied. Although, practically speaking, these spiritual giants lived patriarchally oriented lives, as did all their contemporaries, they left us fertile ground in which we can nurture the development of an alternative way of relating to femininity in general and to woman and her status in society in particular.

76. B. Hagigah 12a