



The Partzufim - The Sefirotic Faces

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G-d manifests Himself throughout His creation. Yet, His level of manifestation differs in accordance to the level of creation in which He is manifest, and through which He manifests. Not all creations are created equal. G-d, however, in His mercy, reveals Himself to each creation in accordance to its ability to receive His light. The filters that G-d uses to diffuse His light to the lower levels are the sefirot. The worlds are the general divisions within creation through which the sefirot manifest. When G-d manifests Himself within one of the worlds, and through a specific sefirotic manifestation, this manifestation is called a sefirotic Face, in Hebrew a Partzuf.

This is the terminology used in the most advanced forms of Kabbalistic study found in Idarot of the holy Zohar and in the writings of the Ari'zal. Partzufim express how G-d's ultimate essence is revealed in each level of each of the worlds. Partzufim are, therefore, the most prominent and important concept in understanding Divine revelation. For G-d reveals Himself differently to different entities within different worlds, each at their different level. Partzufim is the system of levels through which G-d is perceived.

It must be remembered that each sefirah has within it ten sefirot, which have within them ten sefirot, which subdivide to infinity. Sefirot are, therefore, similar to cells within a body. All cells are similar in makeup to one another. Yet, they combine and form different organs. So too, sefirot are like the cells that make up Partzufim. Each Partzuf has ten sefirot, but it is the Partzuf as a whole that is experienced.

The Olamot worlds also subdivide in similar fashion. G-d is manifest and revealed throughout all of these infinite levels. Yet, each of these levels is only a partial expression of the whole of creation. Even though G-d is manifesting only an aspect of Himself within each level, still that aspect of G-d revealed contains within it a microcosm of the whole. Each aspect of G-d's microcosmic revelation is, therefore, called a sefirotic Face, i.e., a Partzuf.

The Partzuf is how G-d manifests Himself. Each world and each sefirah manifests its own Partzufim. Therefore, a correct understanding of the workings of the Partzufim is essential for understanding the Kabbalistic teachings of how G-d interacts with His creation.



The symbolisms used in the Zohar and the writings of the Ari'zal to explain the Partzufim are most precise and detailed. It is these very details that the Kabbalists use to reveal the secrets of the innermost functions of the metaphysical (and physical) universe. Based on the precedent set by the Bible, which speaks of "the Hand of G-d" or that "G-d sees" or "G-d hears", Kabbalists use this same type of anthropomorphic terminology to describe how G-d works and reveals Himself within creation.

Each Partzuf then has detailed explanations regarding it's "eyes", "ears" "nose" "mouth", "forehead" etc..., all of these terminologies are purely abstract symbols used only to assist our corporeal minds in understanding non corporeal reality. It must be remembered that G-d has no form or visage. There is no "Hand of G-d", nor is there an "Eye", Ear, "Nose" or "Mouth" of G-d. When the Bible (or the Kabbalists) uses these symbols they are complete metaphor. One who forgets this crucial lesson comes dangerously close to falling into the pits of evil idolatry.

The Partzufim help explain many of the most difficult teachings within the Bible. For example, in Genesis it is taught that man was created in the "image" of G-d, and that this image was both male and female. Being that G-d has no form or semblance of form, how can the Torah attribute to G-d attributes of masculinity and femininity? The Partzufim reveal both the active and passive aspects of how G-d's ultimate light is revealed within the universe, stirring friction among the creative forces. These creative forces within G-d are the primordial source of male and female in the universe. As it is below, so it is above. Through the merging and union of the supernal masculine and feminine forces is there a "spiritual" birth of sorts in the supernal realms. It is this type of metaphor which explains why Kabbalistic language is highly sexual.

The Partzufim also reveal the interactions of the sefirot. Each sefirah, of the general sefirot, therefore, has within it a number of different Partzufim, which follow a general pattern. In general, there are twelve Partzufim that are divided up among the sefirot. Each Partzuf is above the one beneath it, and is its source. In order to make it more understandable, I will outline the Partzufim according to the sefirot they manifest.

KETER - ATIK YOMIN AND ARIKH ANPIN

Keter, as we have previously learned, reveals the Divine Will, also known as Adam Kadmon, A.K., Primordial Man. The Ari'zal is adamant that any contemplation about A.K. or what is above Him is strictly forbidden. Therefore, when we discuss Partzufim we begin with the A.K. that is the Keter of Atzilut and below, for it is Atzilut that forms the "Body" of G-d that manifests the light of the upper worlds to creation below.

To begin with, it must be understood that each sefirah manifests within it two distinct aspects. One aspect that receives the light of G-d from above it. The second aspect reveals that light of G-d to that which is below it. Thus, each sefirah will manifest two



distinct Partzufim, each revealing one of these functions. However, one at the lower level can receive influx from both aspects and thus from both Partzufim that are above it.

Within Keter, the Partzuf that “looks up” and receives from A.K. is called Atik Yomin, the Ancient of Days. Atik is both male and female, both of which are individual Partzufim, but at the level of Atik, His male and female aspects are inseparable, and act together as one.

That aspect of Keter which “looks down” and gives the light of A.K. to the sefirot and the worlds below is called Arikh Anpin, the Long Face. It is Arikh, the Long Face, which reveals G-d’s Will (the function of Keter) and thus reveals G-d’s ultimate mercy to the universe. Arikh is metaphorically said to have a long beard descending down to His “navel” which is subdivided into thirteen parts. These thirteen parts are the thirteen attributes of mercy that G-d revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai when He forgave the Jewish people for being led astray by the mixed multitude in building the Golden Calf. Arikh too, has His feminine counterpart who, like Atik’s, is integrally united with Him, at His side.

HOKHMA - ABBA AND YISRAEL SABA

Like Keter, Hokhma also contains two sefirot. Abba (Father) “looks up” and receives from Arikh. Yisrael Saba (Grandfather Yisrael) “Looks down” and gives to the six (who we shall see is called Z.A.). Now, Abba and Yisrael Saba both have feminine counterparts, but these counterparts are not part of Hokhma. Both Abba and Yisrael Saba can shine their light into Z.A.

BINAH - IMMA AND TEVUNAH

The feminine counterparts of Abba and Yisrael Saba are the two Partzufim of Binah. Imma (Mother) “looks up” and receives. Tevunah (Intelligence) “looks down” and gives to Z.A.. Hokhma and Binah manifest the male and female aspects of Keter, their source. However, in Hokhma and Binah, male and female are not completely united as they are in Keter. The union of male and female in Abba and Imma is continual, yet they maintain recognizably separate identities, unlike Atik and His feminine, and Arikh and His feminine.

THE SIX - ZEIR ANPIN (Z.A.)

Z.A. is the central Partzuf of all the Partzufim Corresponding to the six sefirot, with Tiferet at the center, Z.A. is the heart of Atzilut. It is this Partzuf of G-d that we know as the G-d of the Bible, the Holy One, Blessed Be He. For all the upper Partzufim of Keter, Hokhma and Binah are concealed within Z.A. and act within Him as His Mohin (brains) and Will. Z.A. is the focal point of all Divine revelation within the universe.



Z.A. also contains two Partzufim within Him. Yisrael is the face that “looks up” and Ya’aqob is the face that “looks down”.

MALKHUT - NOK D’Z.A.

Nok d’Z.A. means Z.A.’s feminine counterpart, i.e., His Mate. Like all the upper sefirot, Malkhut also is divided into two Partzufim. Leah is the face that “looks up”. Rachel is the face that “looks down”. Rachel is the Shekhina, the Divine Presence of G-d, the spark of holiness that is the source of all Beriatric souls.

As I mentioned above, Z.A. and Nok are the Partzufim wherein which creation experiences G-d. Z.A. and Nok of Atzilut are the Holy One, Blessed Be He and His Shekhina. Together they manifest all the sefirot of Atzilut, seven revealed and three concealed. It is the seven sefirot of Z.A. and Nok that manifest the seven days of creation.

Z.A. and Nok of Atzilut are the central Partzufim and it is their relationship with all the other Partzufim that define how G-d is revealed, experienced and manifest to all creatures within creation. Therefore, an understanding of Z.A.’s relationship to the upper sefirot of Atzilut and of A.K., His relationship to Nok, and Her relationship to the upper sefirot explains the majority of Kabbalistic teachings about time, space and mind.