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A'Be'Y'Ah The Four Olamot (Worlds)

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The sefirot are the basic pattern underlying all of creation. Even the sefirot themselves follow this pattern in that each sefirah has ten sefirot within them. Each of these ten has ten within them and so on and so on into infinity. So, in reality there are not just ten sefirot, there are an infinite number, each sefirah being a subjective part of a greater sefirah, which itself is only a part of a greater sefirotic whole.

In order to give some semblance of organization to this extremely complex universe of ours, the sefirot are divided into worlds, which are individual spheres of influence. No sefirah acts independently. G-d manifests Himself through specific sefirot within specific realms of creation. That "Face" of G-d which is revealed is called a Partzuf. This aspect will be discussed shortly. The specific realm of creation that manifests a Partzuf is called an Olam (world or realm). Each Olam (realm) is not a physical location, but rather a level of sefirotic manifestation. These realms are the levels of differentiation in creation. Each realm expresses life in accordance to that sefirah which formed it. G-d is manifest in each realm in accordance to the sefirah manifest therein. These realms are the Olamot.

There are five worlds in the general scheme of things, each world is, of course, subdivided into smaller worlds, sefirot and Partzufim. More of the subdivisions will be discussed later.

The first of the five general worlds is called Adam Kadmon, the Primordial Man. This is the realm (Olam) of the general sefirah Keter. A.K. (as Adam Kadmon is referred to) manifests the interactions within the sefirah Keter. The first and highest of the worlds is the "Will" or the "essence" of being. This is the spark of the Divine that gives existence to everything in creation. For without a sense of essence and identity no molecular structure would "know" to maintain its integrity in its given form. Therefore, A.K., the "Will" of the universe, is the primordial blueprint of everything in creation.

Due to the fact that A.K. is so sublime and unable to be comprehended, He has no form of representation within creation. While A.K. most certainly exists within creation, His being is still beyond that which any form (vessel) can hold. Therefore, although A.K. manifests all the other worlds, He Himself is considered too concealed to be revealed.



So when we refer to the realms (the worlds), we normally do not count A.K., but only the lower four worlds, for they alone manifest in both force and form. The second of the five worlds, and the first realm to manifest creation, as we know it, is Atzilut.

ATZILUT

The realm of Atzilut is where A.K. (Keter) takes a form that is recognizable to the realms below. Together A.K. and Atzilut form a relationship to one another which might be called the “spirit” and “body”. The light of G-d’s ultimate essence descends into the void only to the bottom of Atzilut. Beneath this, the light of Atzilut descends into the lower realms. Therefore, there is a major difference between Atzilut and the lower realms. A.K. and Atzilut together are called the “Creator”, whereas the lower three realms will be called “creation”.

Atzilut is the realm of the general sefirot. Atzilut is the realm of the Divine. Atzilut is the realm from where G-d is revealed to creation, although Atzilut is only a “body” to A.K. and A.K. a “body” to the ultimate essence, the Ayn Sof. The realm of Atzilut is the realm of pure “Spirit”. This realm of the Divine is above all human comprehension. It is the exclusive realm of G-d.

Atzilut means “emanation”, for Atzilut is merely an emanation and reflection of A.K. This realm of Atzilut creates the lower three worlds which are each reflections of the subjective levels within Atzilut itself. The first of the three lower worlds that reflect Atzilut is called Beriah, the realm of Mind.

BERIAH

This is the realm that begins to manifest diversity in the unity of creation. The word Beriah itself means creation. In Atzilut, G-d’s unity is recognized in all. From Beriah and below, G-d’s unity begins to be blurred. The realm (or level) of Beriah is called the Throne of G-d (Kiseh HaKavod). A spark of the Malkhut of Atzilut cloaks itself within the Keter of Beriah and thus enlivens it. Beriah, however, begins a new form of manifestation. These new manifestations are called souls (Neshamot).

Beriah is the realm of the sefirah Binah, the realm of “I am what I am”, in other words the realm of Mind, the abstract level of pure consciousness. Souls are manifestations of consciousness. They are beyond the realm of body and form as we understand them. Nonetheless, they have a very specific identity that both unites them and distinguishes one from the other.

Beriah is the highest realm outside of G-d, and thus the closest to Him. Therefore, the spark of G-d dwells within Beriah. In other words, G-d’s Presence (in Hebrew, Shekhina) dwells upon (and within) the manifestations within Beriah, which are the Neshamot souls. It is these souls that are the Throne of G-d, for G-d dwells upon (and within them).



As Beriah manifests division (the diversity of souls), it is the source of judgment in the universe (for judgment always decides between what is right and what is wrong). Beriah, which is Binah embodies perception, which is the true definition of consciousness (for Hokhma is unconscious). Therefore, it is Beriatric perception which is pure Mind (consciousness) which constructs the forms (and not the essence) of the lower worlds that are yet to come. Beriah, Binah is the mother of the laws of creation. When G-d manifests this aspect of Himself, He is called Elohim, which technically means a Judge. This is the name of G-d used when creating the universe (in Gen. 1). This signifies that G-d created the seven days of creation from the aspect of judgment. Judging from the severity of the laws of nature, this point should not be in doubt. It is the seven days of creation and their spiritual counterparts that are the next two worlds. The first of which, corresponding to the six days of work, is Yetzirah.

YETZIRAH

This realm is the realm of the heart and the place of motivation. It is here in Yetzirah that the pure Mind of Beriah becomes infused with passion; passion being emotion.

The entities manifest at the Yetzirah level are, therefore, very highly polarized and charged to accomplish specific tasks. These entities are not so much “thinking” entities as much as “feeling” entities. Being that they do not emanate from the realm of Mind, these Yetziratic entities do not possess what I will call the “thinking function”, for that is the exclusive domain for those of Beriatric consciousness. Yetziratic entities, therefore, are kind of like the animals in the spiritual, non corporeal planes. We know them as angels, when they manifest functions and missions from above. Otherwise, when these entities perform acts of their own, we know them as demons.

The name Yetzirah means formation. For Yetzirah gave form to that dimension which we know as time. Each of the six sefirot of Yetzirah manifest and form one of the six days of creation, following the form of their sefirotic emanation. Yetzirah as the realm of time also is the realm of emotions. For as time comes and goes but is never stationary, so are emotions.

The realm of Yetzirah is the closest to our physical world. Therefore, emotions, more than pure thought often direct our actions. It is these Yetziratic influences that we are able to cognize in the form of the archetypes of the personal and collective unconscious. Beriatric entities, being that they are pure mind, also take on a pictorial form that our minds cognize in an archetypal form. However, Beriatric beings can only be cognized once the mind is calm and clear of emotion. This level is not reached by the vast majority of people. Yetziratic beings, on the other hand, are able to be cognized whenever there is a strong emotional attachment, be it to something good or evil. The human mind has two functions. One is cognition of the external world surrounding us. The other is the experience of the internal world of the unconscious within us. Therefore, we as humans can experience the archetypes of Yetziratic reality through our unconscious mind. As we



know from dream language, archetypal Yetziratic reality is cognized in symbolic pictorial form. Therefore, people experiencing non corporeal reality always picture it through some kind of vision or similar apparently visual experience.

Rabbi Haim Vital writes in his Sha'arei Kedusha (part three) that with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the gateways of direct Beriatic experience were closed. Thus, the prophet Ezekiel "saw" his vision (recorded in Ezekiel 1), through the filter of the Yetziratic realm. Rabbi Haim says that all Atzilutic and Beriatic experiences will today be filtered through Yetziratic archetypes. It must be remembered that when a prophet "sees" a vision he is not seeing an external reality, but an internal one. The pathway to prophecy is within the mind; a mind that is calm and in control of one's emotions. The Kabbalists have taught that prophecy has its source in the two sefirot Netzah and Hod. One imposes order (Netzah) and the other brings down the benefit (Hod) from that activity. This explains why prophetic messages always consisted of moral admonitions. All prophetic predictions of the future were based upon the rewards or punishments of receiving and conforming to the Divine order (Netzah).

Yetzirah, the realm of the angels, is a domain that is lower than the souls (Neshamot). Therefore, the source of the human soul is much higher than that of an angel. However, the angels are of a higher state when we, as humans, are disconnected from our Beriatic source. This will not be rectified fully until the coming of Mashiah.

Yetzirah is the realm in closest proximity to the final level Asiyah, the realm of the physical. Being that Yetzirah is the closest to us, the physical plane is most subject to its influence. This last realm, Asiyah, Malkhut is the center of all.

ASIYAH

This is the realm of the corporeal, both what is seen and unseen to the human eye. The realm of Asiyah is the realm of matter, which traditional Torah sources tell us are divided into the four basic elements: fire, air, water and earth.

However, that which we recognize as these elements are not what these elements truly are. As each realm has within it complete representative aspects of all the other realms, the realm of matter, as we know it, is the Asiyah within Asiyah. Therefore the fire, air, water and earth that we perceive are the four worlds-realms of the Asiyah of Asiyah. Earth, at this level, therefore, is the lowest of the four and thus its subjective Asiyah. Thus, the earth, i.e., the ground under our feet, is the Asiyah that is within the Asiyah of Asiyah.

All forms of physical matter as we know it are, therefore, only the Asiyah within Asiyah. The conclusion that the Kabbalists learn from this is that there exists in the universe, and on our planet Earth, other forms of matter of a higher and purer nature than what our eye recognizes. Some of these other forms we have begun to recognize as atomic and



subatomic particles, waves and beams. These and other yet undiscovered forms of matter are as real and concrete as that which we today experience.

These other forms of matter form entire universes which exist parallel to our own. For example, the Rabbis speak of what is called a "Haluka D'Rabbanan", which is the Torah term for what today is popularly called the "astral body". Rabbi Haim Vital in his book, Etz Haim (Sha'ar 50) describes this other body of ours, which clothes our soul and exists within (and surrounding) our physical body. This "astral body" is nourished by the energy effects of a person's actions within this realm of matter. It thus appears that this astral body, and thus the entire astral plane are made up of a form of matter that we can define as being the Yetzirah of Asiyah, which is one step above the Asiyah of Asiyah of which our bodies are made.

Like the triads of sefirot, the four worlds are also abbreviated and are called A'Be'Y'Ah. Therefore, each world or realm has a complete A'Be'Y'Ah within it. Whenever we discuss a world we have to know which level within which world we are discussing. Without this spiritual road map, one will get just as lost as would one in a foreign country, without any directions, or knowledge of the language.