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The Secret of the Tree of Knowledge

The Kabbalistic Parameters of Adam’s Sin

Translated from

Sefer Da’at U’Tevunah – Chap. 17
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Text originally from the Kitvei HaAri’zal

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Text:

Now in these introductions will be explained the matter of Adam and just what was his sin. Know, that when Adam was created, Z.A. (1) at this time only had mohin from the side of Imma (2).

Commentary:

(1) Z.A. is Zeir Anpin, the Small Face, which is an appellation for the sefirat Tiferet. It is at this level that G-d is revealed to His universe. G-d’s highest face, i.e., His most true essence, referred to as the sefirat Keter, or the Long Face, Arikh Anpin, is concealed from the universe. This aspect of G-d is only revealed at specific times of grace and mercy. Otherwise the universe is ruled through the aspect of Z.A. However, these Faces are not independent entities, G-d forbid. They are rather expressions of G-d’s light and how this filters down through the realms to become manifest in all the worlds. Z.A., therefore, which is that Face of G-d that controls the world still receives its guidance and abilities from those deeper aspects within G-d, which in Kabbalistic terminology are called “mohin”, brains. For these mohin lights serve as the “brain power” of Z.A. giving Him G-d’s ultimate, most concealed light.

(2) Z.A. receives the mohin energies from the two concealed realms, which are the sefirot of Binah and Hokhma. Being that Binah is the source of Passive Energy above, we say that “she” is feminine. Being that Hokhma is the source of Active Energy above, we say that “he” is masculine. Being that Hokhma and Binah both transfer to Z.A. the energies that are needed in order for this aspect of G-d to become fully manifest, we say that Binah is Z.A.’s “mother” and that Hokhma is Z.A.’s “father”. This symbolic terminology is used throughout the Holy Zohar and the writings of the Ari’zal.

Text:

Therefore His (i.e., ZA's) Keter was only the size of the bottom 1/3 of the Tiferet of Imma (3).

Commentary:

(3) Sefirot are aligned in columns. Sefirot in a column overlap one another. Remember also that each sefirah has the pattern of all ten sefirot within it. Therefore the Keter of Z.A. (which is the crown of his center column) is made up of the Tiferets of Imma (Binah) and Abba (Hokhma). These two Tiferets that are above Z.A. serve as his crown. Being that they still are Tiferets, although at a higher level, they thus belong to Z.A., who is the general Tiferet. Yet being that the Tiferets of Imma and Abba are a higher level, they manifest as the highest level within Z.A., i.e., his “brains” (mohin). When Z.A. receives alone the energies from Imma, we say that He only receives 1/3 of her Tiferet. When Z.A. receives also from Abba, then we say he receives 2/3. So, the 1/3rd stage is a very low level of spiritual energy and awareness.

Text:

Thus was Adam commanded saying, “from the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil, do not eat from it.” (4)

Commentary:

(4) Adam is the human channel of Z.A. Thus the Torah calls the children of Israel, the children of HaShem our G-d. This is reference to Z.A. As Z.A. above was not yet completely manifest, neither was Adam below. What affected the one affected the other.

Text:

Know, that the aspect called the Center Column, be it in Z.A. or in Nok, be it in Atzilut, Beriah, Yetzirah or Asiyah, this is the Tree of Knowledge. (5)

Commentary:

(5) The sefirot of the center column, these are together called the Tree of Knowledge. The part about good and evil will be defined as we proceed.

Text:

For herein are the Hasadim (6) revealed and the Hitzonim (outsiders) (7) are able to grasp them.

Commentary:

(6) Abba and Imma both give to Z.A. energy. That which comes forth from Abba are called “hasadim” which literally means “mercies”. These are powerful, life giving energies of abundance. They are greatly sought after as the source of bounty and prosperity, be it physical or spiritual.

(7) The “outsiders” or the Hitzonim are the forces of evil which hover around the holy sefirot above and try to siphon off any holy energy that may “leak” through the system due to the sins of mankind. Certain lower aspects of holy energy are the nourishment for these outsider forces.

Text:

This however is not true when [Z.A. has] two mohin [which come from both Imma and Abba] which are His [personal] Hokhma and Binah. We thus find that Z.A. Himself is called the Tree, for He is the letter Vav of the holy Name. (8)

Commentary:

(8) The Name of HaShem, Yod Kay Vav Kay manifests within it all the major sefirotic Faces. Yod is Abba, the first Hey is Imma, Z.A. is Vav and Nok (the Shekhina) is the final Hey. Z.A. is called a Tree for in him is balanced the center column of the sefirot, and the letter Vav is kind of in the shape of a tree trunk.

Text:

Therein [in Z.A.] are the two mohin, Hokhma and Binah, which are called “hayim” (life) as is known from the secret meaning of the verse “And wisdom (hokhma) enlivens her husband”. Also Binah is called “the life of the King”. When [Z.A.] takes [both of] these two mohin [together, then] he is called the Tree of Life. (9)

Commentary:

(9) Like in the human being below where life comes to the body through the brain, so it is with Z.A. above. His spiritual life comes to him from his brains, which are the radiance and influence of the energies that come to him from Hokhma and binah, his parents.

Text:

When Z.A. also takes the third [of the] mohin, Da’at, then he is called the Tree of Knowledge. (10)

Commentary:

(10) Da’at is not a sefirah in its own right and thus is not counted as an eleventh sefirah. Da’at however is the outer manifestation of Keter. Keter is the crown. It is too sublime for it to be absorbed and thus experienced within the body. Thus Keter filters itself through Hokhma and Binah. Yet, once this is done, and the radiance in Hokhma and Binah is received in Z.A. a new manifestation is born. This is the birth of knowledge, which is the union of Hokhma and Binah. This is Da’at. Da’at is Keter manifest within the body, as a kind of third brain. This brain then connects the upper brains (right and left loves) to the body. This makes the Da’at correspond to the Medulla Oblongata, which according to Compton’s Encyclopedia. “transmits all signals between the spinal cord and the higher parts of the brain and also governs mechanisms essential to life:

heartbeat, blood pressure, and breathing.” Those familiar with the Ari’zal’s lectures on Passover will recognize the connection.

Text:

Now, it is known that the two mohin Hokhma and Binah come [into Z.A.] cloaked within the Netzah and Hod of Imma. (11)

Commentary:

(11) As I mentioned above, there is always overlapping of sefirot. Thus the Tiferet of a higher sefirotic Face becomes the Keter of the sefirotic face beneath it. And, the Netzah and Hod of the higher sefirotic Face become the Hokhma and Binah of the sefirotic Face beneath it. This is what is being referred to here.

Text:

From there they radiate throughout the left and right columns of Z.A. Being that these two mohin come cloaked in the vessels of Imma, (12) the outsiders are not able to dominate over them. (13)

Commentary:

(12) Even with the overlap, the integrity of the sefirah is still intact. It therefore performs a multiple function. Each function is therefore called a vessel. So, for example, the sefirah of Netzah within Imma of course has its own function, i.e., vessel. Yet, this Netzah also acts as the Hokhma for Z.A. Therefore when this Netzah is manifest in Z.A. it is performing two functions, one for itself in Imma and one for Z.A. thus this Netzah is said to have two vessels.

(13) The light is doubly encased. Each encasing (vessel) acts as a filter. The “outsiders” therefore cannot break in and steal from the light.

Text:

Thus are [the mohin] called life, for the outsiders, who are called death, (14) can have no dominion over them at all.

Commentary:

(14) The outsiders siphon off the life force. Any taking or lessening of life is called death.

Text:

[These mohin] are the light of good, and not evil, life and not death. Therefore Adam was not commanded regarding eating from the Tree of Life. (15)

Commentary:

(15) In review, the Tree of Life is Z.A. with the fullness of his mohin (brains) from both Abba and Imma. The Tree of Knowledge is Z.A. without his complete mohin.

Text:

However he was commanded regarding [eating] from the Tree of Knowledge, which is the third of the mohin, Da'at, which is why Z.A. is called the Tree of Da'at (Knowledge). (16)

Commentary:

(16) Again, this means that the focus of Z.A.'s brain was in Da'at, prior to its being filled with the light that comes from Abba.

Text:

For the Da'at is different from the other two mohin in that its [radiance is primarily] manifest [in the 'body' of Z.A.] from His chest (tiferet) and below. (17)

Commentary:

(17) See Commentary #10 and understand the Da'at as the Medulla, and this will become clear.

Text:

For the source of Da'at is good and not evil, for its place is between the two mohin of Z.A., in his head. And as we have already explained, the outsiders cannot achieve a grasp on the three upper sefirot. (18)

Commentary:

(18) This is because the light of the upper three sefirot are so sublime that by definition they neutralize the existence of the darkness of the outsiders.

Text:

A second reason [why the outsiders cannot grasp the Da'at] is that there are two vessels here, the vessel of the Yesod of Imma and the vessel of Z.A.'s Head. (19)

Commentary:

(19) The vessel of Z.A.'s head is the vessel of the Da'at itself, which remember, is also the Yesod of Imma (complete with its own vessel).

Text:

The outsiders are unable to achieve a grasp upon a thing that is concealed within two vessels. (20)

Commentary:

(20) This is also the Halakha. Something holy can only enter into an unclean place (and not be defiled by that place) when it is doubly sealed in a covering enwrapped in another covering. An example of this is taking food into a bathroom. This makes the food forbidden. However, if you had a stick of gum on one's person when going to the bathroom, which was wrapped up (covering #1) and that was placed in a pocket (covering #2), then it is not defiled and thus not forbidden to eat.

Text:

A third reason [why the Da'at is protected] is that the outsiders cannot achieve dominance in that place where there is a vessel for Imma. (21)

Commentary:

(21) Light and vessel are both that powerful. Also, a vessel itself is just another form or vibration of light. Remember there is nothing physical or concrete in these realms that we are discussing.

Text:

However, the lowest aspect of the Da'at (22) when it radiates beneath the chest [of Z.A.] (23), manifests as good and evil,

Commentary:

(22) Even though we have discussed how the sefirot from one face overlap into the sefirot of the face below it, the face below it does not take into itself the entire upper sefirah. Thus the Yesod of Imma is not completely absorbed into the Da'at of Z.A. but only a portion of it, the lowest 1/3 portion.

(23) The chest of Z.A. is his Tiferet. Below his chest are the three sefirot Netzah, Hod and Yesod. It is here where the sefirotic light is just in a small way dimmed. This dimming is just enough for the outsiders to tap in and suckle off of them. This then is evil, which, as with all things, has its source in holiness.

Text:

For the outsiders can achieve a grasp there. The above three reasons are not applicable here, even though the Da'at is a moah (brain). (24)

Commentary:

(24) And as such should be above the possibility of being tapped.

Text:

This is only true when it is in the head above. However, when it radiates into the place of the Tiferet, which is the body, it is no longer a brain, and the outsiders can achieve a grasp of it. Also the Yesod of Imma only extends down as far as the chest [of Z.A.]. Being that there is no vessel of Imma

cloaking the Da'at (25) [beyond that point], the klipot can grasp it, especially since there is only one vessel [to penetrate] that being the body of Z.A.

Commentary:

(25) As the sefirot of Imma overlap the sefirot of Z.A. so the sefirot within Z.A. overlap. Z.A.'s Da'at is formed from the Yesod of Imma, which descends (1/3 of the way) into the head of Z.A. Z.A.'s Da'at continues to express itself down his entire central column. The influence of Imma is felt within Z.A. down until his Tiferet. After this the radiance of Imma does not descend further, and the Da'at of Z.A. loses one of its protective vessels.

Text:

Therefore are the outsiders (klipot) able to grasp control of and dominate the light of Da'at that is revealed beneath the chest. (26)

Commentary:

(26) In the realm of the sefirot of Netzah, Hod and Yesod. These in turn manifest today what is called the astral plane, which explains why there are so many demons and evil spirits hanging about the physical world.

Text:

Being that Da'at is therefore divided into two aspects, that which is above the chest, and that which is beneath it, we do not just refer to the Tree of Knowledge (Da'at) but rather the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil. (27)

Commentary:

(27) Da'at is good above the Tiferet, but once it descends beneath it, evil exists. This should not be a profound lesson for anyone. We all know that when we think clearly with our heads that things are understood correctly, whereas when emotions (the sefirot of NaHiY) cloud pure reasoning, things become rather muddled.

Text:

What this means is that the aspect that is the bottom of Da'at, [revealed] from the chest and below, this area is good and evil. From here are we commanded not to eat. (28)

Commentary:

(28) This statement could be the topic of a number of books. It seems that the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil was the lowering of pure thought into the realms of emotion. In other words, the descent from the realm of objectivity into the realms of subjectivity. Whenever one loses sight of pure, uninfluenced, none projective thought, the results are the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil. Only by raising the mental faculty above the influence of the emotions does one start the process of rectification.

Text:

What the side of holiness suckles from here is called good. The radiance that exits the body of Z.A. from the walls of the vessels is suckled by the outsiders and is called evil. We thus find that the Tree of Knowledge is the light of the [semi-sefirah] Da'at in that place where it is revealed, which is the center column, from the chest and below, in every place (29) in the four worlds Atzilut, Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah, wherever there is a Z.A. within them.

Commentary:

(29) Just as each world and level has ten sefirot within so this process is manifest in each one of them. So in each of the four realms of spirit, mind, emotion and action, Da'at is in danger of being perverted, and therefore must be protected.

Text:

Another [matter] needs to be explained regarding the outsiders grasping of the revealed light of the aspect of Da'at. [Da'at originally manifests the light from] the side of Imma. [The outsiders can only grasp this light] all the while that the light from the NaHiY (Netzah, Hod and Yesod) of Abba has not yet entered Z.A. However, once this light [of Abba] enters [into Z.A.] then the outsiders cannot maintain any grasp on the light of the Da'at (which comes from the side of Imma), even though they are [still] revealed. (30)

Commentary:

(30) This is the means of the rectification of Adam's sin. There must be the input of the lights from Abba. He is the sefirat Hokhma, which is the realm of the spiritual, which is the realm of thought. This is the realm of faith.

Text:

This is because Abba is superior to Imma, [and the outsiders] cannot grasp there at all, for the vessels and lights of Abba [are completely overwhelming for them.] [Abba] casts off (31) all the outsiders completely, even as it is written in the Zohar, parashat Tazria.

Commentary:

(31) The lights and realm of Hokhma, Abba are the most profound. I reference you to my Shoshana Tekhelet commentary on Sefer Yetzirah (later on in this issue) for more information. One point though does need to be made. Abba is the realm of faith. When one has true faith, all things are possible.

Text:

[In the Garden of Eden] Z.A. had within Him only the mohin (brains) from the side of Imma alone, therefore was he commanded not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil. (32)

Commentary:

(32) Z.A. and Adam were one and the same. Yet, this is supernal Adam, before the fall. We today are the descendants of terrestrial Adam after the fall. Adam-Z.A. was manifest as a maturing spiritual being, not one who was complete.

Text:

Now, it is known that the purpose of the creation of Adam was to rectify, by his hand and by his actions, the supernal worlds. This is the meaning of the verse [regarding the Garden that Adam was to] “guard it and work in it,” (Gen. 2:15). It is also written that “there was yet no man to work the land” (Gen. 2:5). Being that [Adam’s job] was to rectify Z.A. and Nok, he also wanted to rectify the Keter of Z.A. that was then very small, only the size of the bottom 1/3 of the Tiferet of Imma.

The Keter of Nok was comparatively larger than the Keter of Z.A. Her Keter was the size of 2/3 of the bottom of the Tiferet of Z.A., from the chest and below, to the end of His Tiferet. [Adam] wanted to expand the Keter of Z.A. so that it too would be the necessary 2/3’s size of the Tiferet of Imma, from Her chest down to the end of Her Tiferet.

We have already explained that this growth does not come about other than through the reception of the mohin that come from Abba. Thus the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge enabled the outsiders to enter in (33) prior to there being the mohin of Abba who have the ability to repulse them.

Commentary:

(33) Adam-Z.A. through Eve forced the issue, and caused the light of Da’at to be revealed prior to the lights of Abba being revealed within the Da’at. Da’at was not yet ready to experience and thus rectify the realm of emotions. Until one’s bond with G-d is sealed through complete unswerving faith, all the knowledge in the world can’t help a person. This was Adam’s experience, and ours, following in his footsteps.

Text:

Not only this, Adam also sinned in that he attempted to elevate the Keter of Z.A. prior to its time, prior to the receiving the mohin from Abba. All this caused a number of great and supernal blemishes.