

## **THE VOICE OF THE BRIDE<sup>1</sup>**

**By R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi**

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<sup>1</sup> R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi, *Tefilat LeKhal HaShana*, p138-139

## Bare Bones Literacy

### Summary:

*Voice of the Bride* by R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi takes the Ari's model a step beyond and shows how the polarities of masculine and feminine will eventually invert. There will come a time, blessed and welcomed by all, when the feminine will have greater access to transcendent consciousness, and when that happens she will bestow and *man* will receive from her.

### Vocabulary:

**Amida** – (literally, *standing*). Another term for the *shemona essrei* (or prayer of eighteen blessings). See entry above.

**Arik Anpin** – The second (lower) root of soul, also in the *sefira* called *crown*. It faces downward toward creation and generates a constant will-toward-good in the personality.

**Atik Yomin (Atika)** – The highest root of the soul. The innermost point of the *sefira* called *crown*, that actually touches the Infinite Light and dwells in the pleasure of that union.

**halacha** – (literally, *walking*). The vast system of Jewish law derived from the Torah as received by Moses and explicated by the sages, which defines the entirety of Jewish life. There is no area of experience that is outside the jurisdiction of *halacha*.

**integrated lights** – truths and understandings that have been apprehended by mind or heart.

**katnut** – (literally, *smallness*). A term referring to an immature or constricted state of consciousness.

**lights** – *Lights* are always equivalent to consciousness in kabbalistic writings. Each *sefira* or spark is a *light* that transmits a particular insight or capacity for awareness.

**malchut** - The lowest of the ten *sefirot* is called *malchut* which means literally royalty and kingship. It corresponds to the physical plane and represents the final stage of light's congealing into matter.

**man and woman** – Kabbalistic archetypes of male and female in their prime, as opposed to *father* and *mother* which signify their later stages of life.

**messianic era** – The messianic era is a transitional time between *this* world and the next. It begins somewhere towards the end of the sixth millennium (we are now within the period of its likely beginnings) and will take us to the threshold of the world-to-come. It is the joyous stage of actualized perfection. Love of G-d, love of neighbor, and love of Torah reign.

**mother** – The higher (or elder) feminine archetype associated with the *sefira* of *understanding (binah)*

**partzuf / partzufim** – The set of six kabbalistic archetypes that coalesce into a family system with each filling a unique role, for example: *father, mother, man, woman*. Equally frequently, these *partzufim* function as different “voices” or sub-personalities within a single individual.

**sefira / sefirot** – The ten channels of Divine flow and emanation which link the Transcendent Light with Its evolving and apparently finite creation.

**Shemona Essrei** (literally, *eighteen*) – the group of originally eighteen, but now nineteen blessings which form the core and backbone of Jewish worship. Under most circumstances the obligation to pray three times a day is only fulfilled by reciting the Shemona Essrei. This prayer is recited silently, while standing, feet together, facing Jerusalem.

**surrounding lights** – truths and understandings that are too deep or great for the mind (or vessel) to grasp.

**Mishna** - First recording of the oral law compiled by Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi in 180 C.E. Primarily legalistic in content, the *Mishna* consolidates the oral tradition as it had evolved from Sinai through the Second Temple period. It forms the basis of the *Gemara*.

**Synopsis**  
**Voice of the Bride**  
*R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi*

When a Jewish man and woman wed, seven marriage blessings are recited for them beneath the bridal canopy. R. Schneur Zalman comments on the last of these special prayers which heralds an idyllic time when “the jubilant voices of both groom and bride will be heard on the streets of Jerusalem...and the groom will rejoice *with* his bride.”<sup>2</sup> R. Schneur Zalman reads these lines in the context of his encyclopedic knowledge of Jewish teachings where even the most subtle hint reverberates in ever-widening circles of association. He interprets this prayer as depicting a profound transformation of gender relations that will culminate in messianic times.

R. Schneur Zalman identifies two shifts in status quo anticipated by the prayer’s carefully selected words. First is the emergence of woman’s voice from passive silence to full expression (as indicated by the blessing’s unnecessary repetition of the word *voice* both in relation to groom *and* in relation to bride). Second is a reversal of polarities between *man* and *woman*. Now when consciousness (and its associated joys) descends from above to below it passes first to *man* and from him to *woman*. In this sequence, he gives and she receives. In messianic times the polarity will invert and consciousness will move in the opposite direction; it will pass first to *woman*, and from her to *man* (as derived by comparing this prayer’s closing words to a nearly identical line in the sixth blessing that precedes it). R. Schneur Zalman elaborates on these remarkable teachings and explores their implications both for Israel’s relationship to G-d, and *woman’s* relationship to *man*.

He compares this messianic progression to Judaism’s two-stage process of marital relationship which defines a stepwise sequence of deepening intimacy, called betrothal and marriage. These are precisely defined terms in Jewish law. Betrothal is a legally binding commitment to marry. Though the couple is not permitted to relate sexually, in most other respects they are as if legally married and the dissolution of their engagement requires a divorce. The second level of matrimonial commitment occurs when the bride formally enters her husband’s home. The wedding canopy symbolizes their coming together under one-roof and so effects this change of status. The marriage is finalized by its physical consummation. These legal categories have metaphysical correlations as well. In betrothal the couple’s outer layers of soul engage; in marriage their core selves touch and bond.

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<sup>2</sup> The full text is as follows: Blessed are You, *HaShem*, our G-d, King of the universe, Who created joy and gladness, groom and bride, mirth, glad song, pleasure, delight, love, brotherhood, peace, and companionship. *HaShem*, our G-d, let there soon be heard in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem the sound of joy and the sound of gladness, the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the grooms’ jubilation from their canopies and of youths from their song-filled feasts. Blessed are You, *HaShem* Who gladdens the groom with the bride.

Betrothal requires one of several specific deeds to activate the obligations associated with that commitment. The Mishna states, “A woman is [betrothed] in three ways: When she receives a sum of money [or a gift of equivalent monetary value...]<sup>3</sup> Nowadays this is fulfilled by the exchange of a ring,<sup>4</sup> a gold band that *encircles* her finger.

This model also applies to the relationship between *HaShem* and Israel, where He is the groom and they are the bride. Their commitment evolves through a similar progression of intimacy. R. Schneur Zalman proves that the Torah’s revelation effected *HaShem*’s betrothal to Israel, the first stage of intimacy where externalities engage. Their relationship will consummate in messianic times.

Just as a man effects betrothal with a ring, so did *HaShem*, for the ring’s circular form parallel’s the metaphysical concept of surrounding lights. In *kaballah*, lights that can be grasped and integrated are called inner and internalizable (אור פנימי), lights that are present but too “high” or “deep” or “vast” to be contained within their vessel of consciousness are described as surrounding or hovering (אור מקיף). Both types descended at Sinai.

According to Jewish tradition, the Torah’s revelation was the most profound manifestation of G-d that ever transpired on the planet. An estimated four million people experienced that historic event. A searing revelation of Presence engraved the souls of an entire nation with the-truth-of-the-universe compressed into a single burst of light. Its impact continues to impel their generations to be seekers and servants of G-d, and will do so till the end of time.

Sinai is different from all other prophetic encounters not only in its amount of light but also in its quality. Other Biblical prophecies only accessed the aura of Divinity, the glow that surrounds the Blessed Luminary. At Sinai the Infinite Light itself, the actual source of illumination, was manifestly present. And yet, the people could not contain that intensity of revelation. Its bolt of insight impacted their souls, but only a fraction integrated as conscious awareness. The rest overflowed into a ring of surrounding light that holds all the possibilities of future consciousness within its glow. With each passing moment the vessel of awareness expands and a drop of surrounding radiance slips inside and integrates there. Eventually all the encircling lights will be internalized by our infinitely expanded capacity to know G-d.

R. Schneur Zalman defines both integrated and surrounding lights by their relationship to Torah. Integrated lights are truths and teachings that are accessible to us now, at this point in our development. All the accumulated wisdom of the Jewish people, its Torah commentaries, legal rulings, moral lessons and mysticism are all integrated lights to the extent that they are known and incorporated into life.

Conversely, the inner dimension of Torah, the repository of secrets hidden within the text elucidating the deeper reasons behind its laws, stories, and textual structure, this came down at Sinai but was not actually *revealed* at that time. Embedded within each letter, word, and story are all the unrealized possibilities of interpretation daily elucidated. These ungraspable lights (along with the higher states of consciousness that accompany them), form a shimmering halo around the integrated lights of the revealed Torah, enclosing them as if in a

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<sup>3</sup> TB *Kidushin* 2a. The passage continues, “...or by a document, or by sexual relations.”

<sup>4</sup> *Shulchan Aruch, Eben HaEzer* (IH), 31.

sphere of radiant consciousness. With this encircling band as His engagement offering, *HaShem* betrothed the Jewish people at Sinai and secured their commitment to marry at the end of days.

Throughout their engagement period Israel's relationship to *HaShem* daily ripens. It is not a time of passive waiting; only active preparation will do. Our task is to labor in Torah, to release its hidden teachings and allow ourselves to be transformed by its truths. Each day Israel exposes another layer of concealed lights and soon there will be no secrets left. The Torah's soul-satisfying wisdoms will illuminate every question, resolve every doubt, and explain every suffering.

The fullness of Divine light will shine through the Torah and fill Israel's collective heart, bones, cells and spaces with Holy Presence. There will be no place inside them that is not permeated with G-d and nothing of G-d that does not fit inside them. A perfect marriage, a consummate union of glory and awe.

This transition from betrothal to marriage happens through the gradual integration of surrounding lights. The transfer of consciousness from above to below, from its infinite source on high to its final expression as expanded awareness in the minds of mankind, follows one path of descent now, in the engagement period, and will follow an alternative route in messianic times. Now, this stepwise relay of consciousness begins with *mother* who passes it on to *man*. He internalizes what he can and the rest spills over as surrounding light. *Man* then separates out a portion of his newly integrated lights and passes them on to *woman*.

The rule is stated thus: The higher the *partzuf*, the greater its capacity to hold light. Consequently at each transfer only some illumination actually fits into the vessel below. The rest gets displaced into a ring of transcendent awareness that holds all the possibilities of future apprehension, and that encircles the head of the lower *partzuf*. In this way each upper level becomes a crown to the level below.

This is the order of descent in pre-messianic times, while the moon is diminished and *woman's* stature is less than *man's*. In this configuration *woman* cannot access her own transcendent lights, for she cannot reach them on her own. She needs *man* to draw them from *mother* and pass them to her.

Woman's preparation for marriage requires that she heal all traces of diminishment and regain her full stature. Consummation can only happen when *man* and *woman* match from the crown of their heads to the soles of their feet, and this is only possible when they meet as equal statures. As long as *woman* remains diminished, their union can never consummate and "marriage" cannot happen.

Then, explains the Rav, their relationship evolves to a higher level still. *Woman* recovers her full stature and then supercedes *man*. When this happens their polarity inverts. Now *she* becomes "the crown to her husband," holding the superconscious lights that are destined for him, but which he cannot reach on his own. Like a rubber band stretched and released, she springs beyond *man* and becomes the intermediary in their relationship, a service he will have provided for six thousand years. Since she can now access levels that he cannot, she transfers their illuminations to him, some of which he integrates and some of which he cannot, for his vessel of consciousness is too small to contain them. Instead they

encircle his head as a crown, fulfilling the verse which states “the woman of valor will become a crown to her husband.”

The seventh marriage blessing depicts this shift in the polarity of *man* and *woman* with its closing words, “...Blessed is *HaShem* who rejoices the groom *with* the bride.” Its use of the word *with* (as opposed to the word *and* in the sixth blessing) indicates that *woman* is now the primary source of joy and *man* comes along *with* her. In the first six milleniums of history consciousness (and its joys) flows from *man* to *woman*, but this dynamic will change in messianic times. The supersconscious lights of G-d awareness will pass first to *woman*, and then, afterwards, to *man*.

Rav Schneur Zalman depicts this gender transformation as a two-step process. First *woman* comes into her voice. Her current lack of voice manifests in two ways. Now her betrothal happens through a one way flow of speech. The groom talks while the bride stays silent. He pronounces his intention, “Behold you are sanctified [betrothed] to me...” and she does not respond. Her silence expresses her lack of protest which establishes the criteria of mutual consent. Their engagement, with all its contractual responsibilities, activates by her muteness. Second the *Shemona Essrei*,<sup>5</sup> the epitome of prayer and *woman*’s essential expression of Divine service, (as opposed to Torah study, which is *man*’s) is a silently offered prayer.

The seventh marriage blessing reads, “Let there soon be heard ...the voice of the bride.” R. Schneur Zalman reads this as an invocation: Let the bride come into her voice. Let her express herself and project herself in fully audible speech, the very opposite of the whispered prayers we now employ in our *Shemona Essrei*

In the future *woman* will return to her root and receive her lights straight from the very source of consciousness itself, the inwardness of the *Infinite light*. The relationship between groom and bride, God and Israel will then be fully consummated, as *woman* attains her full stature and they now meet at every level of their beings. *Woman* will recover her voice, and the roles of *man* and *woman* will invert. *Man* will receive his light and bounty from the transcendent levels of *HaShem* via the agency of *woman* as his intermediary, a state described by the seventh marriage blessing, “Blessed are You, *HaShem* who rejoices the groom *with* the bride.” All the promised pleasures of the messianic times are merely effects of this profound shift in gender relations.

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<sup>5</sup> Central prayer of Jewish worship. See glossary.

**Full Text**  
**Voice of the Bride**  
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ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם אשר ברא ששון ושמחה חתן וכלה גילה רנה דיצה  
 וחדווה אהבה ואחוה ושלוש ורעות. מהרה ה' אלקינו ישמע בערי יהודה ובחוצות  
 ירושלים קול ששון וקול שמחה קול חתן וקול כלה קול מצהלות חתנים מחופתם  
 ונערים ממשתה נגינתם ברוך אתה ה' משמח חתן עם הכלה.

Blessed are You, *HaShem*, our G-d, King of the universe, Who created joy and gladness, groom and bride, mirth, glad song, pleasure, delight, love, brotherhood, peace, and companionship. *HaShem*, our G-d, **let there soon be heard** in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem the sound of joy and the sound of gladness, **the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride**, the sound of the grooms' jubilation from their canopies and of youths from their song-filled feasts. **Blessed are You, *HaShem* Who gladdens the groom with the bride.**

This is, the last of the seven marriage blessings (*sheva brochot*), the special prayers recited under the wedding canopy and at each of the seven celebratory meals in the week following. The language of its bolded lines is curious for several reasons:

הנה יש להבין מה ששינה בחתימת ברכת שמח תשמח מחתימת ברכה האחרונה  
 אשר ברא כו' ששם אמר משמח חתן וכלה ובחתימת ברכת אשר ברא אומר  
 משמח חתן עם הכלה. וגם מהו עניין הבקשה באמרו מהרה ישמע כו' קול חתן  
 וקול כלה מה שייך עניין הרמת קול לחתן וכלה בשמחתם וגם למה דווקא לעתיד  
 ישמע קול חתן ולא עתה וגם מהו שכפל לומר שני קולות קול חתן וקול כלה כו'.

1. Why is the closing line<sup>6</sup> of this blessing only subtly different from the one that precedes it?<sup>7</sup> The sixth<sup>6,8</sup> *sheva brocha* ends with the prayer, “Blessed are You...who gladdens the groom *and* bride,” while the seventh ends with, “...who gladdens the groom *with* the bride?”

The difference between them must be significant enough to warrant both blessings. Otherwise, one of the prayers would be redundant and its recitation would violate the prohibition of taking G-d's name in vain.

<sup>6</sup> The closing line of a blessing, expressed in the formula of “Blessed are you...,” is called its *seal*. It condenses all the thoughts that precede it into a single statement of prayerful affirmation.

<sup>7</sup> The entire sixth blessing reads, “Gladden the beloved companions as You gladdened Your creature in the Garden of Eden from aforetime. Blessed are You, *HaShem*, Who gladdens groom and bride.”

<sup>8</sup> The blessings are said in a different order under the chupa than at the celebratory meals. Under the chupa the prayer over the wine is said as the first *sheva brocha* and then the six special blessings follow. At the celebratory meals, the six special blessings precede the prayer over wine so the numbering changes. What is here called the *seventh* becomes the *sixth*. What is here called the *sixth* becomes the *fifth*.

2. Why is the blessing stated with such urgency: "...let there *soon* be heard...the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride?"
3. What is the connection between the raised voices of groom and bride and their joy at coming together?
4. Why is the blessing stated in the future tense, as if only then will their voices be heard, but not now in the present?
5. Why is the prayer careful to explicitly mention the word *voice* both in relation to the groom *and* in relation to the bride: "Let there soon be heard...the *voice* of the groom and the *voice* of the bride," when it could more simply have said, "...the voice of the groom and bride."

The answer to these questions draws its illumination from the body of kabbalistic teachings called the *Diminishment of the Moon*, a collection of mystical writings that elucidate the mystery of gender.

אך הנה מה שאומר משמח חתן וכלה קאי עתה בזמן הגלות ומה שאמר משמח  
חתן עם הכלה קאי לעתיד דהיינו אחר שישמע קול חתן וקול כלה אז לעתיד  
דווקא משמח חתן עם הכלה אבל עכשיו שלא נשמע עדיין קול חתן וכלה משמח  
חתן וכלה.

The sixth *sheva brocha*, which ends with the phrase, "...who rejoices the groom *and* the bride" describes the relationship of male and female in our present, fallen and exiled state. The seventh blessing which reads, "...who rejoices the groom *with* the bride" applies to the future and presents the ideal and perfected endpoint of the collective marriage between men and women as cosmic archetypes evolving through time. The blessing describes a two step process of realizing its vision.<sup>9</sup> The first shifting of relationship is described by the phrase, "then will be heard...the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride." Only once *both* voices are heard can the last phase of history begin where "the groom now rejoices *with* the bride." Since at present the voices of bride and groom are not both heard, the reality of the sixth blessing applies instead, and a lower state of joy binds the groom *and* the bride."

והפרש ביניהם ידוע שכשאומר משמח חתן עם הכלה היינו שהשמח' באה  
מצד הכלה וממנה עיקר השמחה לשמח את החתן אבל כשאומר משמח חתן  
וכלה היינו שהחתן משמח לכלה ואל החתן בא עיקר השמחה בתחילה ולכך  
אומר משמח חתן ואחר כך כלה כו'.

The difference between these two blessings and the three-step sequence of relationship they describe is known to all versed in *kaballa*. In the future era described by the seventh blessing when "the groom rejoices *with* the bride," their polarity of giving and receiving will invert. While generally the male bestows and the female receives, then the awakening of joy will originate with the bride and only afterwards spread to the groom.

Conversely, in the sixth blessing, which describes our present, fallen state by the phrase, "...who rejoices the groom *and* the bride," the situation is reversed, and the arousal

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<sup>9</sup> In the siddur containing the essay here translated, there also appears another essay entitled, *Ci Al Kol Kavod, Chupa (Above Every Glory is a Canopy)*, where this point is explicitly elaborated.

moves from groom to bride. Since the kindling of joy starts with him, the verse describes the sequence of joy as starting with the groom and afterwards the bride.

ולהבין ביאור הדברים ושרש הטעם לזה למה עכשיו השמחה בחתן ואח"כ בכלה  
ולעתיד יהיה עיקר השמחה מן הכלה כו'. הנה יש להקדים תחלה שרש עניין  
אירוסין ונישואין.

To understand the reason behind this shifting of the polarity of joy's flow, that now it passes from groom to bride yet soon it will emanate from bride to groom, one must first understand the difference between betrothal and marriage as sequential stages of connubial commitment. Besides their literal application in every wedding ceremony, they also mark the path of Israel's evolving relationship with G-d and Torah.

Betrothal and marriage are precisely defined terms in Jewish law. Betrothal is a legally binding commitment to marry. Though the couple is not permitted to relate sexually, in most other respects they are as if legally married and the dissolution of their engagement requires a divorce. The second level of marital commitment occurs when the bride formally enters her husband's home. The wedding canopy symbolizes their coming together under one-roof and so effects this change of status. The marriage is finalized by its physical consummation.

דהנה כתיב תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה א"ת מורשה אלא מאורסה.

Several *Midrashim* employ the metaphor of engagement and marriage to describe Israel's evolving relationship with *HaShem* through history:

*"Moshe commanded us the Torah, a morasha (inheritance) to the congregation of Jacob."*<sup>10</sup> The *Gemara* derives a homiletical teaching based on the similarity between two words, one of which appears in this verse. *Don't read morasha (inheritance), rather substitute a different but similar sounding word, me'orasah (act of betrothal).* With this substitution the verse now reads, *"Moshe commanded us the Torah as an engagement token to the congregation of Jacob."*<sup>11</sup>

Two teachings emerge from this *Gemara*.

1. The relationship between Israel and *HaShem* parallels the relationship between groom and bride.
2. The Torah's revelation at Sinai bound Israel to *HaShem* through the first stage of matrimonial coupling, called betrothal (*airusin*).

וכן אמרו בעטרה שעטרה לו אמו ביום חתונתו זו מ"ת שהוא בחי' אירוסין בלבד  
שנקרא חתונתו ולא בחי' נישואין.

And similarly another *midrash* teaches:<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Deut. 30:20.

<sup>11</sup> TB *Pesachim* 49b.

<sup>12</sup> *Bamidbar Rabba* 12:10, *Mishna, Taanit* 4:8, TB *Taanit* 26b.

“Go forth, O you daughters of Zion and gaze upon King Solomon, even **upon the crown wherewith his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals...**”<sup>13</sup> The midrash reads this verse as metaphorically referring to the union of *HaShem* with the Jewish people and identifies **the Torah’s revelation at Sinai as the historic event corresponding to “the day of His espousals.”** It further proves that this dramatic encounter **effected betrothal (and not revelation: “And you shall sanctify yourselves today and the day following.”**<sup>14</sup> Since the word here for sanctify (*kidashtem* / תִּקְדְּשִׁיךָ) shares the same root as the word for engagement (*kidushin* / יְשׁוּבֵיךָ) this proves that the Sinaic bond was betrothal and not marriage.

כי בחי' נישואין יהיה לעתיד דווקא בביאת הגואל כמ"ש כי ובוועליך עושיך כו'  
אבל עכשיו אינו אלא בחי' אירוסין בלבד.

The final consummation of Israel’s relationship with *HaShem* as **marital union will only happen in the future, when the messianic redeemer comes to lead the world through its final stages of transformation. Then will Isaiah’s prophesy be fulfilled, “Your husband is your maker.”**<sup>15</sup> The term for husband in this verse emphasizes the physically consummated union of man and wife.

Rambam depicts this joyful era of redemption with the following words:

In that time there will be neither famine nor war, envy or competition. Good will flow in abundance and all delights will be [as common] as dust. The occupation of the entire world will be solely to know G-d. Therefore the Jews will be great sages and know hidden matters, attaining knowledge of their Creator to [the full extent] of human potential as Isaiah states, “The world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the sea fills the ocean bed.”<sup>16</sup>

In addition to these more familiar features of that yearned-for time, *Kaballa* adds another blessing to the list. The messianic era will bring a profound transformation of gender relations which it explicitly depicts as an equalizing of stature between man and woman, groom and bride. This is the subject of Rabbi Shneur Zalman’s essay, *The Voice of the Bride*, translated here.

**During this interim period** until the messianic time, Israel’s spousal relationship with *HaShem* is daily ripening. Yet, since it remains unconsummated, **the term** that most accurately describes their level of intimacy is **betrothal**, a preparatory period wherein the couple readies for wedlock.

והפרש הזה בין אירוסין לנישואין הוא עניין הפרש בין בחי' פנימית לבחיני'  
חיצוניות כו' דהיינו במ"ת הגם שהיה בחי' גילוי אא"ס בחכמה שבתורה  
בעשרת הדברות אבל היה האור הזה מבחי' חיצונית בלבד וע"כ לא ניתנה  
התורה אז רק בבחיני' חיצוניות והוא עניין חלק הנגלה שבתורה כי אורייתא  
סתים וגליא כידוע.

Kabbalah is the body of Jewish teachings that elucidates the esoteric layers of implication in every story, sentence, word, and law of the Torah as well as its customs and

<sup>13</sup> Song of Songs 3:11.

<sup>14</sup> Exodus 19:10.

<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 54:5.

<sup>16</sup> Rambam, *Mishna Torah, Hilchot Melachim* 12:5.

rituals. **The sequence of betrothal and marriage** as a stepwise progression of relationship has mystical significance that is likewise explicated by kabbala.

In betrothal, **the external layers** of the couple engage, but their ‘insides’ do not yet touch. As above so below. When they marry and begin their physical relationship a **core-level bonding** of soul simultaneously occurs.

**Although** the inner essence of Divinity called **the Infinite Light revealed Itself at Sinai as the radiant wisdom of the Torah**, and condensed Itself into ten infinitely compact seeds of teaching called **the Ten Precepts**, nevertheless, **only the more external layers of the Infinite Light** were actually manifest in that encounter. **Consequently** the relationship between *HaShem* and Israel created by **that revelation of Torah was an external bonding**. Though their attachment was profound, their insides were not yet engaged.

The **Torah has infinite layers of teachings, some of which are visible while other lie deeply concealed** beyond the grasp of human comprehension. **At Sinai only its more accessible layers** actually **shone forth as explicit teachings** and visible lights. *HaShem* limited Himself to what would be apprehensible to that generation, at that point of history.

אבל בחי' פנימית התורה שהוא כל בחי' הסוד הגנוז בנגלה שבתורה הנק' טעמי  
תורה כידוע לא נתגלה כלל בזמן מ"ת בהר סיני אלא לעתיד דווקא יתגלה אור  
פנימית טעמי התורה כולה לפי שלעתיד יהיה גילוי אא"ס בתורה מבחינ'  
פנימית אא"ס.

Conversely, the inner dimension of Torah, the repository of secrets hidden within the text elucidating the deeper reasons behind its laws, stories, and textual structure; **this was not revealed at Sinai**. Yet it initiated a process of unfolding that assures its eventual release, for each generation from that point hence peers into the Torah and exposes another layer of its hidden light. **By the end-of-days there will be no secrets left. The Torah's inner recesses will blaze forth, and all will behold the glory of its every detail. The most inward and abstract beauty of the Infinite Light will shine through the Torah** like a holograph, rendered visible by the perfectly ground lens of its Oral Teachings embodied as the living community of Israel.

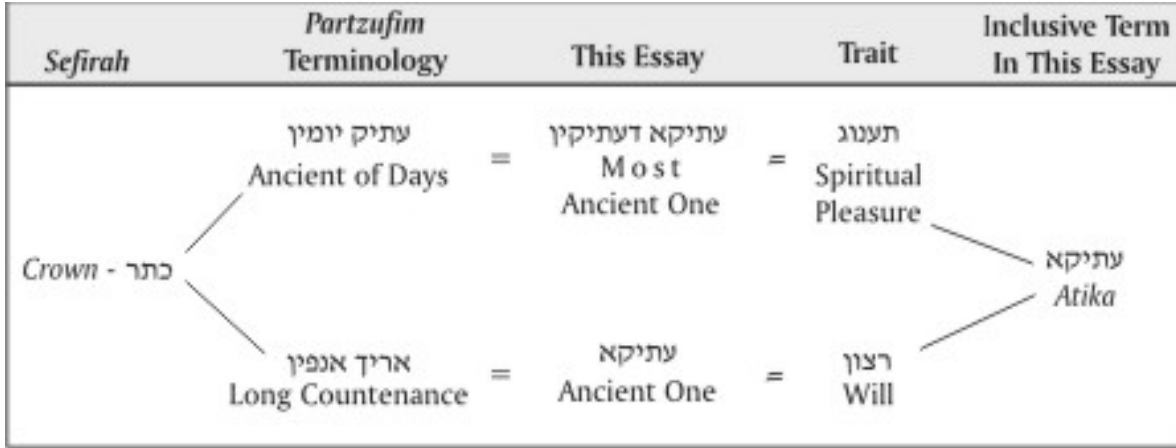
ועניין בחי' פנימיות וחיצונית הללו היינו בחי' פנימית דעתיקא שנק' עונג העליון  
של עצמות המאציל כידוע הוא הנקרא עתיקא דעתיקין.

As explained, each of the ten *sefirot* and six *partzufim* have a distinguishing trait that is *their* contribution to the soul. A person's nature and level of spiritual development determines which of those traits are integrated in strong and healthy ways, and which are under- or overdeveloped. The tree of life marks a ten-step path from below to above that each soul follows in its journey toward perfection and reunion with its Creator.

The last stop in its trek is the *sefira* called *Crown (Keter)* which contains two *partzufim*: an upper one called *Atik Yomin* (Ancient of Days) and a lower one called *Arik Anpin* (Long Countenance). The trait associated with *Atik* is spiritual bliss (תענוג), and the trait associated with *Arik* is will (רצון) for it is the source of all motivating impulses within the personality. For various reasons, sometimes these two *partzufim* are considered a single level, in which case

*Arik Anpin* (Long Countenance) is absorbed by *Atika*, which now comprises two layers, one outer and one inner. In this essay, Rav Shneur Zalman employs this latter model.

In summary:



When it says that only the outer layers of the *Infinite Light* were revealed at Sinai, while its inner lights stayed hidden, encased within the text as unrealized possibilities of interpretation, **the terms *inner* and *outer* refer to specific levels** in the kabalistic map of reality. In this context they **indicate the two layers of *Atika***, the deepest root of soul and point where it is hewn from the pure simple oneness of the Infinite Light. *Atika* is the place where man touches G-d (so to speak).

**The inner**, hidden lights of the Torah form the inner layer of *Atika* whose trait is **spiritual bliss**. This is the highest level of consciousness available in this world (as opposed to the world to come). It is defined as a pure, unselfconscious pleasure that comes when the self is nullified **before the** consuming fire of **Divine Presence** and yet, like Moshe's bush, is not consumed. Rather, in this self-nullified state, awareness permeates every cell of the body, no longer is it limited to the organs of brain and mind. **As is known** to all who are studied in kabalistic literature, this exalted state of consciousness awaits all who reach the last milestone of their journey, called *Atika d'Atikin (Most Ancient One)*. And yet, like all the promised rewards of the next world and nether realms, a taste (diluted as it may be) is always available in this world as well.

ובחיני' חיצונית הוא בחי' עתיקא סתם שהוא בחי' מקור וכתר לנאצלים כידוע.

**The outer aspect** of the *Infinite Light* revealed at Sinai, that congealed into the visible letters of the Torah is called *Atika, Ancient One* (as opposed to *Most Ancient One*). This outer layer of *Atika* **is the earliest beginning of the emanated worlds and serves as their crown**, which means that it holds the vision of their perfection and motivates them to realize that end.

ועכשיו אין גילוי עונג המאציל בתוכה רק מבחינת חיצונית העונג העליון וע"כ לא נגלה למטה רק בחי' חיצונית התורה אבל לעתיד שיתגלה בתורה בחי' פנימית העונג העליון (הנקרא שעשועי המלך בעצמותו כמ"ש בס' עמק המלך) וכמ"ש ואהיה אצלו שעשועים כו' לכך יתגלה אז למטה בחי' פנימית הנק' טעמי התורה כי הטעמים שרשם בבחי' התענוג כו' וד"ל.

Now, since many of the Torah's enlightening teachings remain locked away inside itself, the pleasure that comes from knowing them is **not available** to us. **Only a surrounding glow** is visible **and the lower-order** pleasure that comes from beholding that outer layer of truth. Although **only the external teachings of the Torah are actually revealed now**, this is a temporary condition. Each generation daily mines new jewels from its rich quarry and **eventually our tunneling will reach the bedrock core** of consciousness itself. **The pure ecstasy of Atika will irrupt** into the world and infuse all living things with rapture, inaugurating a new era of blissful union with *HaShem* called, **"the delight of the King in His essence, as described in the book, *Emek HaMelekh*."**

This phrase can be read in three ways:

- The otherworldly **delight that comes when** creation (who will then be called, *king*, having completed their perfection and assumed the role of *HaShem's* royal emissary, i.e. king) **reunites with its source (essence)** in the Infinite Light.
- **The delight of the Creator (the King of Kings) when he reunites with** the lost pieces of **His essence** that were strewn throughout creation at the primordial cataclysm called the shattering of the vessels. These shards of light are the sparks of soul that are finally completing their 6,000-year pilgrimage back to their source.
- The "rest state" of Divinity, the "natural" vibration of His being is delight. This phrase thus refers to **the delight of the King (*HaShem*) that pervades His essence** and characterizes it. Anyone who accomplishes the feat of making contact with Divine essence is instantly electrified by that rapture called, the King's delight.

This idea is conveyed in a verse from Proverbs,<sup>17</sup> which depicts the Torah as *HaShem's* beloved child. The Torah reminisces, **"I was by Him a nursling, and I was daily His delight. Playing always before Him; playing with the universe, His earth; and my delights were with the sons of men."**

In the end of days **the inwardness of the Torah will be revealed below, its hidden, soul satisfying truths** will illuminate every question, resolve every doubt, **explain** every suffering. **These explanations of Torah have their root in the highest level of *Atik*, called spiritual delight**, for pleasure always reduces to an expansion of awareness. As Israel absorbs the deeper and more mystical teachings of the Torah, they become *enlightened*, literally. Their minds illuminated with the holy radiance of Torah wisdom, they will again "see from one end of the world to the other"<sup>18</sup> and *this* itself will be their bliss.

והנה הגם שבזמן מ"ת לא נגלה רק בחני' היצוניות ההארה בלבד מ"מ גם בחי'  
פנימית האור נמשך ובא גם הוא למטה כמ"ש וירד ה' על הר סיני וכשירד ירד  
בכל עצמותו.

<sup>17</sup> Proverbs 8:30.

<sup>18</sup> TB *Hagiga* 12a.

While it is true that only the outer layers of the Infinite Light were actually revealed at Sinai, nevertheless the inwardness of the Infinite Light *did* come forth into the lower worlds at that time, as the Torah itself attests, “And HaShem came down upon mount Sinai.”<sup>19</sup> When the verse anthropomorphically describes HaShem coming down, it is teaching that the actual source of light, i.e. the *Infinite Light*, itself “came down” into this world. This is qualitatively different from all other revelations which are encounters with the aura surrounding the “luminary,” but not with the actual *body of light* itself.

וגם הרי אמר אנכי מי שאנכי זה הוא בחי' פנימית הכתר כידוע.

Another proof that the inwardness of the *Infinite Light* came down at Sinai although it was not actually revealed at that time is the fact that HaShem began His revelation of the Torah with the word, *Anochi* (I am). The first commandment reads, “I am HaShem your G-d who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”<sup>20</sup> That aspect that HaShem refers to as “I” is the level of consciousness identified with the innermost point of the *sefira* of crown (*keter*) as is known. The *partzuf* associated with this point is *Atika d'Atikin*, the Infinite Light hidden *inside* the Torah, the source of holy pleasure and infinitely expanded awareness.

אך ורק שלא באה בחי' הארה הפנימית לידי גילוי גמור בבחי' א"פ אלא נשאר למעלה בבחי' העלם הנקרא אור מקיף השוכן ושורה על בחי' א"פ בהעלם מכל צדדים כו'.

Nevertheless, although this inner light of Atika came down into the world, it **did not enter** the visual field of those beholding the revelation. Instead it hovered beyond the edge of conscious perception, effectively invisible.

*Lights* that can be grasped and integrated are called inner and internalizable (אור פנימי), *lights* that are present but too “high” or “deep” or “vast” to be contained within their vessel of consciousness are described as surrounding or hovering (אור מקיף). The *light* of *Atika de Atikin* that held the inner secrets of the Torah **could not integrate** into the nation at that time. It literally could not “fit” into their minds, even at the Edenic level of development that they attained at Sinai.<sup>21</sup> Displaced, the light of *Atika de Atikin* formed a kind of invisible halo around the integrated lights of the revealed Torah, enclosing them as if in a sphere of radiant consciousness.

זהו עניין בחי' אירוסין כמ"ש ביום חתונתו וכנ"ל כי הרי עניין האירוסין למטה ג"כ הוא בבחינה זאת דהיינו בבחי' אור מקיף בלבד כידוע בעניין טבעת הקידושין שהוא דבר עגול מקיף לאצבע היד כי באמרו הרי את מקודשת לי ממשיך לה רק בחי' אור מקיף בטבעת זאת וזהו פי' מקודשת בבחי' קדש העליון כו' וזהו א"ת מורשה אלא מאורסה בבחי' אירוסין בלבד.

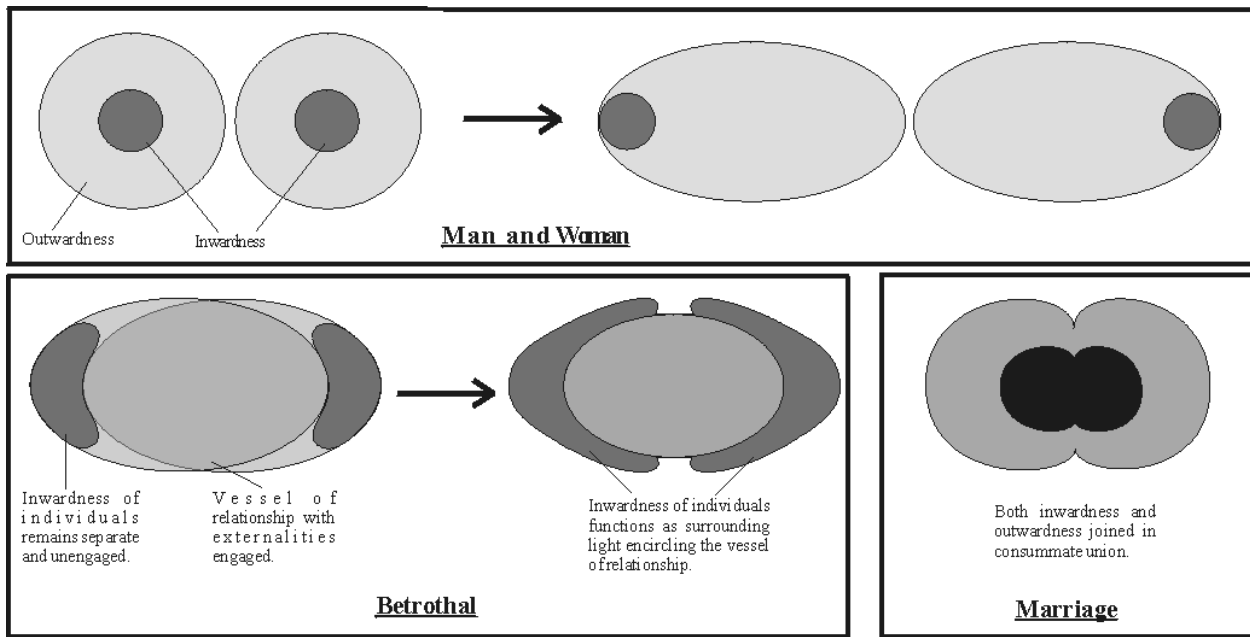
<sup>19</sup> Exodus 19:20.

<sup>20</sup> Exodus 20:2.

<sup>21</sup> TB *Shabbat* 146a.

This is why the Talmud describes the relationship formed between Israel and *HaShem* at Sinai as **etrothal**, interpreting, “The day of his espousals (engagement)...” as a reference to the revelation at Sinai. In both cases (engagement and Sinai) only the more superficial layers of the couple enter into active relationship while their inner essence stays *unengaged*, and assumes a position of surrounding light. The vessel of their relationship is not developed enough to hold the full intensity of their inner selves. For this reason the classic symbol of **etrothal** is a ring, a circular ornament that *surrounds* the finger. And when the groom proposes, and speaks the *halachic* formula of engagement, “Behold you are sanctified (מקודשת) to me (i.e., betrothed) by this ring...”<sup>22</sup> he effects two mergers:

1. The superficial layers of himself and his beloved enter into active and committed relationship.
2. Their respective core levels of soul bond to the vessel of relationship as **surrounding lights**.



This is symbolized by the ring that he places on his fiancée’s finger.

The reason that he uses the language of sanctification (תדשׁיקמ) instead of the actual term for engagement (מאורסת)<sup>23</sup> is to link his action up to the supreme holiness (עליון קדש)<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Mishna, Kidushin 3:1.

<sup>23</sup> A clarification for those less familiar with Hebrew. The *Mishna* presents a formula for effecting *halachic* engagement which includes the statement, “Behold you are *sanctified* to me...” Why doesn’t the groom say a more explicit and straight forward statement, “Behold, you are engaged to me.” The paragraph explains that the Hebrew word for sanctified has other associations that the sages wished to bring into the process.

<sup>24</sup> Zohar II:121b, 122; III:66a, b. This is the term for the point where the *sefira* of *chokmah* contacts the *sefira* of *keter*.

associated with the *sefira* of *keter* (crown), also a circular ornament that sits upon the head and surrounds the primary organ of consciousness, the brain.

**This is the basis for the Gemara's comment: "Don't read *morasha*, inheritance, rather read *me'urasa*, fiancée," thereby implying that the Torah's revelation was an engagement ceremony between *HaShem* and the Jewish people, the transcendent lights serving as the circular ring effecting betrothal.**

אבל בחי' נישואין היינו שבא אור השפע מן המשפיע במקבל בגילוי גמור כמו  
הייחוד והזווג בביאה עד שעושאה כלי בביאה זו כמאמר אין אשה כורתת ברית  
אלא למי שעשאה כלי כו' וכמ"ש ש כי בועליך עושיך כו' ולא בבחי' מקיף בלבד.

**Marriage, on the other hand, is a deeper state of union. The flow of bounty and revelation passes from bestower to receiver completely. There is nothing of the revealer that cannot be seen, held and contained by the perceiver. Their union is consummate and parallels the physical relationship between husband and wife.**

There are thirty-nine categories of prohibited work on Shabbat, each of which constitutes a particular type of creative labor. One of these categories is called building, and included within it is the prohibition of opening containers. While the container is factory sealed (for example the can of tuna or bag of sugar) it is not actually functioning as a vessel since its contents are not available to the outside world. *Halacha* defines *vessel* as a container *with an opening* that allows access to the product within. Consequently when a person opens a can of tuna they are effectively creating a vessel in that moment. Until they removed the bonded metal top, the tin was a partially constructed vessel-in-potential. By cutting away the top its contents become accessible to human usage, and it enters the category of vessel proper. It is thus true to say that the "opener" of the vessel, is its "maker."

Similarly the first time a woman has physical relations, she becomes a "vessel" in the fullest sense of the word. And, "as below so above" her capacity to "receive" on every level of soul is similarly awakened. Her contours of spiritual receptivity are molded into shape by that encounter. A metaphor that describes this idea is an embossing stamp. The metal has a design engraved in boss relief, and when pressed against the paper or wax it creates a negative image that perfectly matches the original design. The outward projecting metal die actually carves out a custom "vessel" of perfectly suited proportions to hold its unique image.

Similarly, an inner covenantal bond of spirit forms between a woman and her husband in their first relations. A man who lacks the strength of soul to impact his bride in this way will not succeed in forming the bond that defines marriage on all its inner levels, and their union will likely not succeed. **This is what the sages mean when they say, "A woman does not bind herself in a covenant of marriage except with one that can make her a vessel."**<sup>25</sup>

**And so its says regarding the end of days, when Israel and *HaShem* finally consummate their union, "Your husband is your maker."<sup>26</sup> *Your husband* (i.e. the one whose revelation of light and beauty has entered into your soul and carved out a space that can hold the full content of that revelation), *He is your maker* (i.e. you have become your full self by this**

<sup>25</sup> TB *Sanhedrin* 22b.

<sup>26</sup> Isaiah 54:5.

experience. Now you can fulfill your highest function. The pleasure of consummation is the pleasure of becoming who you really are. It is as if you were “made” in that moment, while before you were a “partially constructed vessel-in-potential.” “Your husband is [truly] your maker.”

In marriage proper, the inner lights are **no longer** displaced to a **surrounding** position, rather they return to their centers, which have now merged into a common core.<sup>27</sup>

וכדוגמא זאת יהיה לעתיד כאשר יתגלה בחי' פנימית א"ס בתורה בגילוי גמור  
וע"כ אמרו ביום חתונתו בזמן מ"ת שהיה רק בחי' אירוסין וביום שמחת לבו  
לעתיד שיהיה בחי' נישואין בהתגלות טעמי תורה כי האשה נקנית בשלשה  
דרכים בכסף כו' וידוע דכנ"י נקרא' אשה ונקנית בבחי' מקיף בטבעת קידושין  
כו'.

Similarly in the future, the full radiance of the *Infinite Light* will shine through the Torah, its *soul* no longer hidden by the coarse materiality of ink on parchment that cloaks it now. Every wisdom, insight, and mystical reverie will radiate forth for all to see.

Consequently the sages equate “*the day of his espousals*” to the giving of the Torah at Sinai for there began the engagement bond between *HaShem* and Israel. They vowed to wait for each other until the end of days when their time would be ripe for wedlock. The entire verse reads, “Go forth, O you daughters of Zion and gaze upon King Solomon, even upon the crown wherewith his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals **and on the day of his gladness of heart.**” The phrase, “...*day of his gladness of heart*” refers to the future when the marriage between *HaShem* and Israel will finally be consummated. The fullness of Divine light will shine through the Torah and be received by Israel, filling their collective heart, bones, cells and spaces with Holy Presence. There will be no place inside them that is not permeated with G-d and nothing of G-d that does not fit inside them. A perfect marriage, a consummate union of glory and awe.

Jewish law defines betrothal as a legal contract of intention to marry that requires one of several specific deeds to activate the obligations associated with that commitment. The Mishna states, “A woman is betrothed in three ways: When she receives a sum of money [or a gift of equivalent monetary value...].”<sup>28</sup> Nowadays this is fulfilled by the exchange of a ring,<sup>29</sup> an ornament that encircles her finger. Similarly Israel is called “woman” in relation to *HaShem*, and she was betrothed by the encircling light that descended at Sinai and served as her engagement ring.

והנה ידוע בע"ח דעכשיו בחי' המ"ל מקבלת האור מבחי' ז"א שהוא יחוד הוי"ה  
אלקים כו' ובחי' ז"א מקבל מוחין לעצמו מבחי' אימא ז"ש בעטרה שעטרה לו  
אמו.

According to *kaballa*, the role relations that characterize marital union are evolving through time. The model that describes our present stage of development is slowly shifting and after passing through several intermediate milestones will eventually invert. Rabbi Isaac Luria

<sup>27</sup> Israel is defined as a creature, unique in the universe, by virtue of its capacity to know, contain and reveal the full range of existential possibilities that exist within Divinity Itself. At present this is only a potential, but a potential that *will* be realized.

<sup>28</sup> TB *Kidushin* 2a.

<sup>29</sup> *Shulchan Aruch*, IH 31.

identifies seven developmental stages in the evolving relationship of men and women from Eden to the end of time.<sup>30</sup> **Until the final stage, woman receives her cosmic flow of light, bounty, and consciousness via the intermediary of her spouse.** Her relationship to the transcendent aspects of G-d is mediated by her *husband* and all of her Divinely bestowed gifts must first pass through him. His work is to identify which of his spiritual bounties truly belong to him and which are *her* rightful inheritance that he must release into her possession.

**The masculine in turn receives his flow of light and consciousness from the *partzuf* directly above him, called *mother*.** His “brains”<sup>31</sup> derive from there and remain rooted within her. She thus serves as his crown, for her lights sit above his head and encircle it with transcendent brilliance. Always, the integrated awareness of a higher *partzuf* is superconscious and ungraspable by the one below it. **This further explains** the verse from *Song of Songs* which describes betrothal with the words, “...the crown wherewith his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals.” The *mother* in this verse is *Binah* and the crown is her integrated lights that exceed the capacity of his brains, and so surround his head like a crown.

**This relationship system, where the flow of influence passes from the *Infinite Light* to mother to *man* to woman, is kabalistically expressed by a particular form of the union between two names of G-d, *יהוה* (the unpronounceable name of G-d) and *א/ל/ה/י/ם* (pronounced *Elohim*).<sup>32</sup>**

כי בחי' החתן למעלה הוא בחי' ז"א דאצילות שנקרא משפיע כידוע בכי' חתן  
לשון נחות דרגא נחית ויורד מלמעלה למטה ובחי' מ"ל דאצי' נקרא כלה בחי'  
מקבל כידוע ובחי' בינה דאצי' ממשיך מוחין לז"א וע"י אורות דאימא שמקבל  
הוא שיש בכחו להשפיע למלכות אח"כ.

*Kaballa* identifies four planes of reality which it calls the four worlds because each contains an entire set of ten *sefirot* and six *partzufim* within it. From above to below they are:<sup>33</sup>

<i>atzilut</i>	אצילות	spiritual plane of pure Divinity
<i>briyah</i>	בריאה	mental plane
<i>yetzirah</i>	יצירה	emotional (also psychic and astral) plane
<i>asiya</i>	עשיה	physical plane

<sup>30</sup> Ari, *Aytz Chaim, Shaar Miut HaYareach*..

<sup>31</sup> *Brains* is a literal translation of the Hebrew word, מוחין and is a frequently used term in *kaballa*. It refers to the upper three *sefirot*, *keter*, *chokmah*, *binah* (and sometimes *daat*), and thus indicates the faculties of conscious and superconscious awareness, i.e., *intelligence* in broadest sense of the term.

<sup>32</sup> Generally this combination of names refers to the endpoint and rectified expression of masculine and feminine in their equal-statured, face to face relationship. Sometimes however it expresses this less mature state of relationship where the feminine remains dependent upon the masculine. See Zohar I:20a (R. Ashlag's Commentary, para. 110-115) where both of these usages appear. Another explanation appears in *Shaari Kedusha* by R. Yosef Gikatillia, *Shar Chamishi*.

<sup>33</sup> See footnote Error! Bookmark not defined..

*Atzilut*, the highest and spiritual world is the plane of cosmic archetypes, and the first appearance of *partzufim*. The “heavenly groom” discussed in this essay indicates the level of *man* in the world of *Atzilut*. He embodies the force of divine bestowal and heavenly influence upon the lower realms.

The Hebrew term for groom **חתן** (*chatan*) relates to the phrase **נחות דרגה**, to drop rank, suggesting movement from above to below, fall and descent. This semantic derivation emphasizes his role as holy envoy, pulling transcendent lights from above and transferring them to his spouse below. The Hebrew term for bride, **כלה** (*khala*), relates to the root **כלל**, to include, and highlights her trait of receptivity.<sup>34</sup>

The flow of consciousness in the world of *Atzilut* thus passes from *mother* to *man* to *woman*. *Mother (Binah)* pulls wisdom down and passes it to her son. The lights *man* receives from *mother* empower him to extend bounty to his own wife, the *sefira* of *malchut*, and *partzuf* of *woman*.

וזהו בעטרה שהוא בחי' המוחין שעטרה לו אמו דוקא ביום חתונתו כו' וכל זה  
עכשיו דוקא.

Thus when the verse describes, “the crown which his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals...” it refers to the enlightened insights that *mother* brings down from the higher realms and transfers to her *son*. These lights, however, exceed his mental capacity at that time and so, unable to fit “inside” they hover around his head as surrounding lights, appearing as a “crown.” This was his mother’s engagement gift, to assure that he would have the necessary resources to function as a true husband and holy envoy to his bride. All this still applies today.

אבל הנה לעתיד כתיב אשת חיל עטרת בעלה הרי בחי' מ"ל שנק' אשת חיל  
תהיה עטרת לבעלה שהוא ז"א ונמצא בחי' העטרה שעטרה לו אמו ביום חתונתו  
בזמן מ"ת הנה לעתיד יבא לו העטרה זאת דוקא מבחי' מלכות הנק' מקבל מפני  
שאור המלכות תתעלה אז למעלה מעלה מבחי' ז"א לפי שנוסף סופן בתחילתן כי  
סוף מעשה דוקא עלה במחשבה תחלה וכמ"ש ביאור דבר זה במ"א באריכות.

This hierarchy of flow describes the relationship between *man* and *woman* in their earlier stages of development. Just as each day brings messiah one step closer, so does the relationship of groom and bride daily mature into its ideal of equal-statured union. The verse that describes its future and perfected state is, “A woman of valor is the crown (עטרה) to her husband.”<sup>35</sup> This source depicts the bride as a valiant or mighty woman who now assumes the position of crown to her husband (the groom). Their roles have reversed. Until this stage he served as her crown holding the lights that were ultimately destined to her, but still too

<sup>34</sup> The word *khala* also relates to a similar root, **כלה**, which means to complete, finish, perish, as in the phrase **כלות נפש**, a state of fatal rapture where the soul actually leaves the body because of its insatiable longing to unite with its Beloved above.

<sup>35</sup> Proverbs 12:4

“big” for her vessel. Here *she* becomes *his* crown and holds the consciousness that eludes his now more limited grasp.

One could summarize the entire 6,000-year odyssey of Biblical history as the progressive enlightening of the lower realms. Each instant some increment of *Infinite Light* trickles down into the world and integrates into the minds of its inhabitants. An elaborate production line exists, extending from above to below, that packages the *Infinite Light* into a form that can be absorbed by the lower worlds. One key feature of this cosmic chain of descent is that the higher level always functions as a *crown* to the world below it.

In the betrothal period initiated at Sinai, the flow of consciousness passed from from *mother* to *man* to *woman*, and each served as the crown to the one below it. The verse which describes this arrangement is, “**the crown wherewith his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals...**”, for at Sinai the *man* received his superconscious inheritance of lights from *mother* as an engagement gift. He internalized a portion and passed a fraction on to his fiancée as a betrothal token, as an engagement ring.

**In the future, this crown** of superconscious lights that *man* received from *mother* will instead come from *woman* (i.e., *his wife*). She, who had previously been below him in stature and “intelligence”, will now surpass him, and their roles will reverse. She will be holding their higher lights and he will receive his portion from her.

The mechanism which underlies this turn of events is a metaphysical law that has two formulations. Sefer Yetzira states, “**The end is enwedged in the beginning.**”<sup>36</sup> The last (and lowest) point of creation was actually the first and essential reason for it. Similarly a verse from Shabbat liturgy states, “**The final act was the first thought.**”<sup>37</sup> These ideas are discussed at length in other places.<sup>38</sup>

*Kaballa* teaches that this *first thought* was a piercing vision of the accomplished purpose of creation. Its utter and compelling beauty inspired *HaShem* (as it were) to begin this “labor” of materializing that dream. *It* is the whole point of creation and yet it is the last to come forth. Everything else is an intermediate building block toward its one culminating end, the perfect embodiment of that original vision. The last piece of handiwork in the six days of creation was *woman*. This means, according to these principles, that her “root” is higher than all that preceded her, for “*the last and lowest end derives from the first and highest beginning.*” It follows that *her* trait of receptivity must be the ultimate and eternally enduring purpose of creation.<sup>39</sup>

When the universe is a work in progress, *HaShem* needs builders to complete the milleniums-sized task of perfecting the world. This downward-facing work is a masculine skill and when *it* is in demand, power and status resides with those who have it.<sup>40</sup> But eventually (and actually quite soon in the relative scheme of things) the world will be built, the job will be

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<sup>36</sup> *Sefer Yetzira*, I:7,

<sup>37</sup> Standard Liturgy, *Kaballat Shabbat*, *L'Cha Dodi*.

<sup>38</sup> Need to track down sources

<sup>39</sup> R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi, *Tora Or* (TO), *Parshat Vayigash*, (first words, *biur al...*)

<sup>40</sup> TB *Berochot* 64a. “*And all your children [literally sons] shall be students of HaShem and your children [sons] will have abundant peace.*” Don’t read [*banekha*] “your sons”, but [*boniekh*] “your builders.”

done, Shabbat will come. And then the trait in high demand will be receptivity, the capacity to receive the Divine revelation of love and light and Presence that is the pleasure of eternity. This upward-facing activity is a feminine skill and, apparently, the ultimate purpose of creation.

In the world of appearances, *woman* is lowest, in the world of roots, she is highest. When creation returns to its roots and *its* hierarchy rules, the polarity of masculine and feminine will reverse and she will become the *crown* to her husband. Now the opposite is so.

ולהיות כן יובן ענין מאמרם ז"ל בימות משיח באמרם עתידיים צדיקים שיאמרו  
לפניהם קדוש כי שורש נשמת הצדיקים מבחי' מל' שתתעלה למעלה מעלה בבח'  
הכתר שנק' תחילתן ולכך יאמרו לפניהם קדוש וד"ל.

This also explains the mysterious statement by *chazal* concerning the messianic time:<sup>41</sup>

Now the angels gather before *HaShem* and worship him with the formula of adoration that we imitate in our kedusha prayer when we say, "Holy, holy holy is the Lord of hosts."<sup>42</sup> *There will come a time when the heavenly hosts will recite "holy, holy, holy..." before the righteous tsadikim as it is now said before the Holy One, Blessed be He. This is the mystical interpretation of the verse,<sup>43</sup> "And it shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion, and he that remains in Jerusalem shall be called Holy."*

This switch happens because the souls of the *tsadikim* (the righteous and pious ones) are, surprisingly, rooted in the lowest *sefira* called *malchut*, which forms the *partzuf* of *woman*, whereas the *partzuf* indicated by the title, *Holy One, Blessed be He*, is *man*. Consequently, when the universe returns to its roots and *woman* rises to her holy beginnings in the highest *sefira* called *crown*, she will be manifesting a higher octave of Divine majesty than *man*, also called Holy one, Blessed Be He, and the angels will address their adoration to her, and to the righteous *tsadikim* that embody her traits.

ובכל זה יובן מה שאנו אומרים עתה משמח חתן וכלה ולעתיד משמח חתן עם  
הכלה כו' כי הנה עתה בחי' מ"ל הנק' כלה מקבלת מבחי' ז"א הנק' חתן כו' לכך  
השמחה תחלה בחתן ואח"כ החתן משמח לכלה כי שפעה בא לה מבחי' ז"א ע"י  
מוחין שקיבל מאור אימא כנ"ל בפ"י עטרה שעטרה לו אמו כו'.

It is now possible to answer the essay's original five questions regarding the last two marriage blessings.

The sixth *brocha*, which applies to the relationship of man and woman in their present, unperfected state, closes with the words, "Blessed are You, *HaShem*, who rejoices the groom and bride. The seventh blessing, which applies to the future, reads instead, "...who rejoices the groom with the bride."

<sup>41</sup> TB *Baba Batra* 75b.

<sup>42</sup> Isaiah 6:3.

<sup>43</sup> Isaiah 4:3.

Now, *woman* who is called bride receives her lights from *man* who is called groom. His larger stature affords him greater access to the transcendental realms and she is dependent upon him for this. He pulls their lights down from *mother* and afterwards transfers hers to her. Since lights and consciousness are always synonymous with joy, the sixth marriage blessing describes the present as a time when gladness passes from groom to bride, and he is the agent of her joy.

This hierarchy of descent begins with *mother*, who passes superconscious and surrounding lights to her son, *man*, an act described by the verse, “the crown wherewith his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals.” He internalizes some of that light, separates out a portion, and conveys it to *woman*, his wife.

אבל לע"ל שנא' אשת חיל עטרת בעלה שתתעלה המ"ל בכתר ויהיה מדריגתה  
למעלה במחי' ז"א אז יאמר משמח חתן עם הכלה דהיינו שעיקר השמחה יהיה  
מן הכלה שהיא בחי' מ"ל סוף כל דרגים מפני שנעוץ סופן בתחילתן ומן הכלה  
יבא אור שפע שמחה זאת אל החתן כמ"ש אשת חיל עטרת בעלה וכמו כן  
כתיב הנני בורא חדשה כו' נקיבה תסובב גבר כו' וד"ל.

This hierarchy of flow is not the ideal, and will not always be so. Eventually, “The woman of valor [will become] the crown to her husband.” Like a rubber band stretched back and released, when *woman*, completes her *tikun*, she will spring beyond the level of man up to the level of *crown* (the first and highest *sefira*). When this happens their gender polarity of higher and lower, giver and receiver will reverse and she will bestow consciousness to him. The seventh blessing describes this turn of events with the phrase, “...who rejoices the groom with the bride.” The essential source of joy (and consciousness) will originate with the bride, *woman*, who has reattained her full stature after nearly 6,000 years on the lowest rung of creation. This is what it means that, “The end is enwedged in the beginning.” When “the end” finally reattains its beginning, the lowest becomes the highest and the groom will receive his flow of light and joy from the bride, who has become his crown, as the verse foretells, “A woman of valor is the crown to her husband.” This future era is also alluded to by another verse in Yirmiyahu, “Behold I will create a new thing...the woman will surround the man.”<sup>44</sup> Now, since his “intelligence” is higher than hers, his lights are the surrounding ones, for her vessel of consciousness is too limited to hold them. In the future the opposite will be true. Her consciousness will supercede his, spilling over as surrounding lights to his more limited vessel at that time.

וזהו מהרה ישמע בערי יהודה כו' קול חתן וקול כלה כי הנה עתה בזמן הגלות  
אין לבחי' מ"ל רק מה שמקבלת מבחי' ז"א בעלה כי לית לה מגרמה כלום ולכך  
התפילה נק' צלותא דבלחש מפני שאין לכלה הנק' מלכות בחי' דבור בבחי'  
התפשטות וכמ"ש נאלמתי דומיה בבחי' הקטנות שהוא בבחי' שתיקה וכמ"ש  
אדני שפתי תפתח פי' תפתח אתה אבל מצד עצמה אין לה בחי' דבור בקול כי  
בטלה עם כל כוחותיה להיות בבחי' נקודה אחת בלבד באצילות כו'.

This also explains why the seventh blessing expresses impatience with the present and seeks to hurry its envisioned end, “...Let there soon be heard in the cities of Judah...the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride...”

<sup>44</sup> Jeremiah 31:22.

**Now, in our fallen and exiled state, the woman only has what she receives from her husband , “she has absolutely nothing that is intrinsically her own.”<sup>45</sup>** She is completely dependent on him. This model of gender relations plays itself out on other planes as well.

Every level of reality displays gender. There is always a giver and a receiver, a masculine and a feminine. It is certainly possible (if not probable) that within a given “couple” these roles would switch from situation to situation. For example in certain contexts, one of the pair assumes the role of active bestower while in another context he becomes the more passive receiver and vice versa. Nevertheless, in every field of focus gender exists. Consequently, if one examines the subject of “divine service,” Torah study is considered a masculine expression and prayer, a feminine one. There are many reasons for these associations.

Among the variety of prayer forms found in Judaism (praise, request, thanksgiving, affirmation, the *Shema*, etc.) the most complete and essential expression of prayer is the *Shemonah Essrei*, which means literally, the Prayer of Eighteen Blessings (though it actually has nineteen, for one was added at a later period in history). This prayer is the heart of each worship service. All other liturgy is either building up to or winding down from it. When the word *prayer* appears unqualified in Jewish writing it refers to the *Shemona Essrey* (also called the Amida, or standing prayer).

*Halacha* derives many of the laws regarding its recitation from Chana, the mother of Samuel whose prayer for child appears in the first book of Shmuel.<sup>46</sup> The most distinctive rule is that it must only be whispered. Nearly all other liturgical expressions are pronounced with full voice. Conversely the *Shemona Essrei* is enunciated just loud enough for one’s own ears to hear, no more.

Since prayer is a feminine mode of worship, and **the essential expression of prayer is the *Shemona Essrei*, the whispered prayer**, then its thrice-daily recitation symbolically reenacts **the bride’s absence of voice** at this point in history.

Speech is a human being’s primary tool for projecting him or her self out into the world. The hidden content of one’s thoughts becomes heard by another, and even more, once spoken, they influence the subsequent actions of those that heard them. Since speech is an outward projecting extension of influence it is a masculine mode of expression, while the more receptive, listening role is feminine. One who has no “voice”, whether literally or metaphorically, **lacks the normal channels of exerting power and influence** over their environment, and must resort to nonverbal methods, which often include violence or passive aggressive protest.

King David describes this voiceless state by the verse, **“I was struck mute with silence.”** *Kaballa* identifies this phrase from Psalms with a profoundly regressed developmental state **that it calls *katnut*<sup>47</sup>** (literally, smallness), conveying the idea of narrow-minded and constricted consciousness.

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<sup>45</sup> Zohar I:140a, and many others.

<sup>46</sup> I Shmuel 1:1 – 2:10; TB *Brochot* 31a,b.

<sup>47</sup> The term *katnut* describes an immature state, generally corresponding to the soul’s preadolescent period of development “where the individual is only able to understand the externality of things...” The term applies both

A primary feature of *katnut* is the inability to express oneself in words. A chasm exists between awareness and speech due to one's inadequate capacity of articulation (whether chronic or momentary). One's depth or intensity of thought cannot be conveyed through the insufficiently developed instrument of speech. Instead one retreats into frustrated silence.

And so the *Shemona Esrei* begins with the words, "**HaShem open my mouth that my lips may declare your praise.**" *HaShem*, if You want my prayers, if You want a dialogue of communion then You must assist the process. **You must help me speak.** On my own I lack the skill. I have regressed to such a point that **I have lost my voice and capacity for self-expression, along with many other powers** that associate with maturity and expanded consciousness. I cannot even stand upright. I am a puddle. All of my upper nine *sefirot* (representing my higher levels of awareness) have collapsed into the lowest one (*malchut*), and **I am reduced to a single point occupying the lowest level of the emanated world.**

וזהו שהחתן אומר להכלה הרי את מקודשת לי והכלה שותקת ובשתיקה זאת היא מקודשת ולכאורה היה מהראוי שתדבר בפיה בפני שמסכמת בקידושין הללו.

For this reason engagement happens through a one way flow of speech. The groom talks while the bride stays silent. He pronounces his intention, "**Behold you are sanctified (betrothed) to me...**" and she does not respond. Her silence expresses her lack of protest which establishes the criteria of mutual consent. Their engagement, with all its contractual responsibilities, **activates by her muteness.** Why doesn't she speak at least a word of verbal consent? That would seem to be more consistent with the mutually binding character of their relationship.

אך הענין הוא לפי שבחי' המלכות הנק' כלה היא עכשיו בחי' טפל ובטל לגבי החתן ולכך קולה לא ישמע לא בתפילה ולא בקבלת קידושין אלא גם בשתיקה מתקדשת כו'.

The reason for this custom is that the engagement ceremony models the earlier developmental stages in the evolving relationship of man and woman. In those stages the bride is just beginning to recover from her fall and diminishment. Her stature remains severely decreased and overwhelmed to the point of near non-existence before the groom. The most obvious symptom of this disparity in stature is her lack of "voice," both in her associated form of worship, i.e. prayer; and in her mute acceptance of engagement. Each reflects her *katnut* and is thus performed in silence.

אבל לעתיד כשתתעלה בחי' המלכות בכתר ותהיה עטרת בעלה כנ"ל שאז תהיה בחי' משפיע לז"א בעלה הרי יהיה לה אז בחי' קול בהתפשטות בפ"ע וזהו קול כלה שיהיה לכלה בחי' קול בחי' התגלות והתפשטות הדבור בקול רם היפוך בחי' צלואת דבלחש דעכשיו וד"ל.

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to the natural growth process when the soul is passing through *katnut* for the first time, and it is an age-appropriate condition, as well as regressed expressions of *katnut*, where an adult lapses into age-inappropriate immaturity. The verse from Psalms, "I was struck mute with silence..." refers to the latter.

However the time is rapidly approaching when *woman* will complete her journey of perfecting. Fully recovered from her “fall,” she will return to her root in the *sefira of keter*, (כתר), and manifest as “a crown to her husband” having now superceded him in stature. Their roles will have inverted and she will be drawing down their light, bounty and consciousness and passing it on to him (a service *he* has provided for millenniums). All this will follow an earlier shift when the bride comes into her voice, both literally and metaphorically, for voice symbolizes the more general activity of projecting herself out into the world as an independent agent. The seventh marriage blessing reads, “Let there soon be heard ...the voice of the bride.” Let the bride come into her voice. Let her express herself and project herself in fully audible speech, the very opposite of the whispered prayers we now employ in our *Shemona Essrei*.

וזהו ישמע כו' קול כלה פירוש מהרה ישמע לשון עתיד דוקא כי דוקא לעתיד יהיה  
 בחי' קול כלה העליונה וכל עיקר הטעם הוא לפי שעכשיו אינו אלא בחי' אירוסין  
 שהאור אינו בא אלא בבחי' חיצונית בלבד ובחי' הפנימית שורה רק בבחי' מקיף  
 והוא ענין הקידושין בטבעת כנ"ל לכך בשתיקה דוקא מתקדשת דהיינו בהיותה  
 דוקא בבחי' ביטול בצלותא דבלחש כו'.

This is what it means that “the voice of the bride *will* be heard, ” meaning, “Let it *soon* be heard.” Both phrases indicate a future state when the supernal bride will finally attain her full stature and recover her voice. Now we are still in the era of engagement and the bonding between *man* and *woman* only incorporates their more external layers of light and consciousness. Their inner selves are displaced. Prevented from entering into direct contact they surround the couple instead, exerting an indirect influence and serving as their cosmic engagement ring. Reflecting this cosmic stage of development, where *woman* (and all things feminine) is still profoundly diminished, a bride accepts her engagement in silence and prayer is whispered.

אבל לעתיד כשתתעלה בחי' המלכות בכתר ותהיה עטרת בעלה כנ"ל שאז תהיה  
 בחי' משפיע לו"א בעלה הרי יהיה לה אז בחי' קול בהתפשטות בפ"ע וזהו קול  
 כלה שיהיה לכלה בחי' קול בחי' התגלות והתפשטות הדבור בקול רם היפוך  
 בחי' צלותא דבלחש דעכשיו וד"ל.

But in the future *woman* will return to her root as crown and receive her lights straight from the very source of consciousness itself, the inwardness of the *Infinite light*. The relationship between groom and bride, God and Israel will then be fully consummated, for *woman* will become a vessel unto herself, a freestanding, independently acting partner in marriage. She will recover her voice and project herself out into the world to such an extent that the roles of *man* and *woman* will invert. *Man* will receive his light and bounty from the transcendent levels of *HaShem* via the agency of *woman* as his intermediary, a state described by the seventh marriage blessing, “Blessed are You, *HaShem* who rejoices the groom *with* the bride.”

This shifting of dynamic between man and woman underlies all of the promised messianic blessings that await Israel in the end of days.

## DEBRIEFING

### *The Diminishment of the Moon*

By Rabbi Isaac Luria

#### What do we know?

1. The role relations between *man* and *woman* are going to experience a drastic shift in messianic times.
2. This transition will culminate in a reversal of “traditional” polarities; the feminine will become the primary agent of bestowal, and the masculine will receive from her, at least in the area of lights and consciousness.
3. This shifting of role relations is an unequivocally *good* thing. It is one of the yearned-for transformations of the messianic time.
4. While Israel is betrothed to *HaShem* (i.e. from Sinai till the messianic end-of-days), the masculine aspect of Israel predominates; when Israel finally consummates its marital union with *HaShem*, its feminine half will predominate.

#### What do we not know?

1. We do not know anything about the sequence of getting from here to there. Is it a gradual turning; is it a quantum shift; or perhaps a combination of the two?
2. We do not know what the implications of these ideas are (or will be) in real life. How will this shifting of polarities translate into the reality of people’s lives?
3. We do not know how or whether to consciously participate in this process. Should we actively facilitate its unfolding, or passively receive it as it happens?
4. We are now within the era called “the birth pangs of messiah.” The question becomes, “is it a time to resist the urge to push, or has parturition proceeded to the point that pushing is good and necessary?” How can we know the answer to this question?

#### Logical Implications and Speculations

1. Underlying this shift in the polarity of *man* and *woman* is an even deeper (and more fundamental) shift in the purpose of creation. When the universe is a work in progress, *HaShem* needs builders to complete the millenia-sized task of perfecting the world. This downward-facing work is a masculine skill and when *it* is in demand, power and status reside with those who have it. But eventually (and actually quite soon in the relative scheme of things) the world will be built, the job will be done, and Shabbat will come. When that happens the trait in highest demand will be *receptivity*, the capacity to receive the Divine revelation of love and light and Presence that is the pleasure of eternity. This upward-facing activity is a feminine skill and, apparently, the ultimate purpose of creation.