

Neurology & Pain Management

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The Kabbalah of Pain

6.8.07

We don't have to access olam hatohu. We live in it. This is what we mean when we say that we are surrounded by kelipot.

You are asking me to explain to you Matbe'ah haberachah While standing on one foot. Suffice it for me to say that in the words baruk atta hasem elohenu one is accessing the energy of the forces Of creation in order to ascend higher in melek ha'olam to rom hama'a lot in order to confirm the existence of olam ha'azilut as the provenance of the energy which we have to unite, in the words breh peri ha'etz etc.,with the pleasure we have in eating in order that this pleasure can be reunited with its source on high. While you are chewing the fruit, let us say, you should be aware that you are releasing the sparks of holiness which you confirm by your enjoyment of taste in order to reunite with their source on high.

The purpose of pleasure is similar to the purpose of suffering. Both involve a mittuk of geburot by reuniting them with their source on high.

Pleasure is the consequence of our abodah. It is ha simhat ha mitzvah or the oneg connected with being.

George Lasry 12.14.06

What has kabbalah to tell me in my agony?

I know little about “uniting with sources on high”, so how do I explain to myself the deeper aspects of this pain and how can it serve a useful spiritual purpose.

Here I am at 3 am. Writhing in pain. The disc is pressing on my L4 nerve root and my thigh is on fire. Ok so take a pain pill you may say. But, if there is a purpose to suffering then I do not wish to anesthetize it away. If there is something redemptive about the petty pains and aches, the knife-like sensations, and the chronic gnawing burning dysesthesias in my thigh that have prevented me sleeping the last 2 weeks or so, then let me suffer a

little longer for as long as I can hold out and experience the pain from the inside. Let the pain seep through me and let it teach me its secret.

My essay explores the claim George made to me in the above E-mail that *both* pain and pleasure have the same function i.e. *mittuk hadin*¹ which made me wonder as to how this is possible since both are polar opposite experiences in life yet both occur at the physiological level of the body, inscribed as always through the body. Is it possible that the very foundation of kabbalah could be located in the body itself?

The following passage is from *Lekutei Halachot* of Reb Nosson,² the disciple and scribe for Reb Nachman of Bratzlav. It is recorded in *Hishtapchut Hanefesh*

“And this is the aspect of Jacob and Rachel/Leah.”

Rachel represents Torah shebe'al Peh, “like a lamb before the shearing” as all pass before her to receive and adjudicate (and interpret) the (written received) law from her. (L.M. I section 12), whereas

Leah represents prayer and supplication as it states “and Leah’s eyes were weak” for she was constantly weeping and crying and praying that her lot would not fall to marrying Esau.

Jacob: represents the general principles of Torah as in “Moses taught us the Torah, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob” i.e. the written revealed law.

For the written and oral law can be viewed as man and woman, like Jacob and Rachel.

Now we have already explained that the purpose is to transform the Torah we learn into Tefillah (how the study of sacred texts become prayers themselves, however the method to accomplish this is through the path of torah shebe'al peh, the oral law. The oral law allows us to transform the written law we study into prayer and supplication. The oral law is the means through exegesis of the written law; we can access that which might have been inaccessible at first. Unable to relate to the plain written law, the oral law allows us access to become spiritually engaged with the written law to such an extent it can serve as the very basis of prayer and supplication.). The transformation can only occur through the use of the 13 middot or principles of exegesis; thus the use of the 13 principles allows us to interpret the written law and extract from it the oral law. This results in *chiddushin* the

¹ A kabalistic technical term mean sweetening of the stern judgment, I hope the meaning will become clearer as we proceed.

² Hilchot Rosh Chodesh Halacha V

novellae of Torah and Halachah. And it is only through them that we can produce prayer for Torah.³

Thus both Leah and Rachel are vital as we are told in the Holy Zohar and the writings of the Ari'zal. Jacob too is the foundation (yesod) of Torah, and all his work (and Divine service) was with Rachel which is the aspect of the oral law. For there can be no shleimut (completion or integration) of the written law without the oral law. And no worship, divine service, or good deeds can be born from the written law without the (interpretation concomitantly) of the oral law. For with the written law alone how can one understand or perform a Mitzvah in its entirety. As a result all Jacobs' divine service was with (the aspect of) Rachel.

But in truth it is impossible to merit to fulfill the Torah in its integrative wholeness (i.e. both the written and oral aspects) the aspect of the union of Jacob and Rachel without prayer and supplication which involves the longing and suffering of Leah, since Torah learning and prayer are totally dependent upon one another. For it is impossible to merit torah without prayer and impossible to achieve prayer without torah study; for one needs to study torah to know what and how to pray but to merit torah study one also needs the prayers we pray each day "and light up our eyes with Thy torah!" (Prior to the kry'at Sh'ma)..And place in our hearts understanding...in order to learn and to teach...and without these prayers we would not know where to even begin.

Thus Jacob our forefather of blessed memory could solve this problem thinking initially that he had to apply himself to Rachel meaning the oral law for he thought he first had to study the business of the oral law (in order to know what to pray). Rachel too represents the revealed world since everyone knows and can see the advantage (and status) of the novellae of the law that emerge from the study of the oral law and it is beloved among all scholars since it involves great wisdom and intelligence which is revealed to everyone. And wisdom is highly esteemed by all. But Leah represents the hidden world for the importance of prayer and supplication is hidden and closed for public view for prayer is reflective of faith and once not even understand faith with the intellect.

So the paradigm of the beauty of Rachel and the weepy eyes of Leah, reflected in the verses "and Rachel was exceedingly beautiful to see" and "Leah's eyes were dim from crying" is interpreted from the above as the

³ Thus only through the use of these 13 middot or principles of interpretation which are the only acceptable methods of interpreting the written law, can we arrive and the accepted canonical oral law and thus only through them can we transform the written law into prayer. There maybe other methods of interpreting such as the 32 paths of Rabbi Ishmael for the interpretation of Haggadah or non-legal issues or even sectarian and heretical methods of interpretation, but here we are told that they will not lead us to the accepted halachah and perforce in a spiritual manner we will not arrive at true prayer and supplication as a corollary.

beauty of the oral law is seen and appreciated by all and held in great esteem by all, for all seek (to study) Mishnah (the prime code of the oral law), as opposed to “and Leah’s eyes were dim” (meaning she was not attractive to Jacob) for she was always crying and praying she would not fall to the wicked Esau in marriage.

And this narrative struggle applies to the *Knesset Yisrael* on the macro level and to each individual who also needs to cry that he or she not fall into the portion of the *samech mem* (the forces of evil, which represents the demon of Esau (i.e. the spiritual forces of impurity represented above by the notion of Esau).

However the importance of the prayer and supplication not everyone is able to appreciate since it originates from the hidden world so that even well schooled men and learned individuals and men of stature do not pursue it on the contrary make light of it and denigrate it as a spiritual form of service for we see even our Patriarch Jacob could not withstand and worked for Rachel alone and it took the trickster Laban who desired to switch Rachel with Leah on the wedding night thinking that for sure Leah had no status and he could substitute the lesser quality daughter for she had no status at all, thinking he could fool Jacob by the substitution. But in truth all comes from God for His ways are so deep blessed be he; and all turned out for the best in the end for (we are told in the Midrash) Rachel handed over her signs⁴ (out of pity for her older sister’s plight and possible embarrassment and loss of any future prospects since she was the older sister to anyone other than Esau) to her sister Leah and her embarrassment was spared by her marriage to Jacob.

All these *simanim* represent the oral law which is the aspect of Rachel who is the repository of tradition and “signs” (meaning the rules of interpreting the oral law). Yet Rachel transmitted these secrets and signs specifically to Leah! Who represents prayer and supplication; and taught her how to speak with Jacob, representing the entirety of the written law (klal hatorah) and how to transform Torah into Prayer. Thus both of them (the oral law and prayer, Rachel and Leah) are included (inter-included) as one for the oral law and prayer both join with Jacob who represents the foundation of all Torah in order to give birth to the 12 tribes of Israel which have 49 letters paralleling the 49 steps (gates) of T’shuvah which is the aspect of praise Tehillim in order to transform Torah into Praise/Tehillim or prayer.

⁴ Knowing her father and his possible design to switch her and Jacob agreed on a set of signs and codes by which they would be able to recognize each other in the darkness of the wedding night, these were called the *simanim*, the signs. This word is used for the delicacies we eat on erev Rosh Hashanah)

In a most enigmatic midrash⁵ regarding the Hurban and the intercession of the patriarchs on behalf of klal Yisrael, not only did Rachel hand over the wedding night secrets and signs to Leah but in order to spare her further embarrassment and exposure she actually hid under marital bed during the time of lovemaking and “spoke the signs” in her own voice. And in the writings of the Holy Ari z'l we are told of a great secret regarding this midrash, that in fact this very scene takes place as well on high as part of a similar *yichudim*⁶ so that when a particular divine light known as “Jacob” unites with another light called “Leah” then yet another light known as “Rachel” is “under the bed”. (Eitz Chayim of Reb Chayim Vital).

For us it becomes clear since all the unifications we perform “down here” in this world affect similar mirrored unifications in higher worlds, especially when it comes to prayer which represents the archetypal integrating unification. So when a person enters into the spiritual practice called prayer and supplication and engages his intentions and prepares his conversation before God in order to merit coming closer to Him and perform His commandments and Torah and desires to transform his Torah learning into Tefillah, however he can as yet not utter a single word! For he as yet does not “know” the ways or (secrets) signs of Torah, so he does not know how to speak and prepare his words⁷ **then the aspect of Rachel, which is the oral Torah, the aspect of novellae in torah from atika stimaa⁸ form them alone is derived the technique of transforming torah into Tefillah – she alone takes pity on the worshipper who is in the position of Leah (crying and weeping over her lot) and hands over to her the simanim and the (secret) ways of Torah and speaks (on her behalf) to her beloved the aspect of Jacob the foundation of the Torah in order the torah maybe transformed into Tefillah so that there maybe a unification of Torah and Tefillah so that good deeds may ensue.**

In this profound lesson Reb Nosson is working off the Torah In Likutei Mehoran of his Rebbe, Reb Nachman, Torah L.M. II: 73 as well as II: 25. He shows how dialectical the back and forth of Torah and Tefillah is. On the one hand the path to true prayer requires the guidance of Torah and its myriad laws and customs, the formality of prayer embedded in the devotional spontaneity of pouring one’s heart out to God in mediation. Yet the torah itself is not merely an intellectual discipline and the only access to the

⁵ In this same Petichta Rachel becomes the only figure after a whole litany of Patriarchs who is bale to evoke God’s response to the Hurban. By using this episode of her mercy for Leah she is able to awaken the divine to respond to the tragedy of the Hurban. The metaphor for this triggering is her willingness to forgo her marital night with her beloved Jacob out of pity for her older sister. Eicha Rabba Petichta 24

⁶ Meaning spiritual unions of various divine potencies

⁷ When I read this passage it so reflected my whole life! Rebbe is telling us here how difficult any type of authentic spirituality is. In a post Holocaust age how can one pray, how can one prepare any words, how can one even open up to speak to God. In this void all the Torah one has learned melts before the tremendum! What can one say, the wreckage of one’s life is the past, the carnage of the world and the last century stares us in the face, our paralysis in the face of ongoing genocide makes a mockery of prayer!

⁸ A kabalistic term referring to a level of divine knowledge beyond human appreciation, where the secrets of Torah will eventually be revealed, the inner Torah that is encoded in our present day Torah.

deepest layers is via tears supplication and petitionary prayer. He makes use of the biblical narrative of the wedding night between Jacob and Rachel as the platform for this exegesis. Jacob gives signs and codes to Rachel so that Laban will not be able to trump and fool him with Leah on the wedding night. Yet Rachel takes pity on her older sister and hand her over these signs (*simanim*). This forms the basis for his exegesis. These *simanim* are never explained overtly in the text or in Midrash. They form the basis for Rachel's plea to the Almighty on behalf of her children being led into exile.⁹ The very compassion in giving her beloved over to her sister rival and even going so far as to make responsive noises to Jacob in the nuptial bed finally arouses a response and words of comfort from God. For Reb Nosson, however, basing this lesson on the writings of the Zohar and the Ari Hakadosh, moves the story into the personal/mystical realm. The path to true penitence and *T'shuvah* to becoming a true servant of God requires the melding and unification of the written law with the oral traditions of interpretation to arrive at the truth. Jacob is seeking the truth about God and himself and mistakenly believes he must unite with Rachel representing the oral tradition and the interpretive hermeneutical method. He seeks the keys to unlocking Torah, God and himself. He represents the written tradition which needs the oral to stay spiritually alive for each generation. However through Rachel's compassion representing the oral tradition and that Torah that remains hidden and evolving, she teaches him that he must first meet up with and unite with Leah, representing the tears and the longing and supplication of prayer. Only through the heart involvement can Jacob hope to unite with the law and become Sabba Yisrael the fully grown mature human being. This is called fulfilling Torah *bishleimus* meaning in a fully integrated way. The converse is also true, that he cannot arrive at true prayer without the assistance of Torah, both the written and oral traditions.

So what are these *simanim*?¹⁰ On the plain level the voice of Rachel is her compassion for her sister, and her transmitting the secrets of lovemaking that Jacob had already given her. According to Reb Nosson it is the 13 middot or hermeneutical principles by which we can "read" ourselves, both the written Torah and reality, a sort of map by which to read the world. On a deeper level Rachel the traditional oral law and interpretive method,¹¹ pities Leah represented by the tearful young the *Ish Yisraeli*, the devotee on his path to true fully developed spirituality, who is crying over his inability to move spiritually closer to God or Torah. Rachel then hands Leah the *simanim* those secrets that then enable Leah to unify Torah and Tefillah. She does this by subterfuge and trickery (a not unknown method of the trickster in mythology and lore) by ventriloquy or "speaking"

⁹ See Eicha Rabba Petichta 24 end.

¹⁰ Other interpretations have, of course been given for these *simanim* see M. Kasher's commentary to Genesis 29:25, including Aggadot Esther II:20, Yalkut Hamakiri Psalms 18:57, Masechet Kalla Rabbati III. Intriguing explanations include handing her over the laws of Challah, Hadlakat ha'Ner and Niddah i.e to state "I am pure" (Midrash Peirush Ha Riva), others say Jacob gave her an amulet to wear around her neck as a sign of '*zechut avot*. Finally the Yalkut Ruveini suggests, in the name of kabbalists, that the signs were that he would touch her right ear, thumb and big toe the hint being from the verse in Leviticus 14:25, "next he shall slaughter the lamb of the guilt offering; and the priest is to take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on 'the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot."

¹¹ Not merely the legalistic methods but also called *chidushei Torah mei-atika stimaah* the novellae of Torah that arise from a very high hidden level of spirit meaning the secrets of Torah that evolve and unfold in each generation. The secret of how to transform Torah into Tefillah.

to Jacob and thereby causing him to understand himself and unify the written and oral tradition. Using the kabalistic terminology each of the actors represent different divine lights so that the words that come to us in meditation or *Hit'bod'dut* are such gifts of the lights of Rachel from this hidden place above, that allow us to articulate our desire. By the tears of the lights of Leah we arouse the pity of Rachel to give us the very words that will articulate our pain and thereby bring down divine grace and connect with God in *T'shuvah*.

This “handing over the *simanim*” is better articulated in the following Midrash commenting on the verse in Jeremiah (31:20):

כשישראל מזכירים להקב"ה מעיהם הומים לו שנאמר אזכרה אלהים ואהמיה, דודי שלח ידו מן החור ומעי המו עליו, וכשהקב"ה מזכיר את ישראל מעיו הומים עליהם שנאמר כי מדי דברי בו זכור אזכרנו עוד על כן המו מעי לו הציבי לך ציונים, א"ר חסדא אין התורה נקנית אלא בסימנים שנאמר הציבי לך ציונים עשה ציונים לתורה, מאי משמע דהאי ציון לישנא דסימנים הוא דכתיב וראה עצם אדם ובנה אצלו ציון, ר' אליעזר אומר מהכא אמור לחכמה אחותי את ומודע וגו' עשה מודיעים לתורה. ד"א הציבי לך ציונים אלו המצות שישראל מצויינים בהם. שימי לך תמרורים זה חרבן בית המקדש אם אשכחך ירושלים גו', שיתי לבך למסלה דרך הלכת אמר להם הקב"ה לישראל באלו דרכים הלכתם עשו תשובה, מיד אתם חוזרים לעריכם שנאמר שובי בתולת ישראל שובי אל עריך אלה: נקבה תסובב גבר, בעולם הזה הקב"ה מחזר על ישראל שיעשו רצונו ויחזרו בתשובה, אבל לע"ל ישראל מחזרים על הקב"ה שיעשו רצונו שנאמר נקבה תסובב גבר, אמר ר' סימון בשם ר' שמעון חסידא בעולם הזה אדם לוקט תאנים בשבת אין התאנה אומרת לו כלום, אבל לעתיד לבא היא צווחת ואומרת שבת הוא, בעולם הזה אדם הולך ומשמש עם אשתו נדה אין מי שיעכבנו אבל לעתיד לבא האבן זועקת ואומרת לו נדה היא:

12. ילקוט שמעוני ירמיהו רמז

שטו

...Rabbi Chisda says “the Torah can only be acquired through *simanim* as it is written

“Set thee up waymarks, make thee guide-posts; set thy heart toward the high-way, even the way by which thou wentest; return, O virgin of Israel, return to these thy cities.”

Meaning “make waymarks and guideposts for Torah” the word *zion* is an expression of signs.

As our Rabbis explained “make *simanim* for Torah in order not to forget or be led astray (from its correct and accepted interpretations) in order not to reveal aspects of interpretation that are not in accordance to tradition “*shelo legalot panim batorah shelo kehalacha*”¹³

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כ הציבי לך ציונים, שמי לך תמרורים--שתי לבך, למסלה דרך הלכתי (הלקת); שובי בתולת ישראל, שבי אל-עריך אלה. **20** Set thee up waymarks, make thee guide-posts; set thy heart toward the high-way, even the way by which thou wentest; return, O virgin of Israel, return to these thy cities.

All my learning then in Torah must be transformed into Tefillah. It has little meaning in and of itself other than as a mere intellectual exercise if it does not accomplish the goal of bringing me nearer and closer to Hashem. My *avodah* my spiritual discipline and inner work is to harness even intellectual energy and textual study into divine service. The Torah taught above makes clear that in addition Jacob represented by the written law desires Rachel in order to make sense of himself. The written law alone has little meaning without exegesis or interpretation. Our tradition has 13 rules or middot by which we can arrive at the oral law and correct or traditional canonical interpretation which results in the oral law or Rachel. However Rachel knows that Jacob's ultimate purpose is not merely the acquisition of knowledge of law even oral law but its unification with prayer and worship. She also knows he can have no access to (himself, his true inner coded self) with her methods alone. She thus hands over the secrets to her sister Leah the mistress of tears and crying pleading and supplication in order that Jacob *first* unifies with her. Rachel has the secrets of Torah the meaning for our suffering but she also knows that access to it is only through prayer suffering and tears. Leah represents that archetype. Through the *mesiras nefesh* of Rachel in handing over the *simanim* to Leah can Leah unify with Jacob and allow for the Tikkun and the access to the *shleimut of Torah* Jacob's access to his inner encoded Torah from *atika stimaa*.

Both eating and suffering George tells me has the same quality.

In both the locus of the activity must take place in the body. Putting aside the Lurianic concepts of rescuing hidden sparks of holiness in the physical material world I would rather like to read these texts in the context of my own suffering and desires.

I read Jacob as everyman, every person desiring to resolve the existential crisis of being in the body bound to the flesh and suffering the tortures of the flesh. The beauty of this text lies in its insistence that the spiritual struggle must occur within the body that reading the body requires the practice of reading texts and just like the Torah the written received text remains impenetrable without the tools of interpretation. These tools are codes, such as the 13 middot or rules of interpretation which allow us only so far in the extent and boundaries of interpretation. There are limits to sanity and to interpretation, the *gevul* is the limit set by the *ecclesia* of rabbis and the *mesorah*. When a *Tanna* or *Amora* exceeds those limits either in theological daring or anthropomorphism they are chided by their colleagues for going outside the *t'chum* the limits the boundaries of exegesis. ("*dayecha Rabbi Meir ata doresh Torah chutz l'tchum!*"). Rachel is the tool by which Jacob can find himself, his text, so as to be able to read his body, to read his life.

But the *chiddush* of this Torah is otherwise. Access to Rachel must take place via Leah. To read myself as a text, my body in its pain, to interpret it cannot take place merely through the tools of interpretation intellectual means of analysis and self reflection. Rebbe tells us that only through Leah through tears can I hope to be able to "read" myself. Furthermore merely tears alone are insufficient. It requires the handing over of the secrets of interpretation to Leah by Rachel. This means that mere desire and suffering alone will not accomplish the difficulty of uncovering the

¹³ The *simanim* or signs originally meaning the codes between Rachel and Leah now come to represent the codes of interpretation by which we arrive at the oral law's meaning encoded in the written law. The Rabbis were particularly aware of the freedom to interpret and imposed outer limits on this method of interpretation despite the 13 middot or rules.

inner meaning of the text. That can only be accomplished by the informed tears. When Leah receives in her cries and supplications the secrets of Rachel only then can she make the correct interpretation of Jacob.

George calls this “Rachel the great” once she has the tears of Leah intermingled with her Torah then she is a fitting consort for Jacob who is now known as Israel. The transformation of my soul from that of Jacob to that of Israel the sage takes place when the tears and suffering and agony are informed by the secrets of Rachel the lesser, the inner dimension of Torah the p'nimius of Torah.

Both eating and suffering have this quality. In both eating and pleasure as well as suffering the enjoyment and suffering of all activities in this world must be suffused with this inner dimension of Rachel combined with the cries and supplications of Leah. The locus of all this spiritual work is the body. In the body we do the grounding work of bringing the intellect down, down into the physical, subjecting it to the tears and supplications of Leah by which the analysis can be informed *in the body* of pain and pleasure. There is some esoteric meaning to the experiencing of life in an embodied fashion whereby our disconnected souls become incarnated again and again in a conscious manner. In my pain and in my ecstasy I continue to incarnate and become ensouled but only by dis-intellectualizing the data from the world and integrating it into the body the sacred body of the ecclesia of Israel.

That is why George insists on *t'chiyat hameitim* the ultimate *geulah* must include the resurrection of the body since the body is locus of pain and pleasure and the locus of incarnation.

Jacob's task in life is do discover the Israel within him, the myth and narrative that will reflect his true inner being. As I experience life I slowly discover this inner truth and narrative that mirrors my deepest inner space. Only through experiencing what is “out there” can I hope to find that which is mirrored within. To the degree I examine this life and refine the narrative sequences and characters , fleshing out the complexity of this life of mine, is to the degree I become Israel.

The tools I have been given are twofold, prayer (Leah) and study (Rachel). The access to the inner truth about myself (the written law as inscribed in my flesh) seems to require merely the tools of exegesis and rhetoric. (for instance, the 13 middot by which we expound the written law). However the master tells us that in fact a paradoxically different tool must be employed first, that of tears, supplication prayer and suffering. Only through the anguish of living and pain of dis-ease can we become sensitive to how powerless we really are and how much we need and are in need of outside help. In that space of pain where I must turn to the higher Power who guides me through life for help I find the prerequisite for interpreting my life appropriately.

Leah without Rachel leads to life of tears without meaning. Rachel without Leah leads to accurate and self analytical truths that remain unredeemed and desolate. It is the self analysis and critical inquiry in the presence of suffering that allows for the transformation of Jacob into Israel.

However the suffering does not take place merely on the individual level. Elsewhere I have claimed that my patients carry not only their pain from the past but possibly the pain of their family

clan and even culture. In re-reading this passage from the aspect of cultural trauma how can one make sense or meaning?

In a post-Holocaust age we need to radically mis-read the characters of this passage.

Rachel represents both the Jewish People as well as the Divine Shechina. She is teaching us a deep truth. That in our desire to transform from the archetype of Jacob, that historical and locally-situated parochial patriarch into Israel the spiritual genius of bearer of the divine mysteries, there is only one path, that of the suffering Leah. Leah represents all the traumatic tears and tortures of history, of man's inhumanity to man, of the darker sides and forces of the universe, the shadowy side of the divine. She alone realizes in her lot in life, that her destiny is tragic and related to the hated Esau, power, Rome, Chmelnicki, Nazi atrocity, etc. Her tears come from the prophetic vision of what her children must bear. Rachel, however knows that for Jacob to transform he must first follow the path of Leah the vale of tears since she alone knows that darker side of the divine, that for some inscrutable reason the Lord wishes to experience the suffering of man. Jacob too must learn this lesson so Rachel hands over the secrets to Leah on the wedding night.

What are these secrets? The Shechina (Rachel) that aspect of the divine, itself in exile in this world gifts the secret the truth about the need for Jacob's transformation. The secret of Jewish history and exile, the secret about the darker side of closeness. The secrets are the *Chiddushin* of Torah the novellae born by the suffering Jew through the ages, the icon of Jacob engraved on the throne of glory, the biography of each struggle and martyrdom. The Torah is only renewed by Jewish suffering the Torah becomes enriched with the martyr's blood; *mesiras nefesh* is taken at the literal level as it was with the ten martyrs.

In one of the darkest passages in **Lekutei Mehoran**, Reb Nachman speaks of this need for bloodletting. His life was devoted to the *tikkunim* of the living and the dead, especially the martyrs of the Gonta massacre in Uman. In Torah I:260 he writes of *mesiras nefesh*:

“And the ten martyrs gave up their lives for the sanctification of the Name; for the sake of the unification of the Holy One Blessed be He and the Shechina, as is known¹⁴ that the essential aspect of this unification requires *mesiras nefesh*...

“those souls then ascended on high through the act of *mesiras nefesh* and thereby return to the Shechina, from whence they had originally emerged, for Israel is a part of the divine above literally, i.e. an essential part of the shechina literally...and when they return to the Shechina then the Shechina becomes beautified . This in turn arouses a Higher desire and a unification ensues.

“and at times this requires a killing God forbid, when some souls of Israel are killed for the sake of this unification through the elevation of their souls upward. **Other times many many souls are required God forbid, thus comes a pogrom.**

¹⁴ Kitvei Ha Ari Shaar HaKavanot Kriyat Sham 6.

Using the kabbalah of the Ari and the concept of fracture within the divine, the unification process occurs through the martyrdom of the Jew.¹⁵

Maybe these were the secrets transmitted to Leah on her wedding night, a night of unification but treachery, misrepresentation and deceit. On that fateful night the secret of Jacob's transformation into Israel would be handed over from one Mother of Israel to another, a secret bond of knowing, dark knowing.

In this dark Dark Age we live in a dream-like ghostly world. Alternative realities, virtual landscapes replace the real for it is too painful to bear. Addictions sprout as the only solace from the unbearable truth about our humanity gone awry. Language itself has failed to do justice to the horrors of ongoing genocide despite the lessons of the Holocaust. Where language fails so too do traditions that are logos based. All we had was the word of God, the Torah, the text, now after language what remains. All we had through the dark night of exile was the hope that our *mesiras nefesh* had some resonance upstairs as the Ari had claimed:

“for Israel are known as the winds of the *shechina*, and for this reason the exile is prolonged for we have nobody to rise to these heights to raise his soul so high so as to also raise the *malchut* as well so as to allow the unification to occur properly thus ending the exile.

“however there is a small *Tikkun* inasmuch as we give up our souls for the sanctification of the name with a full heart, so that even though we do not have sufficient good deeds yet because of our *mesiras nefesh lahariga* our willingness to die for His name all our sins are forgiven...”

What happened to six millions martyrs and the effect that was supposed to have had? Were six millions souls still insufficient to unify the fractured divine...

The Holy Piacezna Rabbi Kalonymus Kalmish Schapira of the Warsaw Ghetto in a profound interpretation of suffering puts it this way:¹⁶

“In the Talmud (Taanis &a, Makot 10a) Rebbe says ‘I have learned much from my teachers, even more from my colleagues, but from my disciples I have learned most of all’

Whenever we learn something new, and Hashem being the *Teacher of Torah* then also above there is new Torah being revealed, although all Torah belongs to Him, nevertheless more revelation is effected up there as He teaches man.

¹⁵ Ibid. 153

¹⁶ Eish Kodesh, Jerusalem 1960, Shevii shel pesach 1941, Sacred Fire, Trans. H. Worch, Jason Aronson, p 184-5.

Therefore each time a person revises the Torah he has learned he must deepen it each time and learn novellae from the old Torah in order that Hashem can also teach him this time around which in turn causes a revelation above. Only when something new is learned down below can new revelation occur on high as well, and when new revelation occurs on high then in him as well there occurs new revelations. We must learn from everything Hashem does. When a court of law sentences someone to a flogging, for instance, that is Torah too, for the performance and enactment of that Torah law was fulfilled upon someone deserving of flogging.

*So too the sufferings with which Hashem punishes us is also Torah, **and if a person can learn from them** then Hashem (perforce) becomes his teacher for this time.*

“but from my disciples I have learned most of all”

Then refers to Hashem and there occurs a revelation above and below, and through the revelation the hiding of the Divine Face (*hester panim*) is negated and the harsh judgments are sweetened.

This Holy Torah from the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941 radically alters our way of looking at pain and suffering in relation to the divine. By suffering well and learning from our suffering we force Hashem to be the teacher and thus be present to our suffering as a teacher must be present for his disciple. Even the court approved flogging is Torah since it derives from the teachings of Torah and the legal enactments that flow from its teaching. Our sufferings and floggings can also be part of this teaching if only we learn from them as students. We thus force Hashem as author of Torah and Teacher, to become present once more in the classroom and thus negate His radical absence. Stretching this even further I read the Piacezna Rebbe implying that the way Rebbe had claimed he “learned most from his students rather than teachers and colleagues,” we too in our suffering are *kivyachol teaching* the Ribono shel Olam new Torah through our suffering, or at least we are learning new *chiddushin* in the Torah of suffering. The new revelation above may well be the new Torah Hashem learns from our suffering and the revelation below is the new meaning we give to reading our pain and suffering.

Reb Shlomo Carlebach in one of his last teachings suggested the *simanim* that Rachel handed over to Leah were the *simanim* used at the traditional *Seder* night festive meal. The haggada enumerates the order of the service with the highlights including:

Kadesh ----- Recite the Kiddush
Urechatz ----- Washing the Hands.
Karpas ----- Eating of the Karpas.
Yachatx ----- Breaking the Middle Matzah.
Maggid ----- Recital of Haggadah.
Rachtzah ----- Washing the Hands [for the Matzah].
Motzi ----- Blessing of Hamotzi [over Matzah].
Matzah ----- Blessing over, and Eating of, Matzah.

Maror ----- Blessing over, and Eating of, Maror.
Korech ----- Eating combination of Matzah and Maror.
Shulchan Orech ---- Set Table - [Festive meal].
Tzafun ----- Eating the Hidden Afikoman.
Beirach ----- Birkat Hamazon [Blessing after Meal].
Hallel ----- Recital of Psalms of Praise.
Nirtzah ----- The Seder is accepted favorably.

What did Reb Shlomo mean? Did he feel that the 13 rules by which we have interpreted the written law have somehow failed us in this post-holocaust age? That we somehow need a new set of rules, those ordered in the very text of *geulah* recited over millennia by Jewish families at home on the Passover night commemorating redemption from Egypt. That we need to use those in particular to read ourselves anew. In order to arouse the divine to hasten the advent of the Messiah we need a new oral Torah, the Torah of the messiah, a spiritually revived torah. That somehow the Torah we had prior to the Holocaust failed us, was not good enough for us so it is up to us to revive a new oral interpretation so that we can read our lost selves, our alienated souls in the nightmarish world as we enter a new dark age of sectarian violence and terror. I am not sure. But it might be interesting to substitute the *kadesh* for the *kal vachomer* and the *urechatz* for the *gezeiras shava* and see where it might lead us!!

For me Reb Shlomo's implied demand is clear even if the implications of his Torah are too radical! It is our responsibility to make sense of the *simanim* those secrets we have been gifted with in order to explicate the torah for our selves to be able to read our souls and make sense of our relationship with God. For that the Rebbe tells us we need tears, lots of them, hit'bod'dut and prayer, Tehillim and song are the only access we have to the divine treasure of unearned gifts that allow us to articulate our desire. This is the best we can hope for.

Following his path of thought leads one to unfamiliar places theologically. How much more do we now have the responsibility to think and follow our experiences into unsafe theological grounds, places I do not wish to go, and things I do not wish to say.

If the texts we have inherited are inadequate to explain and the myths poverty stricken in the face of Nazi brutality, we either jettison them or do radical violence to them in an effort to save them. There is no middle ground anymore.

It was always about redeeming the Divine, from the moment Adam sinned and caused such a rupture and flaw up there, so Rachel now takes on the burden and realizes that only through Jacob's appropriating the suffering and agony of Leah can he ever hope to unite with her appropriately i.e. with sufficient space to hold their future children's agony. Rachel is the very product of the split in the divine, she herself is diminished and the shechina is in exile within all of us. For her to re-grow to her full stature requires the suffering of Jacob/men. Becoming Israel is then the ability to integrate the satanic within ¹⁷ to suffer the inner satanic dark side the shadow that inhabits all of life.

¹⁷ The Megalei Amukot suggests that the gematria of Israel is Jacob plus Satan