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## THE UNITY THEME AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR MODERNS

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## THE UNITY THEME AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR MODERNS

The oneness of God is universally acknowledged as the foundation stone of Judaism and its main contribution to the world. The theme of the *Shema*, "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One," underlies every single aspect of Jewish life and thought, and permeates every page of its vast literature. So powerful is this vision of God's unity that inevitably it must express the corollary that the divine unity is the source of a unity that encompasses all existence.\*

\*In the history of Jewish rationalism, Maimonides is the first to articulate the unity of existence as flowing from the unity of the Creator: "Know that this Universe, in its entirety, is nothing else but one individual being . . . The variety of its substances . . . is like the variety of the substances of a human being: just as, e.g., *Said* is one individual, consisting of various solid substances such as flesh, bones, sinews, of various humours, and of various spiritual elements . . . You must therefore consider the entire globe as one individual being living through the motion of the sphere, which is endowed with life, motion, and a soul. This mode of considering the universe is . . . indispensable, that is to say, it is very useful for demonstrating the unity of God; it also helps to elucidate the principle that He who is One has created only *one* being . . . There also exists in the Universe a certain force which controls the whole, which sets in motion the chief and principal parts, and gives them the motive power for controlling the rest. Without that force, the existence of this sphere . . . would be impossible. It is the source of the existence of the Universe in all its parts. That force is God, blessed be His name!" (*Guide to the Perplexed*, 1:72). Cf. Yehudah Ibn Shmuel's (Dr. Y. Kaufman) Introduction to his edition of the *Guide* in Hebrew, Vol. I p. xlii-xliii — *Moreh Nebukhim*, (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1959). The Kabbalist, of course, greatly elaborated on this theme. See, for instance, Part III of *Netzach Yisrael* by Rabbi Loewe of Prague (the *Maharal*) and Part III of *Nefesh ha-Chayyim* by Rabbi Chayyim of Volozhin.



## *The Unity Theme and Its Implication for Moderns*

Nowhere is the idea of *yichud ha-shem*, the Unity of God, given more poignant and intense expression than in the Kabbalah. In Jewish mysticism the Unity of God is not only one of the mightiest themes, but it becomes a living reality, perhaps the only reality. God's unity is taken not alone as an arithmetic proposition, but as the unification of all existence, in all its awesome diversity, through God. It is symbolized, in the Kabbalah, by the unity within God Himself. It is this unity — elaborated, explained, enhanced, and expounded by kabbalists from the Zohar through the late Rav Kook — of which our modern world stands in such desperate need. If it was ever necessary to reaffirm that theme, with its conscious rejection of all conflict, multiplicity, and fragmentation, it is today, when mankind stands poised, ready to blow itself to bits both physically and conceptually.

In this paper we shall examine the treatment of the Unity of God in one expression of the Jewish spirit, the Kabbalah — particularly in the Zohar and in the works of its most recent exponent, the late Rav Kook, Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land; in one sacred institution of Judaism, the Sabbath; and in one famous hymn of the Prayerbook, the *Lekhah Dodi*, a kabbalistic poem which celebrates the Sabbath. Our purpose is not a historical presentation of the Unity Theme, but rather to see what it can yield for us in the way of instruction: its implication for moderns.

The reader who is unacquainted with the atmosphere and terminology of the Kabbalah should be aware of the fact that mystical concepts, by their very nature, are incapable of precise, descriptive articulation. They can be expressed only suggestively, in symbolic form often quite complex in structure. The terms used may therefore sometimes sound absurd and unreal, even when they strive to grasp the very essence of reality itself. The reader who will regard the discussion of the Kabbalah as too recondite, may safely begin with the section entitled "The Implications."

### THE WORLD OF DISUNITY

The Zohar, the source book of Kabbalah, regards our mun-



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dane world as the *alma de'peruda*, the World of Disunity or Diversity. The unification of existence, the overcoming of this fragmentation, is to be sought in the establishment of the *alma de'yichuda*, the World of Unity which is the higher unity within God Himself.\* The true unity, beyond all others, is that of *Kudesha Berikh Hu*, the "Holy One, Blessed be He," and His *Shekhinah*, His "Presence" or "Indwelling." The apparent divorce of one from the other is what accounts for all that is wrong with the world. The failure of mankind is to be found in this World of Disunity. The function of man on earth is to help overcome this *perud* or schism and reestablish the primordial divine harmony of the Holy One and His *Shekhinah*, God in His transcendence and His immanence — the World of Unity.

This passion for the Unity of God, for the healing of the breach within Him, was given expression in the most powerful metaphor available. In human life it is the erotic urge which is the most intense symbol of union and oneness. Hence, erotic imagery was freely used in representing the drive for unity and the overcoming of the World of Disunity. (Parenthetically, it is in place to mention Prof. Scholem's observation that rarely did the Zohar ever use this kind of symbolism to express the urge for *devekut*, for the *unio mystica*, between God and man, as did the Christian mystics. It was almost exclusively used to designate the *yichud* or unification within God Himself.) The Holy One was considered the male element, and the *Shekhinah* almost always the female element. *Shekhinah* is thus known by a variety of names all emphasizing its feminine quality. By thus assigning genders to these different aspects of the Creator, the Kabbalah was able to tap the deepest wells of human experience to express its overwhelming yearning for the *yichud* of God and the firm establishment of the World of Unity.

### THE ROLE OF MAN

This reestablishment of the World of Unity was not con-

\*The World of Unity is that of the ten Sefirot which in the Kabbalah are not, as are the Neoplatonists' emanations, static steps mediating between the Absolute God and the phenomenal world. They exist, rather, within God; they are the "unified universe" of God's life.



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sidered, by the Kabbalah, an independent divine activity in which man is merely a passive observer who can do no more than exercise theosophic insight. Man is deeply involved with God in this drama of unification. The breach is not intrinsic; that would be a serious departure from the pure monotheism of all Judaism. God is, of course, absolutely one. It is, rather, only apparent. The error and failure that brought about this breach can be traced to man, not God. It is, therefore, man who must initiate the reunification, and the ascendancy of unity in God is both to be reflected in and caused by unity in man's own life.

The act of *perud* (breach or separation), the conception of the Shekhinah as a *truly* separate entity rather than just an *apparent* distinction in the Godhead, was recognized by the Kabbalah as a danger to monotheism and identified as the primal mystical sin of man. The division introduced between Shekhinah and the Holy One was called, by the Zohar, The Cutting of the Plants (*ketzitzah bi'netiot*), the "Plants" symbolizing the Sefirot. This was the crime of Elishah ben Abuyah, the sage turned heretic, whom the Talmud described as a "cutter of plants" (*kotzet bi'netiot*). This too was the original sin of Adam. By the act of eating of the forbidden fruit, primordial man separated the Shekhinah (represented by the Tree of Knowledge) from the rest of the Sefirot (i.e. the Holy One, represented by the Tree of Life). The punishment for this dualism, the divorce of the Shekhinah from the Holy One, is the silencing of Shekhinah (God's immanence) which now becomes known as "speech without sound" (*dibbur beli kol*) or personified as "the lonely woman" (*ishah galmudah*), and the ordaining of death for mankind. Death was not a new decree issued by God, thus external to man. It is inherent in man in potential, and is awakened by his sin. Death is, in the Kabbalah, also represented by a tree: the *ilana de'mota*. This Tree of Death lies dormant within the Tree of Knowledge and is inactive as long as there is no disruption between the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life — that is, the Holy One and His Shekhinah. But once the separation is effected, the Tree of Death emerges from the Tree of Knowledge which has been cut off from the Tree of Life. Man must die when he upsets the harmony of the divine



unity. His life must therefore be dedicated to the reestablishment of the World of Unity.

In many other ways does the Kabbalah express the idea that the drama of *perud* and *yichud*, of separation and unification, is not a purely theocentric plot, but includes man as a major protagonist in its grand sweep. The Zohar refers to man as the *diyukna de'kalil kula*, the synthesis of all the spiritual forces that went into the work of creation. Man in his pure, pre-sin state reflected the hidden organism of God's own life. In that pure state, according to the author of *Shaarei Orah* (p. 9a), there was a free interchange between the higher and lower worlds. When Adam sinned, order turned into chaos; the Shekhinah was, so to speak, cut loose from the Holy One, and only through the act of redemption will the exiled Shekhinah be reunited with the Holy One in a return to the original divine harmony. Further, human effort, the "impulse from below," evokes a corresponding "impulse from above." The whole unification of God takes place in the soul of man, which is absorbed in the ultimate *yichud*. Hence the remarkable appellation of man as the "Lower Shekhinah" (*Shekhinah Tataah*). The union of Shekhinah and the Holy One which is regarded as taking place, as we shall later explain in greater detail, every Sabbath eve, has its corresponding effect on human life: the scholar is expected to cohabit with his wife on Sabbath eves. Every true marriage, maintains the author of *Iggeret ha-Kodesh* (Joseph Giktila, later ascribed to Nachmanides), is a symbolic realization of the union of the Holy One and His Shekhinah. Man is thus the active partner of God in the whole process of *yichud*. An agent of the original disruption of universal harmony, he must become the agent of its redemption, restoring the unity of God's Name. The purpose of the performance of every *mitzvah* is, therefore, the act of restoration. Hence, every religious performance is to be introduced by the formula "for the sake of uniting the Holy One and His Shekhinah . . ." This restoration by means of Torah, *mitzvot*, and prayer, with its many mystical intentions (*kavvanot*), becomes the task of man and his function in the universe.

#### THE SABBATH

The quest for *yichud* found particularly strong articulation in



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the Kabbalah's treatment of the Sabbath. We need not emphasize the importance of the Sabbath in Kabbalah as in all of Judaism. In the Kabbalah, the "Additional Soul" of the Sabbath day became not only an additional capacity for intellectual attainment, as it did with Maimonides and the Jewish rationalists, but a heightened religious sensitivity, an added spiritual dimension "on the pattern of the world-to-come." The Sabbath, according to the Zohar, is the source of all blessings for the six work days. The author of *Shenei Luchot ha-Berit* speaks for the whole kabbalistic tradition when he represents the week diagrammatically as the *menorah* or candelabrum in which the middle flame which points straight upwards symbolizes the Sabbath, and the two sets of three flames each, which point towards the middle one, are the week-days.

This Sabbath is the day par excellence of *yichud*. We have already mentioned that Friday night is the time of union of the Holy One and His Shekhinah or, as it is otherwise put, the King and His Matron. But in this grand *yichud* the Kabbalah saw many other elements absorbed. All of time is united in the Sabbath. The concentrated essence of the Sabbath, called the "Holy-Point" (*nekudah kaddishah*), is indeed present during the week, but it is obscured. There is no absolute distance between the holy days and the profane days, for by the agency of Sabbath observance — "all those who occupy themselves with holiness during the whole Sabbath day" — the weekdays become absorbed in the Holy Sabbath-Point. On this day the Point is revealed to man as it ascends upward, in the form of the Shekhinah, to be united with the King (or Holy One). Man's whole life, even his ordinary workdays, is thus included in the *yichud* of the Sabbath. Man's participation in this unification of time is further emphasized by the Zohar's description of the Lower Point (*nekudah tataah*), a sort of counter-point to the Higher Point (*nekudah ilaah*) and a symbol of human involvement in the Sabbath. It is this Lower Point that banishes all woe and worry on the Sabbath and replaces sadness and anger with the joy that makes it possible for the Additional Soul to arrive. The unification within God on the Sabbath is reflected in a corresponding unification within man on the Sabbath. To this day Hassidim, who follow the Se-



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phardic version of the liturgy, recite, on Friday nights, the passage from the Zohar beginning *ke'gavna* . . . "even as they unite above in the One, so is there a unification below . . . one corresponding to one . . ."

Not only Sabbath and weekdays, the horizontal aspect of time, but also past and present are united on the Sabbath for the Jew. The Patriarchs are participants in the Jewish Sabbath, representing all of the past and uniting with the present. The Hebrew word *Shabbat* — שבת — is divided by the Zohar into its component letters. The last two letters spell בת, daughter, which stands for the Holy Sabbath Point: the united essence of the whole week, or the Shekhinah with which it is identified. The first letter, ש, is interpreted orthographically, each of the three bars of the letter representing a different one of the three Patriarchs. The unity that prevails on the Sabbath, the Zohar implies, belies any abrupt discontinuity between the sacred past and the mundane present. All history is one continuum of holiness.

Even the material must be united with the spiritual in order to involve the totality of existence in the great *yichud* on the Sabbath — for disembodied spirituality is itself a fragment, a result of *perud*. Hence the importance of eating on the Sabbath, especially the three meals, called by the Zohar the Meals of Faith (*seudata di'mehemenuta*), each involving the participation of another one of the Patriarchs.

All these unifications are but aspects of the central and ultimate *yichud* of the Holy One and the Shekhinah. The erotic metaphor is, therefore, most appropriate to this transcendent union. A number of kabbalists have even compared the Sabbath to a wedding ceremony. Both at a wedding and in the Sabbath Amidah, seven blessings are recited. In each there is a declaration of sanctity (*kiddush* in one case, *kiddushin* in the other) over wine. The opening verses of the central portions of the Amidahs of the Sabbath have similar significance: "Thou hast sanctified" (*ata kiddashta*) stands for the sanctification of the nuptials (*kiddushin*); "Let Moses be happy" for the happiness of the wedding; the "Additional" prayer (*musaf*) for the additional jointure of the bride's settlement (*tosefet ketubah*); and "Thou art One" (*ata echad*) for the coming together (*yichud*) of bride and



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groom following the ceremony.

### LEKHAH DODI

This Unity Theme on the Sabbath is most beautifully expressed in the popular hymn chanted on Friday nights, the *Lekhah Dodi* ("Come my beloved, let us meet the bride, let us welcome the Sabbath"). The poem was composed in the sixteenth century by R. Solomon Alkabetz, the teacher and brother-in-law of R. Moses Cordovero; these, together with R. Isaac Luria (who encouraged Alkabetz to write the hymn), are the leaders of the great school of Safed Kabbalists. The hymn is vastly popular. A measure of its wide acceptance can be seen in the remarkable number of melodies composed for it. Mr. Jakob Michael, a friend of the writer and member of his congregation, has 540 melodies in his private collection. The Birnbaum collection at the Hebrew Union College contains another 700 *Lekhah Dodi* melodies, with an estimated total of 1300 to 2,000 different tunes having been composed for it — so that if a new one were chanted every Friday night, one would not exhaust his repertoire for about forty years! Felicity of style and esthetic excellence can only partially account for the hymn's universal popularity amongst all Jews. It seems that a more basic explanation is the innate and unstudied response to the hymn's major mystical themes,\* to the poetry of the soul rather than the poetry of the pen. The praying public may retain or reject a *new* prayer, especially one whose precise mystical symbolism is clear only to initiates, without being consciously aware of the nature or causes of its reaction. The worshippers unconsciously respond to the broad themes, the real essence of the prayer which, like the moon obscured behind the clouds, exerts a hidden but inexorable influence upon the ebb and tide of their religious experience in the deepest subterranean channels of their souls. So does the secret of the success of *Lekhah Dodi* lie in the magnificent sweep of its esoteric Unity Theme.

\*It is interesting that the same mystical content was responsible for the initial hesitation in accepting the hymn as a part of the service. Many Sephardic, and some Ashkenazic — especially German — congregations, were opposed to the chanting of *Lekhah Dodi* because of the general sensitivity to Kabbalah following the Sabbatian heresy. I am informed that the cantor in the *klaus* in Frankfurt a.M. would remove his *tallit* for the chanting of *Lekhah Dodi*.



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### *The Symbols*

The symbols in Alkabetz's poem are not always constant. The Sabbath may sometimes be the "bride" — the Talmud already speaks of Sabbath as bride and queen. The groom or beloved (*dodi*) may be Israel. In a famous Midrash, the Sabbath complains to God that while each of the other days has its mate she is being left an old maid — an all too human complaint — and God presents her with her groom, Israel. But no doubt these are secondary to the primary "wedding" or *yichud*: that of the Holy One and His Shekhinah, the true *dodi* and *kallah* of the hymn. On Sabbath the Shekhinah (the Zohar's Holy Point which during the weekdays is in the lower worlds, obscured from both God and man) rises to meet her divine lover, the Holy One. It should be emphasized that not only is Sabbath the time during which the unification is effected, but *Shabbat* is itself identified with Shekhinah, the bride of the Holy One.

### *An Interpretation of the Halakhah*

The first stanza explicitly repeats the Unity Theme. Since the Holy One and His Shekhinah have already been united, God is referred to as the *El ha-meyuchad*. This union means that God's Name — the first two and last two letters of the Tetragrammaton — which represent, respectively, the Holy One and the Shekhinah, has been reunited, hence: "the Lord is One and His Name is One."

The first phrase of this same stanza is of particular importance to us. *Shamor ve'zakhor be'dibbur echad hishmianu* — "observe" and "remember" were spoken in one word. The poet here refers to the well known Aggadah that both commandments relating to the Sabbath, in each of the two versions of the Decalogue, were given simultaneously. Both "observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy" and "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" were uttered by God at one moment, but were heard separately by the Israelites. In the Halakhah, "remember" represents the positive commandment — the *kiddush* or sanctification of the Sabbath — while "observe" is the negative, the warning to refrain from the thirty-nine categories of *melakhah*



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or labor. It would not be amiss to say that here, too, in the context of the whole hymn, we have the *yichud* theme and an implicit rationale for the prohibition of *melakhah* on the Sabbath. If Sabbath is the time for and of the essence of *yichud*, then the positive commandment, "remember," is, of course, to be understood as the means for the achievement of this union. But since "observe" and "remember" are but two aspects of a single divine command, then the negative expression of the divine will — the "observe," the refraining from labor — must also contribute to the unification in God. This is indeed understandable in terms of the Halakhah's treatment of the biblical prohibition of *melakhah* (labor) on the Sabbath. The breakdown of the *melakhah* prohibition to thirty-nine separate major categories, with untold number of *toledot* or minor categories subsumed under them, signifies the fragmentized nature of the profane days. The unsanctified days are the real World of Disunity. Man's involvement with nature requires of him to atomize his experience in the various arts and crafts by which he sustains himself physically and economically. The fragmentization of his activity is indicative of the inner disintegration of his own personality and spirit. On *Shabbat*, by refraining from any intrusion into the normal processes of nature, he protects, in a negative manner, the integrity of his own personality. He is in a position to pursue the goal of *yichud*, by way of "observing" the Sabbath, without interference and breakdown. During the six work-days the mundane life has broken up man's human experience into a spectrum of thirty-nine colors; but Judaism, through the Sabbath, reunites and reintegrates the diverse colorations of experience into the pure white light of the unique, undivided Creator. The abstention from *melakhah* thus enables man to overcome the World of Disunity and participate in the Sabbatical unification of the Holy One and His Shekhinah. The Halakhah, which normally presumes a pluralistic universe because it operates in the "real" World of Disunity, thus reveals in its treatment of the Sabbath its ultimate monism.

#### *The Future*

The middle and end stanzas of *Lekhah Dodi* speak of the



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themes of Messiah, the redemption, and peace. The relationship of these to the idea of Unity is obvious. The Shekhinah is in exile together with Israel; the Kabbalah often refers to Shekhinah by the name *Knesset Yisrael*, the Congregation of Israel. The redemption of Israel signifies the reunion of Shekhinah with the Holy One, the beloved. The time we welcome the Sabbath as the occasion for the meeting of the Holy One and His Shekhinah is therefore most appropriately the occasion for waiting and hoping and praying for the national *yichud* of which the union of the Holy One and Shekhinah is hypostatic. *Shalom*, peace, is the state at which *yichud* aims, the condition of complete and utter universal harmony and unity. R. Loewe of Prague (the *Maharal*) declares, in a similar vein, that the present mundane world is that of diversity, whereas the world-to-come is that of oneness — thus extending the principle from Messianic to eschatological times.

### THE IMPLICATIONS

It now remains for us to investigate some of the implications of this idea for modern Jews — modern in a chronological sense only, for the implications we shall draw are valid for us only as long as we locate ourselves ideologically in the context of the Jewish tradition which gave birth to the Kabbalah and especially the Unity Theme. In order to do this we shall move from the esoteric and mystical world of the Kabbalah to contemporary, exoteric modes of thought, and follow some of the consequences of the *yichud* idea in terms relevant to our own current predicament, dealing with problems which are, at most, only penultimate to the transcendent *yichud* of which the Kabbalah speaks.

#### *Disintegration*

Modern man and the complex society he has built for himself are in a state of progressive inner disintegration. Psychologically, socially, and spiritually, he has re-formed himself on the pattern of his new industrial economy. With the obsolescence of the artisan who fashioned the whole vessel, the Whole Man has faded into obscurity. The division of labor, which is indig-



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enous to our modern economy, has begotten many other divisions in many other fields of human endeavor. In professional life, narrow specialization has replaced general practice. Culturally, the expert dominates over men of broad knowledge and general culture. Literature, which should strive for the wholeness of man, has merely reacted to our inner atomization and put under the literary microscope man's baseness and degradation in which only unrelated pieces of fractured experience are regarded as real, and in which wholeness and higher integrity are considered meaningless abstractions. Literary criticism has turned upon the Bible and replaced its unity with a Documentary Hypothesis which has made of Scriptures a haphazard collection of disparate fragments. Philosophically, the extreme logical positivism of some modern thinkers and their reduction of all issues to linguistic analysis is symptomatic of the same tendency. Man's spiritual and religious life has become a true World of Disunity. Long before the atom bomb struck Hiroshima, the modern world sustained a historic atomization, the fission and disintegration of man's heart and soul and mind, and the beginning of the end of his universe.

Indeed there is a deeper relation between the splitting of the atom and the fragmentation of the Self. The tendency to view existence as divided, in pieces or dualities, in "over-against" terms, must inevitably have a deteriorating effect upon the integrity not only of man's ideological orientation but ultimately also his social existence. It was Philo who traced war and peace to man's intellectual activity, particularly to his conception of the Deity. War, he said, stems from paganism which, in its elaborate mythology, saw gods locked in combat with each other, spying, stealing, and betraying in order to gain victory. The pagan's theology influenced his anthropology, his view of man. His social *anschaagung* was thus compatible with constant conflict and war — a true *imitato dei*. The monotheist, who knew of only One God Who embraces all existence in His unity and Who prefers the state of peace which is the end result of unification, naturally sought peace in his own social and political relationships. A recurrent verse in our liturgy is: "May He Who makes peace up above make peace for us and for all Israel." A divided



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society and fragmented polity is the natural result of a World of Disunity.

Yet we are not here addressing ourselves primarily to the obvious fact of the divisiveness of the world politically and militarily, consequential as it is to our very existence. We are emphasizing, rather, the inner peace without which there can be no outer peace, for a fragmented world is merely fragmented man writ large. It is this inner fragmentation of both experience and man's beliefs and attitudes that must be overcome as the World of Disunity if the social and political integration of mankind into one brotherhood is to be achieved.

It was Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, the famed Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land whose twenty-fifth *yahrzeit* is currently being observed, who gave the Unity Theme its greatest development in modern times. Rav Kook's concern with man's atomizing tendencies, and his deep passion for unity throughout all existence, are apparent in almost every page of his writings. Himself a kabbalist of the first order who was very much aware of the modern world, he bridges the gap between the Kabbalah's mystical yearning for *yichud* and the need for unity in human affairs. In the following paragraphs we shall draw upon many of his works, but primarily upon the first volume of his *Orot ha-Kodesh*, published in Jerusalem in 1938.

### *Knowledge*

Rav Kook sees the need for *yichud* in the transcending of human epistemological limitations. Every act of cognition, he writes, implies an area of error (*tzel* or shadow). The view of the whole, in proper perspective, must become distorted in the very act of reduction and withdrawal from the whole to the part or specific, a process which is indigenous to the very act of cognition. The more isolated and refined the area of knowledge, the greater the error or *tzel*. The only way to overcome this inherent defect in man's cognitive life, the only way the shadows can be dispersed and the breach in his intellectual organism healed, is through communion with God Who comprehends all knowledge in His transcendent *yichud*.

The same striving for *yichud* in a spiritual context, or at least



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an awareness of the severe limitations of our World of Disunity, is the solution not only to the problem of epistemology, but to a related problem in our modern culture: the phenomenon of specialization. The more we are involved in one branch of knowledge, the more we tacitly assume its self-sufficiency, and the more we ignore its relatedness to and dependence upon other branches. Rav Kook was especially annoyed by the specialist's haughty disdain, his willful, transcendental ignorance of other disciplines. This is the way of error and confusion, he taught. All knowledge must be accepted as interrelated, reflecting the fundamental unity of the Creator, if specialization is to yield the desired creative results.

In the same vein, Rav Kook refuses to see an unbridgeable chasm separating religion and science. Religious and scientific knowledge are really one in an objective sense; they stand in contrast only subjectively. Spiritual insight, as opposed to intellectual comprehension, is characterized by a total view, by grasping all at once; the latter by its nature deals with specifics, with fragments. The practical progress of the world requires quantification rather than the total, unifying grasp of spiritual insight. Yet spiritual cognition and scientific knowledge are only apparently contradictory. It is a psychic gap that separates the religionist's striving for the over-all from the scientist's critical eye for detail. It requires genius to be able to overcome this abyss, this division, and arrive at their underlying oneness, recognizing that objectively both forms of knowledge are one.

The *yichud* of knowledge is extended by Rav Kook to the study of Torah. Torah cannot abide artificial distinctions between the inner life of man and the world at large, between human individuality and universality. The emphasis on the Prophets and Writings, as opposed to the Pentateuch, represents an imbalance in favor of inwardness, an imbalance he regards as one of the "great pains of exile." Both the element of Prophecy (and Aggadah) and the legal element that predominates in the Pentateuch must be integrated with each other. (This is a somewhat oblique criticism of the Christian — and Emancipation's — usurpation of the post-Pentateuchal portions of the Bible and their spirit-against-letter and love-against-law dualisms.)



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Similarly, Rav Kook is unhappy with the chasm that separates Aggadah from Halakhah. Superficially there is a difference between them. The Holy Spirit responsible for the Written Law is different in quality from the Holy Spirit of the Oral Law or Halakhah. Prophecy and Aggadah derive from what might be translated as "idealistic dignity" whereas Halakhah issues from "royal strength." But the world can be set right only when they are united in the soul of the Jew, for the strangeness of the halakhist in Aggadah and the aggadist in Halakhah is destructive of spiritual growth. The *yichud* we perform between them merely reveals the preexistent, original identity of Halakhah with Aggadah: they are one and the same. The attempt at integration must proceed by searching for the halakhic norms in the Aggadah, and the fundamental aggadic themes of the Halakhah.

*Yichud* in the world of knowledge, therefore, applies to Torah as well as to all other branches of wisdom, demanding the integration of all knowledge and the abandonment of artificial barriers in order to achieve a more wholesome view of life, a unified world-view which will be built on the specialized sciences and yet transcend them. It should be indicated in passing that in many disciplines, especially the natural sciences, a more integrated, total view is now beginning to find acceptance. In quantum physics, statistical predictions based on group phenomena have replaced the study of individual particles; the motion of a single particle is not examined except in relation to others. Biology has veered towards a more organismic approach, as we shall have occasion to mention again later, and psychology is leaning more and more to a gestalt position. Whether field theory, gestalt, organismic approach, or holism, when the scientific terms are translated into the vocabulary of the Kabbalah, you have: *yichud* — not, of course, the great and transcendent *yichud* of the Holy One and the Shekhinah, but the first baby steps, as it were, leading ultimately to the integration of all knowledge and experience in the oneness of God.

### *Personality*

More serious than the fragmentation of knowledge is the disintegration of personality. And the personal break-down of



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modern man, his inability to grasp more than a multiplicity of isolated aspects of life and his failure to unify his experiences in a comprehensive point-of-view, is reflected most clearly in the study of personality. In the sciences devoted to the study of man and society we usually work from the parts to the whole; we analyze discreet items and then add them together. This emphasis on discreet entities has a long history in Western thought. If Aristotle was unable to fit a new observation into a predetermined category, he created a new one. Hume, setting the prototype for modern positivism, maintained that man can know "nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions." On this basis he denied the possibility of knowing the Self. Following him, John Stuart Mill treated all psychological problems as soluble by an atomistic psychology. Hobbes saw society only as an aggregate of self-contained individuals, assimilated through external instruments. One writer, Dorothy Lee (cited in Helen Merrell Lynd's *On Shame and the Search for Identity*), has seen in this attitude a fundamental pattern of thinking characteristic of Western man. She calls this preoccupation with proceeding from the parts to the whole a "lineal codification of reality," in contrast to the non-lineal approach of other cultures; a difference being, for example, whether we conceive of society as a plurality of independent individuals, or of the individual as a differentiated member of society.

Fortunately, the pendulum seems now to be swinging from an affirmation of the World of Disunity to a quest for the World of Unity, if we be permitted to use these terms freely. Some psychologists now believe that the differences between atomistic and holistic Psychology are being resolved in favor of holistic or gestalt concepts, of "molar" as opposed to "molecular" terms. Even Freud, who with his concentration on specific biological needs and his splitting of the Self into Id, Ego, and Superego seemed to enhance the fragmentation of personality, nevertheless contributed to a holistic or molar approach by bringing into the scope of investigation many other heretofore neglected areas of the Self and treating them all as a continuity. One renowned researcher working on the biology of nervous systems has concluded that only the sick or damaged personality can be



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understood by examining its parts in isolation; its relation to the world can best be described in segmented, additive terms. A fully functioning person, however, can be described only in holistic terms. The *yichud* theme, understood exoterically and anthropocentrically, is thus a striving for a higher sanity, an escape from the psychosis of the World of Disunity. The *yichud* within God requires a corresponding *yichud* within man, including, as Rav Kook writes, a "merging of intellect and emotion," and the "integration of reason and will" — a reintegration of man's personality in which his mental oneness will be paralleled by a spiritual unity.

### *Theology*

In his theological thinking, too, modern Western man behaves atomistically rather than holistically. He is heir to a number of dualisms, which he usually accepts uncritically, that have come to him from the ancient Greeks via Christianity, especially the Church Fathers. Thus the distinction between the body and soul, which in Judaism is essentially a diagnostic way of explaining the ethical tensions of man, is for Christianized Western man a stark reality. When the Kabbalah unites, as it does in its interpretation of the Sabbath, the spiritual and material, it denies the bifurcation of man's Self into body and soul as two independent and antagonistic entities. The same can be said for the dichotomy of religious endeavor into faith and works, of religious experience into *eros* and *agape*, or, for that matter, into love (*ahavah*) and fear (*yirah*.) All such distinctions are merely apparent. Underneath, they are one, even as the Holy One and the Shekhinah are one. The kabbalistic formula recited before the performance of a *mitzvah*, to which we referred previously, includes the phrase *bi'dechilu u'rechimu* — in fear and love. The Kabbalah, with its deep and passionate striving for *yichud*, cannot abide a bifurcated view of life which accepts *perud* as a permanent and inherent quality of all existence.

Of even greater moment is the distinction between sacred and profane. At first glance it would seem as if the very existence of these two antinomous categories, not only sanctioned by Torah but crucial to its whole outlook, conveys a sense of *perud*,



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an absolute distance between the two, so that there can be no underlying unity comprehending the both of them. Yet the truth is that in a religion which did not make of the Devil an independent personality pitted against the beneficent God, thus providing for separate sanctions for the domains of the sacred and profane, but saw Satan as only one of the created angels commissioned by God to execute His Will, there can be no *absolute* distance between holy and unholy. A distinction there certainly is — the concept of *havdalah* with all its profound ramifications attests to this — but it is accidental rather than essential, apparent rather than real, extrinsic rather than intrinsic. This is the gist of Rav Kook's intention when he remarks that the "foundation of the holy of holies" comprehends both the "subject [or element] of the sacred and that of the profane." Even more poignant expression was given to this idea in a profound homiletic observation by the author of *Shnei Luchot ha-Berit*, one of the most noted of all kabbalists. In the Havdalah service which marks the end of the Sabbath, he remarks, we proclaim the distinction between sacred and profane, light and dark, Israel and the other nations, and Sabbath and weekday. The first two and the last are appropriate to the occasion. But what is the relevancy of the *havdalah* between Israel and the other nations in this context? He answers that there is a difference not only between Jew and non-Jew, but between the Jewish and non-Jewish understanding of the whole concept of *havdalah*. The Gentile conceives of an *absolute* separation between the sacred and the profane. The Jew, contrariwise, understands that the gulf between sacred and profane is introduced not to signify a permanent and irreconcilable dualism, but to allow the sacred to be confirmed in its strength and purity so that it might return and sanctify the profane. From this point of view there is no holy and unholy; there is just the holy and the not-yet-holy. This is identical with Rav Kook's assertion that the holy of holies includes the sacred *and* the profane.

Basically, this insight pertains most strongly today. We modern Jews have, in our daily life and habit, adopted the *havdalah* concept of the non-Jewish world. We have conducted our affairs on the unspoken presupposition that there is an unbridgeable gap



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between the two categories, each isolated in its own cubicle. We go about life as if the American political doctrine of the separation of church and state were a metaphysical dogma. The modern Jew factually confines the expression of his religious convictions to several holy places and holy moments, not to the entire week and every place. The "Holy Sabbath-Point" of the American Jew's Sabbath, unlike that of the Zohar, has no relationship with the six workdays. Despite his clearly defined occasions of holiness, which may be sincerely intended and genuinely experienced, he permits himself spiritual vulgarity, or spiritlessness, in the material endeavors of life. Emotionally he is unrelated to his spiritual dimension. We are different things to different people, different people to ourselves. Finding ourselves, when within the large area of the profane, thoroughly insulated from the influence of the holy, we are not only at an infinite distance from God, but broken and fragmentized within, our knowledge unrelated and our experiences unintegrated. Our entire world is as much in danger from mankind's internal fission as it is from the fission of the atomic nucleus. The powerful secularism of our day, which recognizes the sacred only so long as it promises not to encroach upon the privileged domain of the secular, is a reassertion of the non-Jewish concept of *havdalah*, a theology which we, in our *yichud*-obsessed world-view, cannot accept lest it disarm and emasculate the very essence of holiness whose function it is to fructify the profane and secular.

This position on the basic, underlying relationship and dialectic of sacred and profane implies a critical revaluation of the whole educational structure and philosophy of most of Orthodoxy today. Modern Orthodoxy has good reason to be proud of its herculean educational achievements. It has raised a generation of American Jews who have benefited from both a religious and secular upbringing. This is not the first time in history that this has occurred, but the number of Jews receiving a training in both and retaining a commitment to Torah is unprecedented. The whole edifice of traditional Judaism in this country today rests upon this dual educational foundation. It is of interest to observe, therefore, that by and large we may be guilty of a cultural schizophrenia in our attitude to secular and religious



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studies, equivalent to what, in *Shnei Luchot ha-Berit*, is regarded as the theological schizophrenia in the non-Jewish understanding of the two categories themselves. Whether we relegate the sacred studies to an hour on a Sunday morning as Reform does, or strive for the minimum secular studying required by state law as the Hassidic schools do, or somehow try to accommodate both on an approximately equal schedule as modern *yeshivot* do, the common denominator of all three in practice is that the two courses of study are departmentalized, unrelated, and merely coexist in splendid isolation from each other within the individual student. The differences between the above systems thus seem to lie in the quantitative distribution of the time allotted for each discipline. Yet this is decidedly not in keeping with the thesis we have been developing. As long as this unrelatedness continues, we are guilty of wasting the resources of the sacred for the profane. State law or economic necessity or social needs are not an answer sufficient to define a consistent philosophic position. The real answer — and this is the real meaning of the “synthesis” of which Yeshiva University speaks and for which it stands — is the qualitative accommodation of both studies. The secular studies are not inherently and eternally unholy. And the sacred studies are sterile unless they have something other than the sacred to act upon. There is no blurring of the distinctions between sacred and secular. But there is an appreciation of the function of the sacred in relation to the secular. The secular studies are important not *despite* the fact that they are not holy, but *because* this is the way in which all life, all knowledge, all existence is ultimately integrated in the great *yichud* of the Holy One and His Shekhinah. Eventually all that is profane (not-yet-holy) is to be found in and sanctified through the Torah, for which reason — according to Rav Kook — it is called *de’kullah bah* (“containing everything”) and is regarded as the fulfillment of God’s blessing of Abraham *ba-kol* (“with everything” — Genesis 24:1).

### CONCLUSION

We have seen how the theme of the oneness of God, fundamental to every expression of Judaism, is expanded by the Kab-



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balah — especially in its treatment of the Sabbath and beautifully expressed in the *Lekhhah Dodi* — to an overwhelming, burning passion for the unification of all life and existence, in all its multifarious aspects, in the unity of God. Where the earlier kabbalists, as in the Zohar, were satisfied in articulating this theme in purely mystical terms, as the union of the Holy One and the Shekhinah, its later exponents, and especially Rav Kook, increasingly applied this thesis to the current, real world, the World of Disunity. Man, as an active participant in the *yichud*, must exert himself mightily in order to overcome the disintegrating tendencies of life and society. We have seen how the modern manifestations of the striving for unity, the transcending of petty dualisms and fragmentizations, are gradually making themselves felt. Philosophically, psychologically, theologically, we must begin to move from an atomistic to a holistic position.

What of the future? We must again return to Rav Kook in whose life and works are so magnificently combined substance and charm, power and elegance, the sudden insight of the kabbalist and the responsible thinking of the intellectual — the personification of the *yichud* which he preached and for which he yearned. *Bo yavo*, Rav Kook proclaims. It shall come. It must come. For the Jew — who cannot by his nature bear disunity in his soul — it will appear in his people's redemption. The Diaspora, the national realization of fragmentation and disunity, is only ephemeral and basically unreal; sooner or later, Israel shall become "one nation upon earth." And *yichud* will come for all mankind. The future unification of all knowledge, all peoples, all existence is inevitable. Redemption for Israel and peace for all men will mark the World of Unity which is surely coming, and which can be brought on even faster by our own efforts.

"And the Lord will be King over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be One and His Name will be One."

### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

1. KABBALAH. Reference was made to many passages in the Zohar, particularly on the appropriate verses in the portions of *Be'shalach*, *Yitro*, and *Va-Yakhel*.



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Readers who wish to pursue the topic further may refer to Gershom G. Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946), especially pp. 225-235, and in Hebrew to P. Lachover and Yeshayahu Tishbi, *Mishnat ha-Zohar* (Jerusalem, Hashiloah Press, 1949), pp. 219-263.

### 2. LEKHAH DODI.

*Chemdat Yamim* (Leghorn: 1763) I, 41.

A. Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and its Development* (New York: Henry Holt & Co.).

*Otzar ha-Teffilot, Anaf Yosef.*

3. RAV KOOK. As mentioned in the body of this essay, most of the references to Kook are from his *Orot ha-Kodesh* (Jerusalem: 1938), I. The theme is also alluded to by Rav Kook in his letters and his *Olat Rayah* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1939), his commentary on the prayerbook. Jacob B. Agus, in his *Banner of Jerusalem* (New York: Bloch Publishing, 1946), discusses Kook's mystical monism in general without going into detail.

4. HALAKHAH. The place of Halakhah in the monistic scheme is quite complex. We have mentioned that Halakhah must presume a pluralistic universe, yet accept an ultimate monism. For a fuller development of this most significant theme, see Part III of the *Nefesh ha-Chayyim* of Rabbi Chayyim of Volozin.

5. GENERAL. Much of the material used is excellently summarized in Helen Merrell Lynd's *On Shame and the Search for Identity* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1958). See also the Everyman edition of David Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature* vol. I, pp. 238-40. A theme similar to ours, but in a non-Jewish and non-theistic form, has been pressed in recent years by a number of Western Orientalists, notably Aldous Huxley.



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