

## The Four Adams

THE FOUR ADAMS FOLLOW THE same plan of development as the four ‘ōlāmīm: each becomes both prototype or pattern for the succeeding Adam, and reflection or image of the preceding Adam; the highest being prototype alone, while the lowest serves solely as reflection or image of the higher Adams.

The lower world is made after the pattern of the upper world; every thing which exists in the upper world is to be found as it were in a copy upon earth; still the whole is one.

— *Zohar* 2:20a, Ginsburg, p. 104

This statement coincides with the axiom given in the Smaragdine Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus: “That which is below is like that which is above, and that which is above is like that which is below, for the performance of the miracles of the one substance” (Mathers, p. 155n).

While it is true that the highest Adam acts as the divine-spiritual prototype for the subsequent Adams of the lower ‘ōlāmīm, this first Adam (ʿĀdām Qadmōn) is the image or reflection (*tselem*) of “previous worlds” or humanities which had been conceived and destroyed until the world or Adam of Balance (*mathqēlāʿ*) was formed. Similarly, the lowest

or fourth Adam is not solely the reflection of the preceding Adams, but itself acts as prototype for worlds or humanities below it in the realms of *Shē'ōl*, the Underworld.

The first Adam, called *'Ādām Qadmōn* (Eastern or Ancient Adam) or *'Ādām 'Illā'āh* (Highest or Supreme Adam), is likewise termed the 'Atstsīlōthic 'Ādām as it corresponds to and informs the highest world, 'ōlām hā-'atstsīlōth. It is the prototype (*tsūrāh*) of the second and succeeding Adams, the model on which the three lower Adams are built. It corresponds to *nēshāmāh* in the human being.

The second Adam, called the protoplastic androgyne,\* is termed the Bērī'ātic 'Ādām as it corresponds to and informs 'ōlām hab-bērī'āh. The reflection of the *tsūrāh* of 'Ādām Qadmōn, it becomes in turn the prototype of inferior degree to the succeeding Adam. It corresponds to *rūaḥ* in the human constitution.

The third Adam, called the pre-terrestrial or “innocent” Adam, is referred to as the Yětsīrātic 'Ādām, as it corresponds to and informs 'ōlām hay-yětsīrāh. It is the reflection of the *tsūrāh* of the Bērī'ātic 'Ādām, and in turn becomes the prototype of the fourth or lowest Adam of our earth, ordinary humanity. It corresponds to *nefesh* in the human constitution.

The fourth Adam, the terrestrial Adam of *Genesis*, corresponds to and informs our earth, the lowest of the 'ōlāmīm. This Adam is the reflection of the third Adam, and hence is the feeble reflection, three times removed, of the divine-spiritual *tsūrāh* of the primeval Adam resident on 'ōlām

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\*See Myer, 418-19.

hā-’atstsīlōth. In other words, the luminosity of ’Ādām Qadmōn is progressively dulled one-quarter as its reflection passes through each succeeding Adam, until our fourth humanity perceives but one quarter of truth and in its folly believes it sees reality in full. As far as the earth chain is concerned, these four Adams correspond to globes A, B, C, and D.

Note the identity of conception between the Qabbalistic four Adams and four ‘ōlāmīm with the four yugas or “ages.” According to the latter, the spirit of truth and light as it manifests in time and space is likened to a bull. In the highest or satya-yuga (truth age), which corresponds to ‘ōlām hā-’atstsīlōth and ’Ādām Qadmōn, the bull of dharma stands firm on four legs. In the second or tretā-yuga (three-fold age), corresponding to ‘ōlām hab-bērī’āh and the Bērī’ātic ’Ādām, truth loses one-fourth of its brilliance, so the bull stands on only three legs. In the third or dvāpara-yuga (twofold age), corresponding to ‘ōlām hay-yētsīrāh and the third Adam, two parts of truth retire, leaving the bull of truth with but two legs. In the fourth or kali-yuga, corresponding to ‘ōlām hā-’āsiyyāh and the terrestrial Adam, three quarters of truth have departed, leaving the bull with but a single leg to stand on: one quarter of wisdom, one quarter of light.

Obviously the bull of dharma does not lose its legs one by one, nor does truth depart in the ratio of 4, 3, 2, 1; rather, human perception of primeval truth becomes veiled in proportion as we descend through the spheres and clothe ourselves with the “coat of blindness” of each succeeding ‘ōlām. Truth is one and the same throughout time: crystal-clear

and whole to the Adam of the highest ‘ōlām; proportionally indistinct and fractional to each Adam on its descent to the lowest ‘ōlām.

This concept is also reminiscent of the series of ages taught by the Greeks, Hesiod in his *Theogony* among them, as descending in spiritual brilliance from the highest or Golden Age, through the second, Silver Age, the third, Bronze Age, until the lowest or fourth age is reached, called the Iron Age, for so blinded and heavy has the humanity of this last age become.

In discussing the ‘ōlāmīm, we reckoned that the original Qabbālāh envisioned the existence of three higher “concealed” ‘ōlāmīm corresponding to the highest three sēfirōth. It follows that, if for each of the four manifest ‘ōlāmīm there is a corresponding Adam, there must be concealed or higher Adams corresponding to the higher and concealed ‘ōlāmīm. Consider again our diagram of the sub-‘ōlāmīm on page 60, where we expanded one ‘ōlām to contain a complete sēfirōthal tree unfurled on the three unmanifest or concealed ‘ōlāmīm and the four manifest or lower ‘ōlāmīm. Substituting the Adams for the ‘ōlāmīm in this diagram, illustrates the above.\*

Further, if what applies to the ‘ōlāmīm likewise pertains to the several Adams, then just as each ‘ōlām has its sub-‘ōlāmīc powers, so each of the Adams itself contains in degree the potencies of the other three Adams. For example, in the highest Adam, ’Ādām Qadmōn is the dominant energy, with the other three sub-Adamic powers recessive and but

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\*See *SD* 2:46 reference to “seven primordial Adams.”

partially expressed. In the second Adam, 'Ādām Qadmōn remains in fullness, but emanates the second or Bērī'ātic 'Ādām, which then becomes dominant — like Krishna, who “establishes this universe with a portion [of himself], and yet remains separate.” Similarly with the third and fourth Adams.

In correlating the four Adams with the four root-races as outlined in theosophical writings, we must not consider only the physical standpoint. In fact, the major significance lies in the *spiritual* transformation from 'Ādām Qadmōn, through the descending spheres, to the Adam and Eve of present humanity. The *physiological* conversion from the homogeneous Adam of the first 'ōlām, through the proto-plastic androgynous state of the second Adam, to the sexed humanity of today is of secondary importance, being not the cause but a by-product of fundamental evolutionary courses. According to HPB:

The original Kabala was entirely metaphysical, and had no concern with animal, or terrestrial sexes; the later Kabala has suffocated the divine ideal under the heavy phallic element.  
— SD 2:457

She reminds us further that

Esotericism ignores both sexes. Its highest Deity is sexless as it is formless, neither Father nor Mother; and its first manifested beings, celestial and terrestrial alike, become only gradually androgynous and finally separate into distinct sexes.  
— SD 1:136n

'Ādām Qadmōn, therefore, as the chief or hierarch of the first manifested beings, celestial and terrestrial alike,

is not just the first Adam of the first world, but imbodyes within its cycle all that goes with the beginning of a new appearance or manifestation of worlds and humanities out of the ages-long past. Thus, 'Ādām Qadmōn is the archetype of succeeding forms. The "World of Perfect Ideas," as Qabbālāh phrases it, is equivalent to the third or manifested Logos in theosophy through which, as a focus or laya-center,\* flow all the seeds of the lives to come. These seeds of future worlds and humanities are contained within 'Ādām Qadmōn not as *physical* elements, but as spiritual energies "in their true form," the *diyyūqnā'* or "spiritual counterpart." As the *Zohar* has it:

when this last work was nigh completion, all the things of this world, all the creatures of the universe, in whatever age they were to exist, before ever they entered into this world, were present before God in their true form.

— 3:61b, Ginsburg, p. 104; cf. also Myer, p. 388

In short, the archetypal form was impressed on the plastic substance of the divine seeds, which later expressed themselves in manifestation on earth.

In the process of emanation from the Boundless, the *Zohar* refers to several unsuccessful attempts to form a universe. Before the ten sēfirōth were emanated in their present form, several elementary worlds suffered birth and death, until at length the sēfirōth of perfect balance came forth successfully from the womb of space and time:

There were old worlds which perished as soon as they came

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\*Dissolution point between two planes of consciousness or matter.

into existence: were formless, and they were called sparks. . . . These sparks are the primordial worlds, which could not continue, because the Sacred Aged had not as yet assumed his form (of opposite sexes — the King and Queen), and the master was not yet at his work.

— *’Idrā’ Zuṭā’, Zohar 3:292b, Ginsburg, p. 103*

Finally the “Aged of the Aged” assumed a form in which it could manifest its full capacities and powers. The four Adams and four ‘ōlāmīm, therefore, were not the first worlds to take shape, but the offspring or fruit of a series of evolutionary efforts:

Before the Aged of the Aged, the Concealed of the Concealed, expanded into the form of King, the Crown of Crowns (*i.e.* the first *Sephira*), there was neither beginning nor end. He hewed and incised forms and figures into it in the following manner: — He spread before him a cover, and carved therein kings (*i.e.*, worlds), and marked out their limits and forms, but they could not preserve themselves. . . . All these were imperfect: he therefore removed them and let them vanish, till he finally descended himself to this cover and assumed a form.

— *’Idrā Rabbā’, Zohar 3:148a, Ginsburg, p. 103*

The *Zohar* frequently refers to these “previous worlds” as the Kings of Edom who “reigned before the monarchs” and who were then destroyed “since they had not as yet the perfect form of which they were capable” (3:135b, Ginsburg, pp. 102, 104). It may be significant that the word Edom (*’edom*) has the same consonants in Hebrew as the word Adam (*’Ādām*): ’Ālef, א, dāleth, ד, and final mēm, מ. These worlds or kings may also refer to periodical obscurations, as

well as to “the several continents which have disappeared, as also their decline and geographical change of place” (*SD* 2:705), likewise to the destruction of early races, until fit vehicles were produced to retain the sacred form, the kingly or mānasaputric energy from the sun.

In answer to the question: “Why were these primordial worlds destroyed?” the *Zohar* states:

Because the Man, represented by the ten *Sephiroth*, was not as yet. The human form contains every thing, and as it did not as yet exist, the worlds were destroyed. . . . Still when it is said that they perished, it is only meant thereby that they lacked the true form, till the human form came into being, in which all things are comprised, and which also contains all those forms. — 3:135b, Ginsburg, p. 104

HPB comments:

Worlds and men were in turn formed and destroyed, *under the law of evolution and from pre-existing material*, until both the planets and their men, in our case our Earth and its animal and human races, became what they are now in the present cycle: opposite polar forces, an equilibrated compound of Spirit and Matter, of the positive and the negative, of the male and the female. Before man could become male and female *physically*, his prototype, the creating Elohim, had to arrange his Form on this sexual plane *astrally*. That is to say, the atoms and the organic forces, descending into the plane of the given differentiation, had to be marshalled in the order intended by Nature, so as to be ever carrying out, in an immaculate way, that law which the Kabala calls the *Balance*, through which everything that exists does so as male and female in its final perfection, in this present stage

of materiality. . . . Therefore the First Root-race of men, sexless and mindless, had to be overthrown and “hidden until after a time”; *i.e.*, the first race, instead of dying, disappeared *in the second race*, as certain lower lives and plants do in their progeny. It was a wholesale transformation. The First became the Second Root-race, without either begetting it, procreating it, or dying. “*They passed by together*,” as it is written: “And he died and another reigned in his stead.” (*Genesis xxvi, 31 et seq. Zohar iii., 292.a*) Why? Because “the *Holy City* had not been prepared.” — *SD 2:84*

Hence ’Ādām Qadmōn, as the receptacle of the seeds of future lives, is not only the prototype (*tsūrāh*) of the lower manifestations, but de facto the radiant “image” (*tselem*), the consummation, of “previous worlds.” Here the *tselem* corresponds to the Sanskrit word *chāyā* as used by HPB in *The Secret Doctrine*: in the *tselem* of the ’elohīm was ’Ādām made (*Zohar 3:76*, Cremona ed.), in the image of the ancestors or pitris mankind was fashioned (cf. *Genesis 1:27*). Not only “in the image,” however, but also of the substance of this *tselem* was humanity formed; in other words, the human ancestors projected their astral forms which became the lower principles of the individual members of the human race.

Further, ’Ādām Qadmōn could in no sense be “the creative origin of all things, which is composed of the Host of Cosmic Powers — the Creative Dhyān-Chohans” (*SD 1:443*), unless previous karmic ties enabled it to gather from the spaces of ’ēin sōf those “seeds of beings” which belong to it by right of attraction, impelled thence by links of spiritual, intellectual, psychomagnetic, and physical destiny.

’Ādām Qadmōn is therefore the tsūrāh of the lower worlds, not as their *originator* but as *transmitter* of ancient yet ever evolving powers-to-be. HPB describes this specific function of ’Ādām Qadmōn:

the celestial Logos, the “Heavenly Man” [’Ādām Qadmōn or ’Ādām ‘Illā’āh], which evolves as a Compound Unit of Logoi, out of whom after their pralayaic sleep — a sleep that gathers the ciphers scattered on the Mayavic plane into One, as the separate globules of quicksilver on a plate blend into one mass — the Logoi appear in their totality as the first “male and female” or Adam Kadmon [in his manifest aspect], the “Fiat Lux” of the Bible, . . . But this transformation did not take place on our Earth, nor on any material plane, but in the Spacial Depths of the first differentiation of the eternal Root-matter. — SD I:246

’Ādām Qadmōn is often called simply by the name of its genius or rector, the presiding influence of that world, termed *diyyūqnā*, “spiritual form or counterpart”: the world of “perfect form or will” (Myer, p. 332).

The second Adam, which corresponds to the second root-race, is called the protoplasmic androgyne because the spiritual and material poles of evolution (i.e., the *noumena* of masculine and feminine potencies, not their *physical* manifestations) have begun to individualize while still remaining unified in one field of activity. This Bērī’atic ’Ādām is likewise referred to by its “presiding influence” or rector, called *kūrsejā*, the “throne” occupied by Mēṭaṭrōn, the “great teacher” or angel of this second world, the “abode of pure spirits.”

Metatron governs the visible world, preserves the unity, harmony and revolutions of the spheres, planets and all the heavenly bodies; and is the Commander, under the Will of the Deity, of all the myriads of the angelic hosts, of the next or Ye'tzeer-atic World. — Myer, p. 328

In the *Zohar* the “presiding influence” or genius of the third Adam is called *mal'ākhayyā'*, the “angels” or “messengers,” called the “abode of the Angels, the Intelligences of the Celestial planets and stars” (ibid.). The same world is sometimes termed the “Living Ones” (*Ḥayyōth*). The pre-terrestrial or “innocent” Adam corresponds to that period of our racial history where spirit and matter, masculine and feminine, active and passive, become distinctly specialized, but where egoic self-consciousness of the opposing energies is still unawakened. When the children of this third Adam “eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,” the work of the 'elohīm or mānasaputras, the sons of intelligence, is accomplished, and the third Adam or third humanity envelops the “cloak of the higher light” ('ōr) of previous Adams with the “coat of skin” (ōr), the coat of flesh and blindness.\*

As the *Zohar* says:

He gave supernal wisdom to Adam, but Adam utilised the wisdom disclosed to him to familiarise himself with the lower grades also, until in the end he attached himself to the *yetzer-hara* (evil tempter), and the fountains of wisdom were

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\*Note the difference in 'ōr, ר'א, meaning light and 'ōr, ר'ע, meaning skin, also by extension, blindness, matter. The numerical value of א (ʾālef) is One, of ע ('ayin) is seventy.

closed to him. After he repented before his Master, parts of that wisdom were again revealed to him, in that same book, but through that same knowledge people came later on to provoke God. — *Zohar* 1:75b, 76a, Sperling 1:257

The feminine potency having now become too strong to be contained within the sphere of the masculine, in other words the differentiation or specialization of the two poles having matured, Eve is drawn out of the side or rib (*tsēlā'*) of Adam, and the third Adam, now become Adam and Eve, step(s) out of the Garden of Eden (*Gan-Ēden*) into the valleys of matter, the home of the fourth or terrestrial Adam of *Genesis*. One could, of course, just as well say that man was separated from woman, or made from a rib or side of woman, since Adam signifies not one individual male person, but the whole of androgynous humanity.

This last Adam corresponds to the fourth or most material root-race, and is clothed not only with a “coat of skin” or blindness, but hides within, deep enough to be hid from human knowledge, the “cloaks of the higher light” of the upper ethereal Adams:

God clothed Adam and Eve in garments soothing to the skin, as it is written, HE MADE THEM COATS OF SKIN (*'or*). At first they had had coats of light (*'or*), which procured them the service of the highest of the high, for the celestial angels used to come to enjoy that light; so it is written, “For thou hast made him but little lower than the angels, and crownest him with glory and honour” (Ps. VIII, 6). Now after their sins they had only coats of skin (*'or*), good for the body but not for the soul. — *Zohar* 1:36b, Sperling 1:136

The “presiding influence” of this fourth Adam is *Sammā’ēl*, who rules over the *’ōfannīm* (the “wheels” of birth and death) and the *galgillīm* or *gilgūlīm* (the “revolutions” of the planetary spheres). Called the Angel of Death and Prince of Darkness or of Poison, *Sammā’ēl* rules the seven habitations called *shēba’ hēikhālōth*, which are the seven infernal or material zones of our globe, the lower seven of the ten degrees which make the dwelling places of beings inhabiting the lowest ‘ōlām. This fourth world is divided into ten degrees, as reflections of the *sēfirōthal* tree, and these are divided into three higher or relatively immaterial spheres and seven material or infernal regions. HPB correlated *Sammā’ēl* with desire, *kāma*, emphasizing his duality as both the evil knowledge of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and pure spirit divorced from form. The Talmud states that “the evil Spirit, Satan, and *Sammā’ēl* the Angel of Death, are the same”; and *Sammā’ēl*’s role is made equivalent to that of the serpent in the *Genesis* account of Eve tasting of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. He is also termed the chief of the Dragons of Evil, and in conjunction with Lilith is represented as the Evil Beast (*hiwyāi’ bīshā’*).

’Ādām Qadmōn, then, as the “chariot” (*merkābāh*) or carrier of all the seeds of previous worlds gathered from ’ēin sōf, manifests as four individualized entities, each entity or root-race finding appropriate expression in the *sēfirōthal* tree on its respective ‘ōlām. Two lines of evolution thus proceed simultaneously: (a) the retirement of spiritual capacity, the “cloaks of the higher light,” in the intensification of material pursuit of the descending Adams; and (b) the expan-

sion or evolution of a physical vehicle or “coat of skin” for the spiritual powers to manifest through. From the union of these two, energized by the sons of intelligence or ’elohīm, self-conscious thinking humanity is born. As HPB describes it:

The Occult Doctrine teaches that while the monad is cycling on downward into matter, these very Elohim — or Pitris, the lower Dhyan-Chohans — are evolving *pari passu* with it on a higher and more spiritual plane, descending also relatively into matter on their own plane of consciousness, when, after having reached a certain point, they will meet the incarnating senseless monad, encased in the lowest matter, and blending the two potencies, Spirit and Matter, the union will produce that terrestrial symbol of the “Heavenly Man” in space — PERFECT MAN. — *SD* I:247

The sons of the fourth Adam, ourselves, must *self*-consciously become that “Heavenly Man.” We must choose between the “cloaks of the higher light” which call us upwards, and the “coats of blindness” which drag us continuously down to material things. The former influences us for good, the latter for evil. This interplay of forces affects the destiny of every one of us, as individual and racial units, and on this theme the *Zohar* has much to say:

When our forefather Adam inhabited the Garden of Eden, he was clothed, as all are in heaven, with a cloak of the higher light. When he was driven from the Garden of Eden and was compelled to submit to the needs of this world, what happened then? God, the Scriptures tell us, made for Adam and his wife coats of skin and clothed them; for before this they had coats of light, of that higher light used in Eden.

. . . The good actions accomplished by man on earth draw upon him a part of that higher light which shines in heaven. It is this light which serves him as garment when he is to enter into another world and appear before the Holy One, Whose name be praised. Thanks to this garment he is able to taste the bliss of the elect, and to look into the luminous mirror. That it may be perfect in all respects, the soul has a different garment for each of the two worlds it is to inhabit, one for the earthly world, and one for the higher world.

— 2:229b, Franck, p. 208

