

Symbolism of 'Arīkh 'Anpīn and Zē'ēir 'Anpīn

KETHER, THE FIRST SĔFĪRĀH, called the open eye in contrast to 'ēin sōf, the closed eye, is the Ancient of Days ('*at-tīq yōmīn*), the Old Man of the *Zohar* who produces from the cranium of his White Head the three sĕfirōthal triads which manifest through Malkhūth, the tenth sĕfirāh. In three books of the *Zohar* — *Sifrā' di-Tsēnī 'ūthā'* (Book of Concealment), *Hā-'Idrā' Rabbā' Qaddīshā'* (The Great Holy Assembly), and *Hā-'Idrā' Zūṭā' Qaddīshā'* (The Small Holy Assembly) — an intricate mystical symbolism is worked out whereby the cranium, hair, eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, and beard, as well as the other components of the Ancient of Days, are used to illustrate the coming forth into manifestation of the tenfold powers of a sĕfirōthal tree from the infinitude of 'ēin sōf.

One of the fundamental tenets of the archaic wisdom-religion is that the universe is a living sentient being, and that all within the universe is likewise living and evolving. So profoundly were the Qabbalists imbued with this fact of nature, that they portrayed the universe as a Heavenly Man, 'Ādām Qadmōn, whose head reaches to heaven, and whose feet rest upon the earth.

In all the illustrations or symbols of 'Ādām Qadmōn

— synthesis of the tenfold sefirōthal tree — one feature predominates: the gradation of power from the spiritual to the material. This division into upper and lower, superior and inferior, great and small, is depicted in the *Zohar* as two faces: the Great Face (*'Arīkh 'Anpīn*) and the Small Face (*Zē'ēir 'Anpīn*), often referred to by their Graeco-Latin equivalents of Macroprosopus and Microprosopus respectively. As *Hā-Idrā' Rabbā' Qaddīshā' ('Idrā' Rabbā')* puts it:

And He Himself, the Most Ancient of the Most Ancient Ones, is called ARIK DANPIN [*'Arīkh 'Anpīn*], the Vast Countenance, or Macroprosopus; and He Who is more external is called ZOIR ANPIN [*Zē'ēir 'Anpīn*], or Him Who hath the Lesser Countenance (*Microprosopus*), in opposition to the Ancient Eternal Holy One, the Holy of the Holy Ones.

— 5:54, Mathers, pp. 117-18

Sometimes *'Arīkh 'Anpīn* is described as *Kether 'elyōn*, the “highest crown,” from which the remaining nine smaller crowns derive, these nine inferior sefirōth collectively forming *Zē'ēir 'Anpīn*. More generally, however, *'Arīkh 'Anpīn* represents the unity of the three highest sefirōth: *Kether*, the crown of the head; *Ḥokhmāh*, the wisdom of the concealed brain; and *Bīnāh*, the understanding that issues from the heart — a three-in-one.

When *'Arīkh 'Anpīn* stands for *Kether* alone, *Zē'ēir 'Anpīn* is considered to comprise the nine lower sefirōth. When *'Arīkh 'Anpīn* represents the superior triad as one energy, *Zē'ēir 'Anpīn* embraces the two remaining triads, the six sefirōth presided over by *Tif'ereth*, the Sacred King, while *Malkhūth*, the tenth and lowest of the sefirōth, stands

as the receiver of all the superior powers, and hence is called the Queen, the Bride of Zē'ēir 'Anpīn.

Whether divided as one and nine, or three and six (or seven), the same relationship exists: 'Arīkh 'Anpīn is the prototype, Zē'ēir 'Anpīn the reflection; phrased otherwise, 'Arīkh 'Anpīn is the originator and spiritual progenitor of Zē'ēir 'Anpīn, which latter could not exist except as the prolongation and expansion in manifestation of its supernal parent. In the words of 'Idrā' Rabbā':

Now take ye your places, and apply the science (*the Qabalah*) to describe how the parts of Microprosopus are conformed, and how He is clothed with His conformations, from the forms of the Ancient of Days ['Arīkh 'Anpīn], the Holy of the Holy Ones, the Withdrawn of the Withdrawn ones, the Concealed one of All (25:508).

But the conformations of Microprosopus are disposed from the forms of Macroprosopus; and His constituent parts are expanded on this side and on that under a human form, so that there may be manifest in Him the Spirit of the Concealed One in every part (25:510).

The ordering of all things is from the Ancient of Days. For before that He was disposed in His conformation, nothing could be ordained, because as yet it was first necessary that Himself should be ordained; and all the worlds were desolate (26:518). — Mathers, pp. 173, 175

Note that the terms previously given for Kether are used interchangeably to denote 'Arīkh 'Anpīn; therefore Ancient of Days ('attīq yōmīn) and Holy of the Holy Ones all refer to Macroprosopus. *Hā-'Idrā' Zūṭā' Qaddīshā'* ('Idrā' Zūṭā') echoes the teaching:

He the Eternal Ancient of the Ancient Ones is the highest Crown among the Supernals, wherewith all Diadems and Crowns are crowned.

And from Him are all the Lights illuminated, and they flash forth flames, and shine.

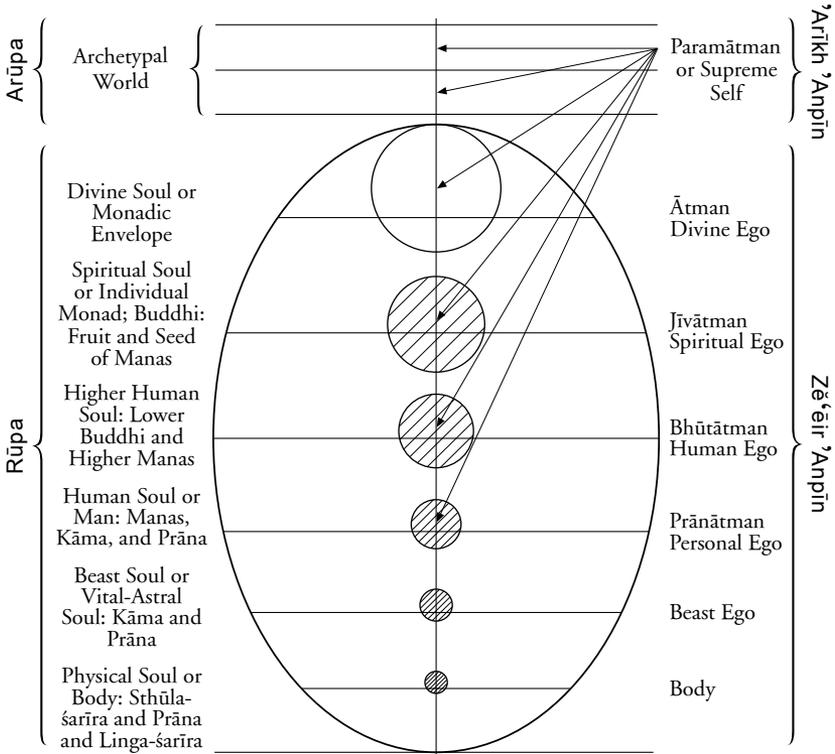
But He verily is the Supreme Light, which is hidden, which is not known.

And all the other Lights are kindled by Him, and derive (*their*) splendour (*from him*). — 2:74-7, Mathers, p. 267

In *Sifrā' di-Tsēnī'ūthā'* (Book of Concealment) an intriguing verse occurs: “The Ancient One [ʿArīkh ʿAnpīn] is hidden and concealed; the Microprosopus [Zēʿir ʿAnpīn] is manifested, and is not manifested” (4:1, Mathers, p. 91). In these few words is the symbolism of the doctrine of *arūpa* and *rūpa** worlds or spheres of consciousness. ʿArīkh ʿAnpīn, the synthesis of the three higher planes or *sēfirōth*, is “without form” when viewed from below, that is, from the standpoint of the remaining *sēfirōth*; hence it is “hidden and concealed” to the consciousness of the lower *sēfirōth*. Zēʿir ʿAnpīn, described above as “manifested” and yet “not manifested,” being the totality of the six (or seven) inferior *sēfirōth*, is “with form” (*rūpa*), that is manifest and revealed as compared with ʿArīkh ʿAnpīn, the unmanifest or *arūpa*. Within its own range of consciousness, however, Zēʿir ʿAnpīn partakes of both manifest and unmanifest qualities: from the viewpoint of Malkhūth, the lowest of the *sēfirōth*, the two triads immediately preceding and superior to it in quality are “not manifest” but “hidden,” because invisible,

*Sanskrit *arūpa*, “without body”; *rūpa*, “with body.”

not apparent *to it*; yet considered from the angle of 'Ariḥ 'Anpīn, the whole of Zē'ēir 'Anpīn is apparent, manifested, and clothed in vehicles of matter of varying gradation.



Adapted from *Fundamentals*, p. 240

A diagram in *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy* illustrates the theme of arūpa and rūpa worlds. As G. de Purucker explains:

Let the three parallel lines drawn above the egg represent, if you will, the arūpa world, the formless world; and

the seven planes comprised within the egg, the rūpa world, seven being the number of the principles always in manifestation, held in union as an individual by the higher triad, the arūpa triad, its root above.

The three higher of the seven within the egg are also called arūpa, formless, but only relatively so. . . .

. . . through this egg-shaped paradigm falls the ray from the arūpa world, represented by the vertical line signifying the self universally manifesting in every atom it touches in this kosmos — and it permeates them all — as the self individual, the self egoic, the human self, the astral self, etc. These three highest divisions, the arūpa triad, collectively are likewise called the Paramātman, the supreme self, the summit or flower of the hierarchy, the root-base or source of that self.

— pp. 240-41

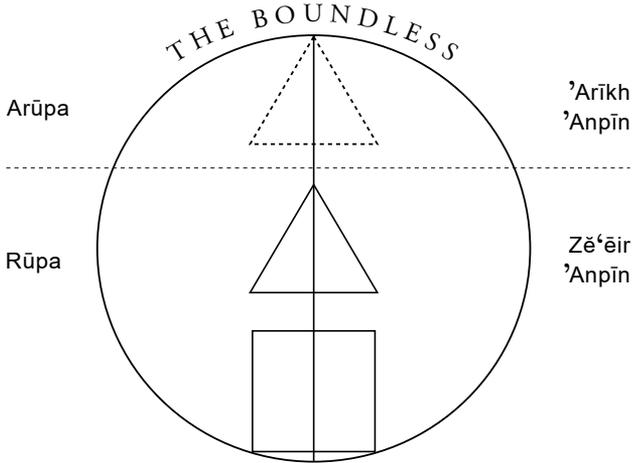
In Qabbalistic terms, the three parallel lines stand for the three formless sefirōth (relatively speaking, of course) — Kether, Ḥokhmāh, and Bīnāh — synthesized as 'Arīkh 'Anpīn, the Great Face, the supreme self, equivalent to the Sanskrit paramātman. The six circles within the egg are the six inferior sefirōth of Zē'ēir 'Anpīn, while the egg itself is the *Shēkhīnāh*, the “dwelling place” or “vehicle” in and through which all the energies from 'Arīkh 'Anpīn and Zē'ēir 'Anpīn find expression.

Shēkhīnāh is an important concept in Jewish mystical thought, being the cloud of glory surrounding a spiritual manifestation. When used in a cosmic sense it is termed the superior Shēkhīnāh. It then stands for the first divine substance which emanates from 'ēin sōf and envelops it as a veil, from which proceeds the hierarchy of the sefirōth. This

corresponds to the Sanskrit parabrahman and mūlaprakṛiti, from which proceed the hierarchies of the manifested universe. In this context the superior Shēkhīnāh is equivalent to Aditi or Devamātrī, mother of the gods, and to Vāch, the Voice or Verbum; also to the Pythagorean music of the spheres and the Holy Ghost in the Christian Trinity. The inferior Shēkhīnāh is associated with the tenth sēfirāh — Malkhūth, the material or physical universe. But whatever the stage of manifestation, there is always a radiance enveloping it. We may speak of a Shēkhīnāh enveloping the human being: our vital aura, the carrier of our higher principles. Qabbālāh regards Shēkhīnāh as feminine. HPB remarks:

so it is considered in the *exoteric* Purānas, for Shekinah is no more than *Śakti* — the female double or lining of any god, in such case. And so it was with the early Christians whose Holy Spirit was feminine, as Sophia was with the Gnostics. But in the transcendental Chaldean Kabala or “Book of Numbers,” “Shekinah” is sexless, and the purest abstraction, a State, like Nirvana, not subject or object or anything except an absolute PRESENCE.

Thus it is only in the anthropomorphised systems (such as the Kabala has now greatly become) that Shekinah-Sakti is feminine. As such she becomes the *Duad* of Pythagoras, the two straight lines of the symbol that can never meet, which therefore form no geometrical figure and are the symbol of matter. Out of this Duad, when united in one basic line of the triangle on the lower plane (the upper Triangle of the Sephirothal Tree), emerge the Elohim, or Deity in *Cosmic* Nature, with the true Kabalists the *lowest* designation, translated in the Bible “God.” — SD 1:618-9



Adapted from *Fundamentals*, p. 125

In a similar diagram from *Fundamentals*, the conception is almost identic, and Purucker's remarks are equally applicable to both diagrams:

Surrounding this immense spiritual aggregate, we are taught to conceive an aura, as it were, taking the shape of an egg, which we can call, following the example of the Qabbalists, the *Shechīnāh*, a Hebrew word meaning "dwelling" or "vehicle" or what the esoteric philosophy calls the auric egg in the case of man, and representing in this paradigmatic scheme the universe which we see around us in its highest aspects, for this aura is the very outgrowth of Mūlaprakriti [primordial homogeneous substance]; while this mystical line which we draw in the figure as running down through all the various grades of the hierarchy is the stream of the self, the Unconditioned Consciousness, welling up in the inmost of everything.

— p. 126

This “stream of the self . . . welling up in the inmost of everything” is 'Arīkh 'Anpīn or Kether, the source of all manifestations. Without the supernal crown, no smaller crowns could derive their splendor, as Qabbālāh phrases it, as all things, whether worlds, humans, or atoms, exist only because they are rays of and from Kether, the divine source, the link with 'ēin sōf. As *'Idrā' Rabba'* has it: “manifest in Him [is] the Spirit of the Concealed One in every part” (25:510, Mathers, p. 173).

In its manifested aspect, Shēkhīnāh refers to the tenth sēfirāh, Malkhūth, called the Queen or the Mother (Maṭrōnīthā'), the Bride of Zē'ēir 'Anpīn, so named because it is

an egg-shaped container or “carrier” or vehicle, an auric egg; and this auric egg, as the tenth, is called Kingdom, or sometimes Dwelling Place, because it is the fruit or result or emanation or field of action of all the others, manifesting through these different planes of being.

— *Fundamentals*, p. 88

To illustrate more graphically the “formless” nature of 'Arīkh 'Anpīn in contrast with the body-character of Zē'ēir 'Anpīn, the *Zohar* represents the former as a head alone, while the latter is conceived of as a full-membered being. Hence 'Arīkh 'Anpīn was called White Head (*Rēishā' Hiw-wārā'*), from whose shining cranium, concealed brain, open eye, nostrils, mouth, and beard, a stream of spiritual force flowed down into Microprosopus, Zē'ēir 'Anpīn, who was portrayed as having all the features of 'Arīkh 'Anpīn in inferior proportion, with the remaining members added:

Of this Most Holy Ancient One, Concealed with all Concealments, there is no mention made, neither is He found.

For since this Head is the supreme of all the supernals, hence He is only symbolized as a head alone without body, for the purpose of establishing all things.

— 'Idrā' Zūṭā' 7:168-9, Mathers, p. 276

The structure and conformations (*tiqqūnīm*) of the Great and Small Faces are fascinatingly described in three books of the *Zohar*. In *Sifrā' di-Tsēnī'ūthā'* the theme is greatly condensed, making it a more esoteric presentation than that given in 'Idrā' Rabbā' or 'Idrā' Zūṭā', in which Rabbi Shim'ōn, called by his pupils the Lightbearer, illumines the bare outline of the teaching with descriptive illustration. He admonishes his pupils to study well and make true interpretation: "For now wisdom requireth that ye judge a true judgment, becoming and honourable; so that ye may dispose all the conformations as accurately as possible" ('Idrā' Rabbā' 25:509, Mathers, p. 173). As in all cases, however, where truth has been submerged in a sea of metaphor, it is not always easy to determine the most exact interpretation, nor is it wise to push analogy beyond truthful limit. No interpretation is put forward here as the only one.

In 'Idrā' Rabbā' it is written:

And this is the tradition: The Absolute desired within Himself to create the essence of light, hidden for two thousand years, and produced Her. And She answered thus unto Him: "He who wisheth to dispose and to constitute other things, let Him first be disposed according unto a proper conformation."

— 3:35, Mathers, p. 115

What is the Absolute spoken of above? Is it the Boundless, 'ēin sōf, the limitless fields of space? Or is it the “first and primordial point,” Kether, 'Ariḫ 'Anpīn — names for the first quiver of manifested life, the first Logos? The latter surely, for the Absolute here is the hierarch or “Sacred Head or Beginning,” the *absolutus*, the one “absolved,” i.e., freed from the spell of matter and māyā as far as its own hierarchy is concerned. In the words of Purucker:

The absolute self, our Father in Heaven, is but the Absolute of our hierarchy, its crown, its summit, its glory; or, considering it as the beginning of manifested beings, the root or the seed thereof. — *Fundamentals*, p. 229

“The Absolute desired” (*sālīq bi-rē'ūthā'*) — this is more exactly translated as the “Highest with will (or desire or pleasure),” the Aramaic phrase pointing directly to the age-old teaching expressed by Norsemen, Brāhmans, and Qabbalists alike, that the universe was brought into being through will, through desire, through joy. As the Norse cosmogony expresses it: “Allfather, the Uncreated, the Unseen, dwelt in the depth of the abyss and willed, and what he willed came into being” (*Asgard and the Gods*, p. 22).

The Vedic verse has it: “Desire [kāma, the driving force of love] — first arose in It.” Again, Brahmā — the demi-urge, the Evolver — is said to fashion the worlds through the help of *līlā*, “sport” or “play,” in other words to have formed all beings and things through the sheer joy infilling his being, which joy overflowed into the forms of manifested lives. Our English word “illusion” bears the same connotation, etymologically as well as philosophically, from

ludo, “to play,” i.e., Deity dreams a dream, in play, and the universe is born.

In the Hebrew Bible Job is challenged as to where he was in the dawn time of the world when “as one the stars of the morning sang, and all the sons of the ’elohim shouted for joy” (38:7).