

B.H.

Individuality and Oneness in a discourse by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, 23 Elul / 15 Sept., 1979

Difficulty: within Panentheistic Monism, how does Created Individuality have Union with, not negation in, G-d.

Prerequisite and 3 stages of intensification:

Prerequisite: Oneness of the People of Israel within their own diversity makes them receptive to oneness with G-d (infinite): 'You are standing today, *all of you*, before the L-rd, your G-d ...' (Deut. 29:9). Only via the transformative process of synthesizing their diversity are they receptive to full union with G-d.

'Unity = Covenant': Full union is called 'covenant', where, biblically, the two retain their individual integrity yet are fused into a single wholeness. (Contrast 'treaty'; cf. Gen. Ch. 15 vs. 31:52.)

Three progressive stages:

[1] Unity of Israel within themselves and with G-d before the Creation, as they exist in G-d's plan: 'With whom did G-d take council [as to whether He should create the world]? With the souls of the saints' (Genesis Rabbah 8:7; Ruth Rabbah Ch. 2).

However, this relation was with souls only, whereas G-d's inner purpose, in which His inner Self is engaged, is to be made at home in the lowest realms = what feels separate from G-d (cf. Song of Songs Rabbah on 5:1; Tanchuma Naso 16).

[2] Unity of Israel within themselves and with G-d in the Physical Embodied Realm: Covenant at Sinai: Because of the desire of G-d's essential Self to be made at home with what feels separate, within all of Creation, G-d's essential Self is truly expressed only the Created and embodied human self, which feels that it is its own independent self, and does not feel contingent on or derived from anything else (unlike the feeling of an unembodied soul) (Tanya Part 4, essay 20). Only such an 'I' embodies the ultimate Divine 'I'. And it is specifically in this realm that G-d entreats, 'Make Me your King' (Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 16a, 34b), despite having a pre-existing relation with the souls.

Because of the sense of individuated selfhood of the created, embodied person, only this bond is considered a true 'covenant'.

[3] Unity after sin: full independence is tasted only after one falls and disobeys G-d. Thus, the fullness of covenant is possible only when one becomes a penitent, not when one is a saint. This is seen in the second covenant (Deut. 28:69), further discussed in continuation from the verse with which we opened: ('You are standing today, *all of you*, before the L-rd, your G-d ...') 'to have you pass over (hyperliterally: 'transgress', Heb. לעברך) into the covenant' (Deut. 29:11; & cf. the covenant of 'passing through' the parts). Through breaking away and then coming back one discovers one's full self, and discovers that it is one with G-d's Self: 'For Your sake my heart says: Seek my face; it is Your face, O G-d, that I seek' (Psalm 27:8).

The word 'today' in this covenant is related to Rosh Hashanah (cf. Job 1:6): every Rosh Hashanah the covenant is renewed with new intensity, growing out of our complexities and reconciliation with G-d. By reaching the point at which we, the Creations, and G-d are reconciled and unified, we reach an infinite truth that cleanses all ('you are standing') and we draw divine goodness into our world.

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