

Celebrate the Web of Life

A Story for All Ages

This text is based on Rabbi Isaac Luria's (1554-1572) theory of creation. After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, Safed, Palestine became the center of a new form of Jewish mysticism. Lurianic Kabbalah focused on the questions of suffering and evil and how the world can be saved and redeemed.

Tikkun Olam: Repair of the World

A Kabbalistic creation story

by Naomi Newman

In the beginning,
before there were any beginnings or endings,
there was no place that was not already God.
We call this unimaginable openness

Ein Sof,

Being without end,
World without end,
Ein Sof.

Then came the urge to give life to our world and us.
But there was no place
that was not already God.

So *Ein Sof* breathed in to make room
like a father steps back so his child will walk to him.
We call this withdrawing
Tzim Tzum.

Into the emptiness *Ein Sof* set vessels
and began to fill them with divine light,
like a mother places bowls
in which to pour her delicious soup.
We call these bowls
Kaleem.

As the light poured forth,
a perfect world was being created.
Think of it, a world without greed
and cruelty and violence.
But then something happened.
The *kaleem* shattered.

No one knows why.
Perhaps the bowls were too frail,
perhaps the light too intense,
perhaps *Ein Sof* was learning.
After all, no one makes perfect the first time.

With the shattering of the bowls
the divine sparks flew everywhere.

Some rushing back to *Ein Sof*,
some falling, falling,
trapped in the broken shards,
to become our world and us.

Though this is hard to believe,
the perfect world is all around us,
but broken into jagged pieces,
like a puzzle thrown to the floor,
the picture lost,
each piece without meaning
until someone puts them back together again.

We are that someone.
There is no one else.

We are the ones who can find the broken pieces,
remember how they fit together
and rejoin them.
And we call this repair of the world
Tikkun Olam.

In every moment with every act
we can heal our world and us.
We are all holy sparks dulled by separation.
But when we meet and talk
and eat and make love,
when we work and play and disagree
with holiness in our eyes,
seeing *Ein Sof* everywhere,
our brokenness will end.

Then our bowls will be strong enough to hold the light,
and our light gentle enough to fill the bowls.
As we repair the world together,
we will learn
that there is no place
that is not
God.

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