



A Personal God

There is a cognitive dissonance in the Western traditions. On one hand, we're told that God is transcendent, and has no properties or qualities that we can know or understand, other than utter Singularity. On the other hand, we're told that the God of the Bible is a personal God that answers prayers, in contradistinction to the "mindless" and "lifeless" idols of wood and metal and stone:

"Their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, nostrils but cannot smell . . . Their makers becomes like them, and so do all who put their trust in them."

(Ps.115:4-6;8, tr. U.K. Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks in his 7 November 2009 commentary on Vayera 5770 available at <http://www.chief Rabbi.org/UploadedFiles/Articals/vayera5770.pdf>)

Torah tradition teaches that those who worship idols will become like them. Worshipping inanimate objects, power, and the various "-isms" of the world is a dead end.

The inner traditions teach that God is not a noun; God is a verb. God is not a thing; God is process. And the process most often alluded to – without detail and without understanding – is loving-kindness.

Here's how it works. Here's how we can pray to a personal God and get a personal response, *without* God having to be a noun-name thing, a humanlike great-granddad in the sky.

First of all, God actually is Love, expressed as the ongoing process of loving-kindness. Love is the process of unqualified giving. God's Love continuously rains on all of us, including the good, the not-so-good, and everyone in between. This is a transcendental rain from the Transcendent, but we understand it in terms of the rain we know that descends on us from above.

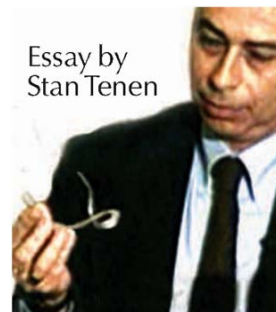
Thus, the coin and currency of God's Love is his *Shefa Tal*, usually translated as "effulgence of dew". (See *Shefa Tal*, by R. Shabetai Sheftel Horowitz (1561-1619).) Effulgence refers to a continuous overflowing flow; dew is a synonym for rain, as a metaphor for the rain of God's Will and God's Love. *Shefa* can be thought of as wave-like, and *Tal* as particle-like, with each *Tal* carrying a unit of information, negentropy, i.e., God's Love. (*Tal* is spelled טל *Tet-Lamed*, i.e., "bound-learning" – a unit of information or negentropy.)

The illustration above from *Linguistic Cosmology* shows the geometry of the flow of *Shefa Tal* from the Singularity of Hashem at the "sun-point" at the top to the All-Inclusiveness of Elokim as the "shield" of the "earth-plane" below.

Paralleling the process of photon-fueled photosynthesis of plants,ⁱ the *Shefa Tal* empowers free will, volition, and choice, by fueling all choices but not making any choice per se. God expresses His love by His trust that we will use His "fuel-for-choice" to make good choices. Thus, we are given this volition in Eden so that we can learn and grow, and be custodians (loving caretakers) of the world.

How does God's process of expression – i.e., the *Shefa Tal* – "know" who or what to reward and when to do it? This is determined by us. When we "stand up" (act with truth and loving-kindness), we receive and are filled with *Shefa Tal*, and have the freedom to make our own choices. It is as if (conceptually) we are all vessels – i.e., glasses with open tops – that when we stand up straight, accept all of the rain of the *Shefa Tal* flowing "down" from the Transcendent. When we do not "stand up" (when we do not act with love and according to the golden rule), we do not receive a full measure of *Shefa Tal*, because the vessel of our lives is like a glass on its side. It doesn't catch much rain (*Shefa Tal*),ⁱⁱ and thus the range of choices

Essay by
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available to us becomes restricted and constricted. The ultimate absence of free will, the ultimate restriction, is sometimes known as Satan – spelled שׂטן *Shin-Tet-NunFinal*.

Shin = expression of

Tet = bound

NunFinal = to go on forever

"The expression of being bound forever" means living without free will, without volition, without the ability to make choices, and this means we can't dig ourselves out of the hole we're in, and we can't grow. We're bound to mechanical behavior, as if we did not have a soul.

God, however, is Holy - קדוש - Qadosh.

Qof = a carrier

Dalet = for giving

Vav = and doing

Shin = expression ("expression" in the sense of "shining outwards", like the sun.)

The Shefa Tal carries the "photons" of negentropy from "sun" to "shield." (Ps. 34:11 – "Hashem-Elokim is a sun and a shield.") God – that is, Hashem-Elokim – is known to us by this process. This is the Shefa Tal. Hashem-Elokim's rain of Shefa Tal, "answers prayers" in proportion to the humility and integrity of the person – that is, how upright they stand, and how open they are. Thus, everyone gets a personal response to their behavior and their prayers, in proportion to their humility (yirat Hashem: "awe of God"), the openness of their heart, and their personal posture and inclination. (Plants that stand up and look to the sun thrive; plants that do not stand up do not thrive.)

This is how personal prayers are answered personally, without our having to speculate on God as a personality with knowable qualities – compassion, jealousy, anger, etc. etc. – like our own.

It is not the noun-name "God" (nor "Hashem" nor "Elokim") that personally answers our personal prayers, but rather the process of the rain of Hashem-Elokim's Love known as the Shefa Tal, and our relationship to it. Our prayers are thus always answered appropriately and personally. All we need to know of God – all we can know of God – is God's Oneness, and God's expression of his Oneness to us in the form of an endless flow of loving-kindness entrusted to us so we can learn to grow and care for ourselves, and care for the world. Thus we too can be Qadosh: a vessel or carrier for giving our own loving-kindness.

One reason why these ideas are not widely known is because they are dependent on metaphor, which is not easily appreciated by the majority of people. But God's Love cannot be restricted only to those people who think deeply and appreciate metaphor. God's Love is available to all. So, there's no choice: since the process-of-God answers our personal prayers *as if* God were a grandfatherly and lordly version of ourselves, this is how God is known to the vast majority. Understanding the inner process underlying "God the noun" is not a prerequisite for accepting and acting with loving-kindness. Understanding God as a kindly and/or stern lord whose treasure of loving-kindness is available to all functions to encourage us to act according to the golden rule, regardless of whether we think simply or deeply.

ⁱ (For recent findings on photosynthesis, see "Living Physics," by Susan Gaidos, *Science News* Vol. 175 #10, p. 26, available online at <http://www.sciencenews.org/index/feature/activity/view/id/43147>)

ⁱⁱ For a traditional understanding of God's Will as the flow of water and some of its implications from a Lubavitch perspective, see Yanki Tauber's "The Fluidity of Life," as published in *B'Or HaTorah*, vol. 10E (1997) pp. 59-67.





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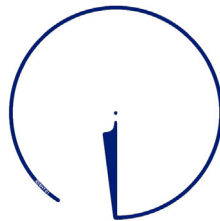
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