

The High Holy Days and the Shechinah of God

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The One Who Dwells

- The rabbis teach us that the *word* of God is referred to as the *Shechinah* (שכינה—in English—*Shekhina*).
- The word derives from the root *Shechen* (שכן), which means *to dwell*.
- The word is used to describe God’s manifest glory or His manifest presence in the world.ⁱ
- Interestingly, the Hebrew phrase “words of the living God” (דברי אלקים חיים), appears in the plural form.ⁱⁱ
- The rabbis also refer to the *word* of God as the *breath of His mouth* and *His Malchut* (Kingship), for they say: “the word of a king (*Melech*—מלך) rules and a king rules his kingdom through his speech, his word (*Milah*—מילה).”ⁱⁱⁱ
- Therefore, the word of God is His *breath* and His *speech*, both of which are tangible and audible, correlating with God’s manifest presence (*Shechinah*) within creation, and His Lordship (*Malchut*) over all creation.
- We now understand that the *word* of God (*Shechinah*) both dwells (*Shochen*—שוכן) and vests itself in created beings, giving them life.
- And, we know that Yeshua is the King who will one day *dwell* (*Shochen*) amongst us, communicating and communing as the king of Kings through His speech.
- “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God” (Revelation 21:3).
- In Christ, we now have both the physical presence of God (*Shechinah*) and His written word (which was spoken to Moses and the prophets) dwelling within our hearts and minds.^{iv} In Jewish understanding, the heart and mind are the same.
- Therefore, the fullness of God now lives within us, as it is written, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We (plural) will come to him and make Our home with him” (John 14:23).
- God’s *written word*, and Yeshua, His *living word* made flesh, are inseparable. Therefore, Yeshua and the *Shechinah* must be *one*, wholly united within themselves.
- God’s written word came to life. Hence, the “word became flesh.”

Living Water

- The rabbis have compared the Torah to water, for just as water descends from a higher level to a lower level, so has the knowledge and wisdom of God been brought down to ours.
- *"From there [the heavenly realm] the Torah has journeyed in a descent through hidden stages, stage after stage, in the chain-like order of interconnected spiritual [heavenly] "Worlds," until it clothed itself in material matters and things of this corporeal world, which comprise nearly all the Torah's commandments and their laws."* Wow! That sounds like the word of God became flesh.
- Yeshua certainly understood these prophetic teachings of the rabbis when He said, *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water"* (John 7:38).
- I believe it is an inescapable conclusion that Yeshua is the Torah made flesh. He is the living water,^v which is the wisdom, knowledge, and most importantly, the heart of God who has come down to our level and become manifest to us as both His *Shechinah* (Divine presence) and His *Malchut* (Divine Kingship).
- *"One of the main aspects of the holiday of Sukkot (Tabernacles) is the ceremony surrounding the commandment to pour water on the altar—the water libation—which lasted the entire night. During this event, which mainly took place in the Women's Court, the Levites played and worshiped on many instruments. Men, women and children participated in the immense joy of this libation. Special elevated balconies were constructed to enable the righteous women of Israel to watch the wise men of the Sanhedrin as they danced. At dawn, the assembly proceeded with melody and song to the spring of Shiloach, at the foot of the walls of Jerusalem. One priest carried with him a special golden decanter and filled it with the sparkling spring water. Then the congregation ascended again to the Temple, led by the priest who bore the golden vessel. Arriving at the Temple, he brought the decanter up to the altar, and poured the water into the silver cup at its corner."^{vi}*

The Bread of Life

- Yeshua also referred to Himself as the bread of life, *"For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world"* (John 6:33).
- Water is a primary ingredient in making bread. Yeshua combined these two elements when He said, *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst"* (John 6:35). The word of the Torah became flesh.
- This scripture suggests that we need both *bread* and *water* to survive spiritually: bread which is analogous to the written word of God, and water which is analogous to the Holy Spirit.

- Combining these gives us the fullness of God's written word, which now comes to life by the revelation and instruction of the Holy Spirit.
- It also comes to life in the person of Yeshua who is the fullness of God's written word and Spirit revealed to humanity, and is both the dwelling and indwelling presence of the *Shechinah*.

The Infinite Light

- The rabbis refer to God, the Holy One, blessed be He, as the Infinite Light (*Ein Sof*).
- The Hebrew word *Baruch* (ברוך—blessed), also means to descend and be revealed.
- God's greatness can never be fathomed, and no thought can apprehend him at all.
- His will and wisdom are infinite and unfathomable, as it is written, "*Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite*" (Psalm 147:5), "*His understanding is unsearchable*" (Isaiah 40:28).
- Therefore, human thought is incapable of grasping Divine thought.^{vii}
- How, then, can the rabbis say that in understanding the Torah, that man can grasp God's wisdom?
- Their answer is that: "*God compressed and lowered His wisdom, clothing it in the physical terms and objects of Torah and its commandments, so that it might be accessible to human intelligence, in order that man may thereby be united with God.*"^{viii}

Revelation Out of Concealment

- Divine *light* in scripture signifies revelation out of concealment.
- In other words, the light (truth) that was previously concealed within the luminary source of the light, is now drawn forth from its source and is revealed as light (truth)— "*Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life...'*" (John 14:6). "*And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14).
- When God's concealed light is in a state of revelation, it is called an *utterance*. It is also called the *word* and the *breath of His mouth*.
- Therefore, Divine speech utters and reveals that which was previously concealed,^{ix} as it is written, "*And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice [utterance] came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased'*" (Luke 3:22). Paul said (uttered), "*This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church*" (Ephesians 5:32).
- This descent in bodily form is the purpose of the *Shechinah*, to reveal to the world a light which is higher than the world.
- Therefore, the *Shechinah* was and is the level from which life and vitality are drawn down and revealed to all God's creation.^x
- In other words, God's revelation is for giving life to His created beings.

- *“The sages of Israel testify to the celebrations of the water libation from the days of the Second Temple, describing the great joy of the ceremony: Whoever has not seen the celebration of the water libation [during the festival of Sukkot] has never experienced the feeling of true joy—great lamps of gold were hoisted, with four golden bowls at the top of each lamp. Four young priests-in-training would climb to the top, carrying immense oil jugs with which they would fill the bowls. Once lighted, there was not a courtyard in all of Jerusalem that did not glow with the light that emanated from the celebration in the Temple courtyard. As the people sang, the righteous and pious men would dance before them while juggling flaming torches. The levites, standing on the fifteen steps that descend from the Court of Israel to the Women's Court, played on lyres, harps, trumpets and many other instruments. Two priests who blew silver trumpets stood at the top of the stairs on either side of the entrance to the great gate of the Court. All this was done to honor the commandment of the water libation.”^{xi}*
- All this was done in celebration of our King—Yeshua—and His coming Kingdom: *“And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zechariah 14:16).*
- Amen!

ⁱ Encyclopedia Britannica.

ⁱⁱ The Tanya of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi. Elucidated by Rabbi Yosef Wineberg. Translated from Yiddish by Rabbi Levy Wineberg and Rabbi Sholom B. Wineberg. Edited by Uri Kaploun. Published and copyright by Kehot Publication Society.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Jeremiah 31:31.

^v John 1:4, 6:33, 35, 48.

^{vi} Based on Mishna, Tractate Sukkah, Chapter 5.

^{vii} Job 11:7, Isaiah 55:8.

^{viii} Ibid. The Tanya of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi.

^{ix} Revelation 10:4.

^x Ibid. The Tanya of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi.

^{xi} Ibid. Mishna, Tractate Sukkah, Chapter 5.