

Fire and Flow in the Book of Genesis : A Post-Teilhardian Outlook

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Myths are creative hypotheses concerning the struggle of life against death. The rhythm of myth is its imaginative impulse toward life-perpetuation. As Ignaz Goldziher reminds us, “murders of parents or children or brothers, battles between brothers, sexual love and union between children and parents, between brother and sister, form the chief plots of all myths.”¹

These basic mythologems of Eros and Thanatos are not always starkly evident, for myths pick up all sorts of accretions with the passing of time. However, to test the theory that myth is primarily concerned with human vitalization, I intend to examine the “physiology” of Genesis, in other words, to apprehend the interpenetrations of the male and the female within the Biblical narrative.

The purpose of a physiological approach would be to emancipate Genesis from possibly outdated ethical meanings and sociohistorical valuations, in order to see the *vital* content with unclouded eyes.

I also intend to synthesize my findings with those reflections of Teilhard de Chardin most pertinent to my thesis. Finally, I hope to show that as male and female are co-equal in procreation, the masculine and feminine principles are equally necessary in the creative process, and more specifically, to demonstrate when there is masculine-feminine imbalance, the result is entropy, or in the most radical situations, atrophy, of humankind.

The impossibility of maintaining a purely physiological perspective should be understood at the outset. Unlike the anatomist dissecting the brachial plexus, we are not dealing with the physicality of things in the

'Book of Creation' (*Sefer Maaseh Bereshith* in Hebrew), but with *words* representing the physical phenomena, and carrying a profusion of symbolic meanings: Object, in the blink of an eye, converts to symbol, sensation to cognition. By conjecture we can imagine how the findings of Cassirer,² Whitehead,³ and Levi-Strauss,⁴ in regard to myth, language, and symbolism, would apply to the ancient Hebraic consciousness. Furthermore, C. G. Jung has alerted us to the process of psychological projection, and the way in which it provides a stumbling block to the framing of physiological or "organic" hypotheses.⁵ Yet an attempt will be made to get back to the body-referent which triggered the mythmaking process and cast out rather than cling to the old abstractions and extrapolations. In this regard, Biblical scholarship will not be forfeited, but rather used as an excising tool to get closer to the oral (poetic) tradition.

Here I would like to put forth a provisional hypothesis to be subsequently tested within the framework of Genesis. When we confront that which most differentiates the female from the male, physiologically speaking, we think in terms of flowing substances, viz., lactation, amniotic fluid, vaginal fluid, and menstrual flow. While three of the above substances are life-sustaining, menstrual flow was always associated with death in the primitive mind. With the onset of menses, women were considered taboo, and thus separated from society; this was a universal practice of the ancients, Frazer tells us in *The Golden Bough*.⁶ In a similar way, menstruation for the ancient Hebrews held the awesome power of death: "And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness—he hath made naked her *fountain*, and she hath uncovered *the fountain of her blood*—both of them shall be cut off from among their people" (Leviticus XX.18; emphasis mine). Horror of contact with a menstruant woman still prevails in the Middle East, and a man passing between two such women is thought liable to death.⁷ The phenomenon of menstruation was clustered with the abhorrence of blood, water, or seed split on the ground; each signified the wasting of life. The dead "are as water split on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again" (II.Samuel XIV.14). This also is the jist of the prohibition against

Onan for practicing coitus interruptus with Tamar (Genesis XXXVIII.1-12)—euphemistically, Onan “threshed within, but sowed without.”⁸ Such wayward sexual practice was considered contrary to the Life-Commandment of the Pentateuch: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. . . .” (Genesis I.28; variants thereof Gen.I.22, Gen.VIII.17, Gen.IX.1,7). The point of this diverting discussion of the feminine life-giving fluids versus menstrual flow, which symbolizes death, is to show that in her physiological being alone, woman is viewed as both creative and destructive of life. And because she has been invested by nature with the nurturing function, she is unconsciously held responsible for the ‘stability’ and ‘continuity’ of life—the horizontal continuum. Thus, whenever human society is threatened with cataclysmic eruption, the value of woman increases.

To continue with the construction of my provisional hypothesis: morphologically speaking, the female generative organs are ‘hidden’ or ‘in the dark,’ so to speak; and the female germ cell, the ovum, is characteristically passive, non-motile, produced with cyclical economy. On the other hand, the male genitalia are ‘exposed,’ or ‘in the light,’ and possess anti-gravitational properties. The male germ cell, the sperm, is characteristically active and motile, produced acyclically in great number without seeming to drain the body of energy, viz., by changing the metabolism, as in the oestrous cycle. The ‘spurting’ action of the seminal fluid is in vivid contrast to the tonic flow of the female fluids. Additionally, the male pattern of sexual behavior—erection, thrusting, intromission, and ejaculation—is *relatively* more dynamic than the female pattern of receptivity. Thus man is unconsciously related to “innovation” and “discontinuity” of life—the vertical axis. Whenever human society begins to succumb to creative paralysis, or stasis, the value of man increases. (To digress a bit, the notion of *logos spermaticos*, articulated by Norman O. Brown,⁹ has much to do with these distinguishable properties of male motility and female receptivity: the projectile, carrying power of the word seeking a “receiver” to be realized.)

In accordance with the above remarks on human physiology and mor-

phology, I have provisionally designated the male principle 'fire' and the female principle 'flow'; in other words, the sperm, the 'spark of life,' is the generating fire which animates the ovum and activates the flow of the life-sustaining female fluids. "Is not Life, too, a fire, burning in the body? —and Death the extinction of the flame? And as fire is kindled by boring with a stick in the hole of a plate of wood, so human life is produced in the womb."¹⁰ It now remains to be seen whether this auxiliary hypothesis tests out in Genesis, that is, to discover how masculine 'fire' and feminine 'flow' figure in the life and death of human being. There are two categories of masculine-feminine interpenetration to be analysed: the concept of deity, which we will look at first, and the male and female characters in the narrative.

The predominant appellations for deity in *Genesis* are *Elōhīm* and YHWH. *Elohīm*, 'God,' is an abstract word signifying "the Creator of the material universe."¹¹ Therefore, the stringently abstract account of Creation, found in Genesis I, abounds with the Elohist term. There is for instance only one explicit mention of color in the entire chapter—"every green herb for food" (verse 30).

The Tetragrammaton YHWH, rendered variously as Yahwe (Max Weber, John Skinner), Yahweh, Jaweh, and Jehovah, is translated into English as 'Lord.' The use of YHWH connotes a "direct and intuitive notion of God," and refers to the "ruler of the moral world."¹² Consequently, the Creation account in Genesis II, focussing on the concrete drama of human origins, prefers the compound term YHWH '*Elōhīm*,'¹³ to indicate a doubled notion of deity, as materialist and moralist.

When reading Genesis, both God-terms appear to be thoroughly masculine and monotheistic. Owing to the skilful authorship of the male priest-scribe, or scribes, responsible for the written text, there was an indefatigable suppression of the pagan and feminine components of deity that existed in the spoken word of antiquity. However, by turning to the exhaustive and brilliant scholarship in Hebrew mythology of Robert Graves, Raphael Patai, and Ignaz Goldziher, and by concentrating on the star of anamnesis, we can recover the Feminine that was rejected or

passed over in silence by the Biblical editors.

1.In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2.Now the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep ; and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters. 3.And God said : 'Let there be light.' And there was light. 4.And God saw the light, that it was good ; and God divided the light from the darkness. 5.And God called the light day and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. (Genesis I.1-5)¹⁴

Most scholars agree that the above cosmogony is in some way dependent on the Babylonian creation myth. The associational clue lies in the word "deep," *tehōm* in Hebrew, a feminine substantive (verse 2). Cassuto points out linguistic correspondences with the Arabic *Tihāmat* which denotes "low-lying Arabian littoral," and the Arabic *tahmun* which signifies "land sloping towards the sea," and the Akkadian *Tiamat*, the goddess of the primeval world-ocean.¹⁵ Tiamat is the notoriously destructive woman in the form of a huge serpent in the *Enuma Elish*. She is finally subdued by Marduk, the solar-god (or 'fire' god), who is sent to "conquer Tiamat and give you life."¹⁶ His battle with Tiamat carries the overtones of sexual intercourse : Marduk "cleaves" and "splits" Tiamat. "He set the lightning in front of him, With burning flame he filled his body. He made a net to enclose the inward parts of Tiamat."¹⁷ Midrashic literature contributes more information on the necessity for subduing the excess flowage of Tiamat/Tehōm. "Leviathan has been confined by God to an ocean cave, where the world's whole weight rests upon him. His huge recumbent body presses down on Tehōm, which prevents her from flooding the earth. Yet, since sea water is too salt for Leviathan's taste, thirst often compels him to raise one fin ; the sweet waters of Tehōm surge up and he drinks awhile, then drops the fin again."¹⁸ Leviathan's 'fin' resembles a phallic organ, and Tehōm's "sweet waters" represent the receptive condition of the female which are not out of control, thus, not to be feared.

The Egyptian cosmogony is also a parent myth to the Hebrew creation story :

“In the beginning was the formless abyss, Nu. From Nu came Re, the Sun. Re was the first and he was the most divine of all beings. Re created all forms. From his thought came Shu and Tefenet, the Upper and the Lower Air. From Shu and Tefenet came Qeb and Nut, the Earth and the Sky. The Earth and the Sky had been separated, the one from the other, but once they had been joined together. From the eye of Re, made out of the essence that is in that eye, came the first man and the first woman.”¹⁹

This account is nearly as abstract as the one given in Genesis I, but note that each emergence of new elements requires a male-and-female pairing. In the salutation of Nefer-ka to the solar-god Re, a note of passion of the “water” (fem.) for the “sun” (mas.) resounds in the language : “It is for love of him (Re) that the Nile cometh, he, the sweet, well-beloved ; and at his rising men do live.”²⁰

So too in Psalm 74, verses 12, 13, and 15, we find traces of a Procreator-god struggling with water which is implicitly feminine : “For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength : thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. . . Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood : thou driedst up mighty rivers.” Creator-gods—almost always solar-gods—such as the Babylonian Marduk, the Egyptian Re, the Canaanitish Baal and El, forerunners of *Elohim*, have to commingle or copulate with the Creatrix—primordial watery deep—to bring forth new life, structure out of antistructure, light out of darkness. Such is the underlying meaning of “and darkness was upon the face of the deep ; and the spirit of God (*ruah Elohim*) hovered (or “was hovering” *merahpeth*) over the face of the waters” (verse 2). By the rule of parallel construction, commonly used in the Biblical idiom for emphasis, the “deep” (*tehōm*) and the “waters” (*edh*) are syn-

onymous terms. Here again we find hidden beneath the abstract language, the mythic notion of creation as a process of insemination.

The above mythological fragments really amount to projections of the physiological/psychological needs of men and women. As such, they attest to the strength and pervasiveness of the procreative/creative instinct, the Eros principle. From this perspective, "the whole order of the universe can be seen as an extension of the rhythms of the human body."²¹

In the last analysis *Elôhîm*, when not subject to anthropomorphism and psychological projection, may be thought of as an asexual power that creates by re-ordering elements which are explicitly or implicitly masculine or feminine in nature. Such is not the case with Yahweh, the highly-differentiated masculine "God of Israel." He is the deity who rules and commands creation and created being, the personification of rational severity. With a kind of Socratic technique, he mercilessly questions Adam and Eve after their double transgression (*pesha*): "Where art thou?" . . . "Who told thee. . . ?" . . . "Hast thou eaten. . . ?" . . . "What is this thou hast done?" (Genesis III.9, 11,13). In like manner, Yahweh questions Cain: "Why art thou wroth?" . . . "Where is Abel thy brother?" . . . "What hast thou done?" (Genesis IV.6, 9,10). Yahweh's voice is the voice of a harsh parent or a demanding relentless conscience. After Yahweh extracts a confession of transgression, he immediately passes judgment and sentence. Whether it is the expulsion from the garden of Eden, the exile of Cain, the sending of the Deluge in Noah's generation, or the destruction of Sodom/Gomorrah in Abraham's era, punishment follows crime without any intermediary thought of compassion. While Abraham's intercession on behalf of the Sodomites (Genesis XVIII. 23-33) does reveal some wavering of Yahwist rigidity, the passage is ultimately designed to show the close communion between Abraham and his Lord. Despite the fact that many exegetes cite this section to demonstrate the love of Yahweh for human being, the verses are more indicative of Abraham's love for even errant humanity.

According to the thesis of Raphael Patai, developed in his book, *The Hebrew Goddess*, the severity of Yahweh was the reason for the continu-

ation of the worship of various goddesses, who served as a softening and tempering influence over against the inflexibility of the male deity. Here are some samplings from Patai's book :

From the time of the arrival of the Israelite tribes in Canaan to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., the Hebrews worshipped Asherah, the Canaanite mother-goddess.²²

. . .not even the most thorough and zealous Yahwist reform was able to eradicate the tenacious worship of Asherah.²³

The goddess Astarte (Anath) was the daughter of Asherah and her husband El. She is mentioned nine times in the Bible, and her mother is mentioned forty times. Both were worshipped, and in the increasingly patrilineal society of the Hebrews, had to be continually suppressed in order to establish the dominance of Yahweh.²⁴

The original meaning of the name Astarte was "womb" or "that which issues from the womb,"²⁵ an appellation befitting a goddess of fertility. She was worshipped in a sacred grove or "high place" (*bamah*) from which water would freely run down. A reference to the Ashteroth (the plural of "Astarte"), viz., "Ashteroth-karnaim," is found in the fourteenth chapter, verse 5 of Genesis. Hertz' annotation on "Ashteroth-karnaim" reads as following: "A hill 21 miles E. of the Sea of Galilee. The name means 'Astarte of the two horns,' derived in all probability from a local Sanctuary of that goddess, whose symbol was the crescent or two-horned moon."²⁶

Yahweh, however, was usually manifested in fire, often in the form of lightning, as in "the flaming sword which turned every way" (Genesis III.24) and "a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces" (Genesis XV.17). And Yahweh was appeased, solicited, or thanked, by means of fire: "And Noah builded an altar (lit. a

"slaughtering-place") unto the Lord ; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings (*olah*, meaning a "completely-consumed sacrifice") on the altar" (Genesis VIII,20). The mythic tradition considered Astarte to be the wife of Yahweh, complementary to, rather than competitive with him, but with the rise of monotheism, the two deities became greatly polarized, and were definitely not on speaking terms.

With the ultimate suppression of Asherah and Astarte, other forms of the Feminine came to the fore to attenuate the strict authority of Yahweh. They include the female half of the Cherubim, the Shekhina, the Matronit, and the Sabbath (as a feminine personification). These female "divinities" are for the most part post-Genesis, and do not fall within the sphere of this paper.

Mention should be made of one more conception of deity, that being, the *En-Sof* (lit. "no-thing"). While the *En-Sof* is a Kabbalistic notion, and not found in the pages of Genesis, the concept of *En-Sof*—the Infinite which contracts on itself to produce male and female emanations called the ten Sefiroth—is related to the "male and female gods of antiquity."²⁷ The interlocking system of the Sefiroth represents the right interrelationship of the sexes, according to a mystical understanding of Torah. I include this post-Genesis postulation of the *En-Sof* and the Sefiroth because first, it is an organic system aiming at *Tikkun*, or restoration of harmony between male and female, human kind and cosmos, and secondly, the Patriarchs and Matriarchs of the early Hebrews seem to embody the concept in their behavior toward one another, as will be shown later. The following diagram of the ten Sefiroth is taken from Gershom Scholem's, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (pp.213-4), but it also includes additions and elaborations as found in other source material on the Kabbala :

In the language of Teilhard de Chardin "Cosmogogenesis" involves a process of development from the natural level, which is orientated toward the ordering and re-ordering of elements, and the inception and conception of species, to higher levels of "complexity-consciousness," or expansion of the psychic faculties, in a word, Mind. The physiological level of human species, represented Biblically as "male and female created He them. . . 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. . .'" (Genesis 1.27, 28) is neither to be denigrated nor over-valued. As the preceding chart indicates, it is the source of life. One of the enduring truths of Genesis is the primacy of procreation. Its importance among the ancient Hebrews can be deduced from the tolerance of polygamy and concubinage (Abraham, Jacob, Esau, *inter alia*) and incest (Lot and his daughters): "Let us make him drink wine this night also ; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father" (Genesis XIX.34). Once the procreative process occurs in sufficient *quantity* to ensure perpetuation of *homo sapiens*, then psychic vitalization, that which constitutes the *quality* of *homo sapiens*, becomes eminently important. Biblically, the transcendence from the physiological to the psychological occurs in the most pronounced fashion in the Abraham/Sarah interrelationship, which we will come to shortly.

As the chart discloses, the psychic interchanges or syntropic movement between the "Father-attributes" and the "Mother-attributes" produce a new modality of being. For instance, *Hesed* (a generating force) and *Din* (a stabilizing force) together create *Rahamin*. *Without Hesed* ("mercy, grace, lovingkindness"), there would be no creation of the new, but without *Din* ("justice, stern judgment"), *Hesed* would expend itself excessively and ultimately burn-out.

As an aside, Shakespeare also viewed the quality of mercy (*Hesed*) to be of great value for transformation and renewal of life. The feminine voice of Portia speaks : "The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth like a gentle rain. . . We do pray for mercy."²⁶ And the masculine voice of Prospero echoes : . . . "prayer / Which pierces so, That it assaults Mercy itself, and frees all faults."²⁹

If we interpret the Sefiroth pattern of interrelationship symbolically (that is, flexibly) with the realization that the feminine attributes may be found in the masculine consciousness, and vice versa, we should then be ready to acknowledge its value as a system of checks-and-balance.

Scholem closes the case with these words. . . “the world is maintained only through the harmony of grace and strict judgment, of the masculine and feminine, a harmony which the Zohar calls the ‘balance.’”³⁰ On the one hand, we have acyclicity, discontinuity, excess, a cluster of “masculine” synonyms closely corresponding to male physiology. On the other hand, we have cyclicity, continuity, and economy, the “feminine” terms analogous to female physiology, serving to balance the scales of human existence. Again, the conception of the En-Sof and its emanations is really a metaphorical repository of the physiological/psychological needs of human kind. We are now ready to analyze the interpenetrations of male and female characters in the Book of Genesis.

The major male-and-female pairs are Adam/Eve, Abraham/Sarah, Isaac/Rebekah, Jacob/Rachael, and Joseph/Asenath. The other “couples” are minor and subsidiary in terms of supplying proof that Genesis is not only a “Book of Creation,” but also a *mythos* of human vitalization. Taken as a whole, the major characters, in action, constitute an evolving pattern of relationship between the sexes. Relationship originates in the physiological dimension (Adam/Eve), increases in psychic intensity with the growth of “personalization” and “spiritualization” (Patriarchs/Matriarchs), and ultimately transcends the personal for the sake of the universal (Joseph/Asenath). To put it in Teilhardian language, the Edenic narrative describes the phenomena of the “biosphere,” the layer of vital substance that envelops the earth. The post-Edenic narratives focus on the phenomena of the “noosphere,” the layer of thinking substance of the earth, with its expansion into two different modes of knowledge, i.e., science and technology (line of Cain) and poetry and mysticism (line of Seth)—see Appendix II. Finally, the Joseph-narrations carry the suggestion of the coming “globalization” or “planetization” of humankind, manifested in the synergetic union of Israel (Joseph) and Egypt (Pharaoh) to overcome entropy

(drought and famine) of life. I hasten to point out that the seeds of the “noosphere” are present in the garden of Eden, most dramatically in the consciousness of Eve (Genesis III.1-6), just as the roots of “globalization” are present in the patriarchal narratives, most significantly, in Abraham’s sojourn in Egypt (Genesis XXII.10-20), an incident foreshadowing in miniscule form, some of the later experiences of Joseph (see, e.g., language parallelism : “for the famine was sore in the land,” XII.10 ; “And the famine was sore in the land,” XLIII.1).

Beginning with an analysis of the relationship of Adam and Eve, I suggest that Eve is not only *wife* to Adam, but also, in a symbolic sense, *mother*. In examining both the mythological material feeding the garden of Eden story and the etymology of the words “Eden” and “Eve,” it seemed to me that the Eve of Genesis is really an amalgamation of mother and mate, which would explain many of the discrepancies and absurdities in the narrative. The Adam/Eve dialectic takes the form of a “physiology of sex” in some verses, in others, a “physiology of consciousness.”

In the post-Edenic narrative, Eve is assuredly wife to Adam : “And the man knew Eve his wife ; and she conceived and bore Cain, and said : ‘I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord’” (Genesis VI.1). After treating Eve’s declaratory statement as interpolation on the part of the Yahwist scribe, and excising it on that basis, we can see that the mating of Adam and Eve is strictly a physical union, uncomplicated, and bearing immediate fruit. The use of the verb “knew” (*yadah*), referring to sexual intercourse, connotes not only intimate knowledge of the body, but also “the character of the relation between the knower and the known in the Hebrew mind ; it involved always a surrender of the self, though the degree of that surrender and the action it demanded necessarily varied with the object or the person known.”³¹ In the case of Eve, self-surrender is solely on a physiological plane. Soon after Cain’s birth, Eve conceives and bears Abel (there is some evidence that Cain and Abel were twins in the mythic tradition). When Abel is killed by Cain, she readily conceives Seth, as a replacement, without a single psychological qualm. The sexual union of Adam and Eve is based on procreative desire, and is akin to the

relationship of Abraham with his concubine, Hagar, and Jacob with his concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah, even his wife, Leah. Though Leah bears six sons and a daughter, in contrast to Rachael's initial infertility, Rachael is the preferred wife—"And Jacob served seven years for Rachael; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her" (Genesis XXIX.20); "And he went in also unto Rachael, and he loved Rachael more than Leah. . ." (Genesis XXIX.30).

The *motif* of prolonged barrenness followed by conception of an extraordinary son—Sarah and Isaac, Rebekah and Jacob (Esau being the ordinary counterpart, and foil-figure), Rachael and Joseph—seems to be the pentateuchal way of expressing not only the miraculous aspect of Creation, but also the necessity for physical desire to be coupled with love in order to produce a human being of high spiritual quality. The role of Eve and the concubines is to "increase and multiply," while the role of the Patriarchs is that of spiritual fecundity.

In the case of Sarah, surrender of self is both physiological and psychological. This is demonstrable in her complicity with Abraham in deceiving both Pharaoh (Genesis XII) and Abimelech (Genesis XX) as to her true marital status. Whether Sarah was in fact, Abraham's half-sister, as indicated in XX.12, or the verse is a gloss to make Abraham look better, does not matter. Sarah complies with Abraham's wishes in a "lie of omission," and is willing to sacrifice her honor for the sake of her husband's life. In like manner, Rachael deceives her father, so Jacob may prosper: "Now Laban was gone to shear his sheep. And Rachael stole the teraphim that were her father's" (Genesis XXXI.19). The removal of Laban's idols will supposedly render him powerless to prevent Jacob and his family from fleeing to the land of Canaan. Both falsehood and theft are subsumed by the higher morality of love and devotion.

In regard to Eve as the symbolic mother of Adam, and the Edenic narrative as metaphor for a "physiology of consciousness," let me first present the etymological evidence. Cassuto develops a very complex and sound argument asserting that the etymological meaning of Eden is "a place that is well-watered throughout."³² He shows that the word *edh*, from which

“Eden” is derived, as used in the phrase, “the face of the waters” (Genesis I.2; and variants throughout VII, VIII), connotes water issuing freely from the ground, as underground springs or the source of rivers. As I have indicated earlier, “waters” (*edh*) and the “deep” (*tehôm*) are analogous; they are both a *feminine* form of water flowing from the earth; the Lower Waters in contrast to the Upper Waters (rainfall) which are considered *masculine*, e.g., the Deluge, according to a mythological weather map, was caused by an excess of feminine and masculine waters, or we might say, the unchecked flow of vaginal and seminal fluid: “on the same day were all the fountains of the great deep (*tehôm*) broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened” (Genesis VII.3; variant VIII.2). Again Casuto supplies connections between Eden and feminine water. Psalm XXXVI.8 reads: “They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures (*abhanekha*).” The Hebrew *adhanekha* may also be rendered “watering” and is related to meadden, “refreshes;” both words are derived from *edh*. In Genesis XIII.10, Eden is compared to “the plain of the Jordan” and “the land of Egypt”—both are fertile lands well-watered by the rising of rivers. Finally, Scholem tells us the mystical meaning of Eden is “bliss” or “joy.”

Eden, then, is metaphor for free-flowing sustenance, obtainable without effort, producing a blissful condition. Eden is a memory trace in the collective unconscious of the anaclitic relationship of lactating mother and nursing child. Eden is the time of dreaming innocence, of vague fulfillment, of *participation mystique* (Lévy-Bruhl).

The etymology of Eve’s name, however, is ambivalent. One school of thought renders the Hebrew as *Havvah*, “life.” The other transliterates (Hebrew letters) as *Hawwa*, “female serpent.” Skinner attempts to reconcile the two views by saying the Eve of Genesis may have been a deity in the oral tradition, a Phoenician goddess worshipped in the form of a serpent (shades of Tiamat!), and bearing the title, “Mother of all living.”³³

Taking the above correspondences in lump sum, the Eden/Eve syndrome could represent the symbiotic tie between mother and child (Eve/Adam), which becomes severed in the weaning process. The free-flowing

breast, the site of nourishment, warmth, and comfort, becomes the “forbidden fruit.” Does not weaning generally occur simultaneously with the most rapid and radical growth of human consciousness?

The breast is the primordial organ of human relationship; and the “rib” is the bone closest to the breast. “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis II.23) may be interpreted as somatic kinship, as in, “And Laban said to him (Jacob): ‘Surely thou art my bone and my flesh’” (Genesis XXXIX.14). The mythological explanation of the creation of woman from a “rib” of Adam, while he is in a “deep sleep,” refers back to the infantile memory of being curled rib to breast in sleepy satiation on the mother.

Furthermore, the Tree of Life is a symbol for the lactating mother. The analogy is found in Proverbs III.18: “She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.” See also Proverbs XIII.12: “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.”

Determent/Expulsion/Exile are components of the weaning process, which is mirrored in the mind as growth of consciousness. To grow and to know requires severance from the Tree of Life-Giving Nourishment. Of necessity, the mother pushes the child away from the breast—this is her “serpent” aspect. The breast becomes the “forbidden fruit” and the mother transformed from the Tree of Life to the Tree of Knowledge. The child, now distanced from the mother, becomes conscious of itself as an “I” and its mother as a “You,” at the same time acquiring the power of choice: to repress or transgress. This is why Ramban wrote that the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge gave rise to *will* and *desire*. . . “why it was called ‘*etz hada’ath* (the tree of the knowledge) of good and evil, for *da’ath* in our language is used to express will.”³⁴ And this is why Eve is wife/mother.

The wife/mother amalgamation continues to express itself throughout Genesis in the characterization of the good-for-life mate. One example should suffice: “And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. And Isaac was comforted for his mother” (Genesis XXIV.67).

Eve is wife/mother, and also daughter, when she functions in the narrative as transgressor. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat. . ." (Genesis III.6). Each son and daughter of the Earth has to endure the rupture of the anaclitic relationship, and the expulsion from Eden, the process being necessary to activate all the dormant potentiality of human being. The story of the double transgression of the woman and the man in the garden of Eden amounts to an allegorical explanation of the expansion of consciousness. The major elements for the stretching of Mind are all found in Genesis: taboo and transgression, choice and change. The rupture and the results are Promethean. After his defiance, Prometheus must "keep watch upon this bitter rock/Standing upright, unsleeping, never bowed in rest."³⁵ Eve will suffer multiplied "pain" and "travail;" and Adam is sentenced to eat bread in "toil" and "in the sweat of thy face" (Genesis III.16-9). They are irrevocably expelled from Eden, and Redemption is a dream of the future.

The Patriarchs and Matriarchs are charged with not only raising up "seed," but quality seed. In order to be effective parents, there must be harmonization and unification in the marital situation, an encounter where love lifts two to the level of one. Contrary to popular thought,³⁶ the Patriarchial-Matriarchal unions were not founded on a master-slave relationship, first, because the pairs were linked in loving passion, and secondly, because they had a common vision of life.

Affectivity is expressed in the Biblical idiom by the phenomenon of "lifting up the eyes" and/or "weeping:"

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL

"Let me not look upon the death of the child.' And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept" (Genesis XXI.10).

ABRAHAM AND SARAH

“. . .and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her” (Genesis XXIII.2).

ISSAC AND REBEKAH

“And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide ; and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, there were camels coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she alighted from the camel” (Genesis XXIV.63)

JACOB AND RACHAEL

“And Jacob kissed Rachael, and lifted up his voice, and wept” (Genesis XXIX.11).

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN

“And Joseph made haste ; for his heart yearned towards his brother ; and he sought where to weep ; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there” (Genesis XLIII.30).

“And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud ; and the Egyptians heard, and the house of Pharaoh heard” (Genesis XLV.1, 2).

“And he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck, and wept ; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them ; and after that his brethren talked with him” (Genesis XLV.14, 15).

[See also L.1 ; L.17, 18 ; XLII.12]

The form of affect described in the above quotations is designated Rahamim (“compassion”) on the Sefiroth chart. It is produced by the union of “masculine” *Hesed* (“grace”) and “feminine” *Din* (“judgement”) in a sin-

gle human consciousness. It is perhaps the most prominent characteristic of each of the male and female characters in Genesis who affirm life, and the source of ability to interconnect with other human beings in a positive, "anti-entropic" manner. The quality of *Rahamim* reaches its highest expression in the character of Joseph.

The common vision, in not specifically religious terms, basically amounts to a reverence for life and a sanctification of the world. All of the *mitzvoth* ("commandments") of Torah may be said to ultimately converge on these two principles. Abraham is the first to have this vision articulated to him by a "numinous power," designated YHWH by the Biblical authors. Or to put it in physiological terms, Abraham experiences a change in his field of consciousness which results in a radical re-interpretation of life that in turn prompts him to action. He is told to sever national, familial, and cultural ties and go to an unknown land where he will be "blessed" and in him "shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis XII.1-3). There is both implied risk and implied fulfillment in the imperative of his consciousness. In Scripture, blessing is equitable with that which builds up, constructs, more life, as in the phrase, *marbah Torah marbah hayim* ("the more Torah, the more life").

Furthermore, blessing is a union of the masculine and feminine creating new life, as in the Joseph-blessing :

With the blessings of heaven above	(mas.)
Blessings of the deep that coucheth beneath,	(fem.) =
Blessings of the breasts, and the womb.	(new life)
(Genesis XLIX. 25)	

Curse is equitable with that which tears down, destroys—atrophy, death.

It is this vision, then, of reverence for life and sanctification of the world, in conjunction with loving passion, that bonds the Patriarchs and Matriarchs to one another and to the rest of human kind. But let the text speak for itself.

1.And the Lord appeared unto him by the terebinths of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day ; 2.and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood over against him ; and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed down to the earth, 3.and said : "My lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. 4. Let now a little water be fetched, and wash your feet, and recline yourselves under a tree. 5.And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and stay ye your heart ; after that ye shall pass on ; forasmuch as ye are come to your servant." And they said : "So do, as thou hast said." 6.And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said : "Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes." 9.And they said unto him : "Where is Sarah thy wife?" And he said : "Behold, in the tent." 10.And he said : "I will certainly return unto thee when the season cometh round ; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son." And Sarah heard in the tent door, which was behind him.

(Genesis XVIII.1-6 ; 9, 10)

To the contemporary mind, the description of Abraham may seem obsequious, and the portrait of Sarah, submissive. There's Abraham, kowtowing to the strangers, and being overbearing with his wife. There's Sarah, trapped in the tent, and jumping through hoops for Abraham. But that would be a superficial reading of the text. Here's a different interpretation :

Abraham is taking a rest from his hard labor, at midday. Though weary, he remains in a state of anticipation and vigilance. When he sees the strangers approach, he lifts up his eyes in delight, for he is an open-hearted and gregarious man, and takes pleasure in being hospitable. Abraham touches the earth to show his reverence for the land which has blessed him with enough riches to share with others. His deep humility is evident in his willingness to wait

on his guests. The strangers' response is one of immediate trust. Sarah is of one mind with Abraham. She is ready to back up his generous overtures and does not have to be begged, bribed, or cajoled. Abraham's dynamic behavior has the effect of sanctifying time. Sarah's receptivity has the effect of sanctifying the world. Thus they are both ready for the advent of a son whose name will be Isaac—"Laughter."³⁷

Without meaning to belabor the point, I should like to add that the concept of the Sefiroth is at work in their relationship. The "Father" attributes of *Hokhmah*, *Hesed*, and *Netsah*, exhibited by Abraham, are conditioned by the "Mother" attributes of *Binah*, *Din*, and *Hod*, evidenced in Sarah. Though perhaps the *Din* is not so evident. We have to choose another passage to show Sarah's stern judgment.

8.And the child grew, and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. 9.And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne unto Abraham, *making sport*. 10.Wherefore she said unto Abraham: "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." 11.And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight on account of his son.

(Genesis XXI.8-11, emphasis mine)

Abraham has an excessive love for his son, Ishmael, even though he is "a wild ass of a man" (Genesis XVI. L 2)—sensual and violent and intractable. Sarah perceives Ishmael will be a detrimental influence on Isaac, and wants him ejected from the family sphere. Opinion varies on the meaning of "making sport." Hertz suggests that Ishmael was laughing derisively or mocking. Ramban concurs. But that rendering is questionable, making Sarah appear unreasonably harsh. (The Skinnerian exegesis seems out of the question, i.e., that Ishmael was "playing with Isaac her son," and excited her maternal jealousy. Isaac is not mentioned in verse

9; and pettiness is inconsistent with Sarah's character.) In the twenty-sixth chapter of Genesis, verse eight, we have a different glimpse of the Biblical notion of sport: Abimelech, the king of the Philistines, looks out the window and sees that "Isaac was *sporting* with Rebekah his wife." Abimelech accousts Isaac, saying, "Behold, of a surety she is thy wife; and how saidst thou: She is my sister?" (Genesis XXVI.8, 9). *Sporting*, in this case, is either *yadah* or some form of intimate play beyond an expression of brotherly/sisterly affection. Thus the Haggadic interpretations of "making sport" make the most sense: unchastity, idolatry, or attempted murder.³⁸ If Ishmael is indulging in any one of these three, Sarah's "justice" is indeed justifiable.

So far I have stressed the Feminine, speaking of woman as a "flow" in need of adjustment, so she will nourish rather than "deluge" others. It naturally follows that man as a "fire" must learn to provide light and warmth without charring others. Abraham was such a self-taught man: "who am but dust and ashes:" a banked fire. Perhaps that is why he was chosen by legend or history, to signify the end of the burning of children—infant sacrifice (Genesis XXII). And perhaps that is why he choose himself to intercede for Sodom/Gomorrah, an environ where the masculine principle had run amuck.

There is some relevance in looking at the Sodomite disaster at this juncture.

1.And the two angels came to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom; and Lot saw them, and rose up to meet them; and he fell down on his face to the earth; 2.And he said: "Behold now, my lords, turn aside, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go your way." And they said: "Nay; but we will abide in the broad place all night." 3.And he urged them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

(Genesis XIX. 1-3)

Lot's experience with the "two angels" (three men in the previous chapter, now minus the one who predicted the birth of Isaac) is a parody of Abraham's. Lot sits in the gate of the city of Sodom, alone. When he sees the men approach he falls down in fear, and tries to hustle them into his house before they will be seen. They distrust him immediately, and refuse. Lot knows the streets are perilous, and urges them once again to take shelter in his house. They agree, and Lot prepares them a meal. *But where is Lot's wife?*

In the prelude to the destruction of Sodom, we are given a vivid picture of the "negative vitality" of the city, as Lewis Mumford puts it. Prosaically stated, fear, suspicion, stagnation, and alienation are on the loose in Sodom. Poetically pondered, misandry and misogyny spew misocainea. For, as the text reveals, the women are absent or in hiding; thus the living space of Sodom has become de-sanctified.

5.And they called unto Lot, and said unto him: "Where are the men that came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know (yadah) them." 6.And Lot went out unto them to the door, and shut the door after him. 7.And he said: "I pray you, my brethren, do not so wickedly. 8.Behold now, I have two daughters that have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes. . .

(Genesis XIX. 5-8)

Lot's pitiable offer is refused, signifying the death of the Feminine in the Five Cities of the Plains. Is it any surprise that the whole plain, once "well-watered and fertile," becomes enveloped by the "smoke of a furnace"-the Masculine completely estranged from the Feminine. Sodom is metaphor for *perversitas*, because it completely "turned the wrong way" toward extinction.

Teilhard de Chardin remarks in his book, *Human Energy* :

The gravity of offences against
love therefore is not that they outrage

some sort of modesty or virtue. It is that they fritter away, by neglect or lust, the universe's reserves of personalization.³⁹

It is fitting to close this analysis of the male and female interpenetrations in Genesis with a few brief words on the Joseph/Asenath union. Of Asenath, we know little :

“And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah ; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-phaera priest of On” (Genesis XLI.45).

“And unto Joseph were born two sons before the year of the famine came, whom Asenath the daughter of Poti-phaera priest of On bore unto him” (Genesis XLI. 50).

Joseph, after the arrogance of youth which alienates him from his brothers, the temptations and suffering of young adulthood, i.e., Potiphar's wife, the pit, and the prison, rises to a position of leadership in Egypt which allows him to exercise all of his gifts of intuition, reason, and emotion, to save the people from famine—Entropy of Life. As said earlier, Joseph and Pharaoh comprise a “synergy” which enriches and preserves the life of both Egyptian and Hebrew. This is why Pharaoh calls Joseph, *Zaphenath* (“food-man”) -paneah (“of the life”).⁴⁰ And why Pharaoh rewards him with Asenath for a wife. We can only assume she is a good-for-life wife in the tradition of the Matriarchs.

Joseph is dreamer and interpreter of dreams, prophet and politician, seer and saviour. He is the embodiment of *tamim* (“wholeness, integrity”), and therefore the one most capable of “universalizing” humankind. The Book of Creation ends on an ascending chord with the reconciliation of the brethren.

PROGNOSIS FOR THE FUTURE

The name of the Hebrews is *Ibhrim*, “those who wander here and there,” the Nomads. It is characteristic of the nomad to forge into the unknown, to explore, risk, and create the new. In many ways, we are today a neo-nomadic people, thrusting out into the unknown Universe. A close look at the vital truths of Genesis could help us maintain our balance and integrity in these times of galloping instability.

Man as “fire” and “sanctifier of time,” and woman as “flow” and “sanctifier of space,” may still be valid metaphors for the perpetuation of human life, if we are willing to transfer the private/home space to the public/workplace. In our time, a lot of nonsense passes for wisdom, in forgetfulness of physiological truths. I have, in a rather disjointed fashion, attempted to present some of those bone-and-flesh realities. Superficially, everything has changed. Vitalistically, everything remains the same: “male and female created He them. . .and it was very good.” This viewpoint is con-servative of the procreative aspect of human being. Yet within this frame, there is allowance for flexibility in human sexual relationships. I have presented no case for rigid sexual role differentiation, nor espoused a static sex/gender system. I have only presented an interpretation of the covert drive toward male-female equilibrium and masculine-feminine balance, in the narrative of creation, and implicitly in the creative process.

AFTERWORD

I first wrote this paper in graduate school in 1977, and at that time had not yet read Alicia Ostriker’s splendid and related work, *The Nakedness of the Fathers: Biblical Visions and Revisions*,⁴¹ which appeared in 1994. I had long been an admirer of Ostriker’s poetry and poetry criticism, feeling an uncanny connection with her energetic mind, even before I met her in person, in Japan. Proof perhaps of Teilhard de Chardin’s concept of “psychic vitalization” and his theory of the “noosphere.” Even

though Ostriker comes from Russian-Jewish ancestry and was raised in the eastern United States, and I spring from Anglo-Saxon roots and grew up in the Midwest, I felt as if Alicia was my "spiritual sister," and this feeling only increased after reading *The Nakedness of the Fathers*.

When Ostriker writes . . . "to Judaism I am marginal. Am woman, unclean. Am Eve. Or worse, am Lilith. Am illiterate" and [F]or a thousand years and longer I am not permitted to be a scholar" (6) she lays out the history of sexism, misogyny, and phallogocentrism common to both our faith positions—Judaism and Christianity. She encourages us to read Torah and the Midrash (and indeed all sacred texts) between the lines, to expose the spirit rather than only the letter of the Word. Ostriker also embarks on the feminist project to recover the feminine, the "much more woman," as I have tried to do, in the Book of Genesis, though I believe she does this with more creative courage than I have been able to gather up. She writes with poetic aplomb :

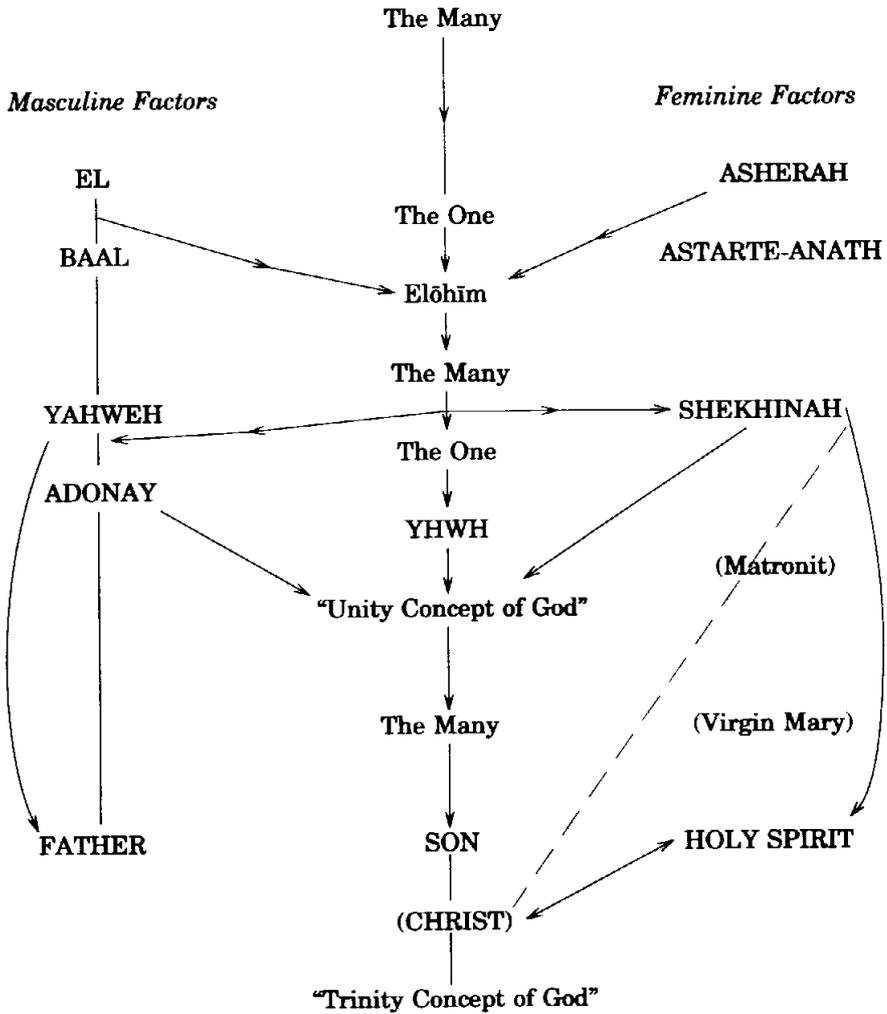
. . . *I know myself mother of all living,
my ovaries burdened and abundant at my
birth. I can hear the chirping of the eggs.* (23)

The only improbable story is that God was originally male. (32)

She denies rigid, overmasculinized patriarchy its power when she says : "*Father Abraham is neither king, general, prophet, or priest, but an obscure shepherd whose newly circumcised loins produce in old age a particular seed, representing a particular idea*" (50). In the conjoining of "seed" to "idea," of body and mind, we find the conjunction of essentialism and constructionism, a rational form of feminism that accounts for a shifting balance of masculine and feminine attributes, a paradigm that can re-form the future through the agency of multiple subjectivities of various genders, all of whom are part of "this copious world," as Ostriker puts it. We neither need to read biblical texts literally nor discard them all together, instead read and interpret them with a spirit of between-ness.

APPENDIX I

EVOLUTIONARY CYCLE OF TERMS IMPLICIT IN JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN DEITY



NOTES

1. Ignaz Goldziher, *Mythology Among the Hebrews* (London : Longmans, Green, 1877) 90.
2. Ernest Cassirer, *Language and Myth* (New York : Dover, 1946).
3. Alfred North Whitehead, *Symbolism : Its Meaning and Effect* (New York : Macmillan, 1927).
4. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago : U of Chicago P, 1966).
5. C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types* (Princeton, NJ : Princeton UP, 1971) 285.
6. Sir James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London : Macmillan, 1971) 241, 690, 702-3.
7. Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths : The Book of Genesis* (New York : Doubleday, 1964) 225.
8. *Ibid.*, 244.
9. Norman O. Brown, *Love's Body* (New York : Random House, 1966).
10. H. Steinthal, "The Original Form of the Legend of Prometheus," Appendix to Ignaz Goldziher's *Mythology Among the Hebrews* 367.
11. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem : Magnes, 1989-92) Vol. I 87.
12. *Ibid.*
13. The Tetragrammaton is rendered by Rabbi Hertz as *Adonay*, also meaning "Lord," but carrying a heavier connotation of "lovingkindness" than found in the mythological *Yahweh*.
14. All quotations from Genesis are taken from Dr. J. H. Hertz, ed., *Pentateuch & Haftorahs : Hebrew Text English Translation and Commentary*, (N.P. : Soncino, 1937). Quotations from other parts of Scripture are taken from The Holy Bible, King James Authorized Version, edited by W. C. Sanderson.
15. Cassuto 23.
16. L. W. King, *Babylonian Religion and Mythology* (New York : AMS, 1976) 67.
17. *Ibid.*, 71.
18. Graves and Patai 48.
19. Padraic Colum, *Orpheus : Myths of the World* (N.P. : Floris, 1996) 3.
20. *Ibid.*, 3. In the salutation of Nefer-ka, the Nile seems to be a feminine personification. This contradicts the more common designation of the Nile as a masculine personification, i.e., "father of the gods" (Skinner).
21. I am indebted to Dr. Ihab Hassan, Vilas Professor of the Humanities [Emeritus], the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, for this comment.
22. Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* (Detroit : Wayne State UP, 1990) 29.
23. *Ibid.*, 49.
24. *Ibid.*, 50.
25. *Ibid.*, 56.

26. J. H. Hertz 50.
27. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York : Schocken, 1974) 227.
28. "The Merchant of Venice," *The Works of William Shakespeare*, Warwick Edition, Vol. III, p.98.
29. "The Tempest," *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p.108.
30. Scholem 266.
31. *The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville : Abingdon, 1971), Vol. I, p.517.
32. Cassuto 107-9.
33. John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (Edinburgh : Clark, 1956) 85.
34. Ramban (Nachmanides), *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 5 (New York : Shilo, 1971) 72.
35. Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* (New York : Oxford UP, 1975) 21.
36. Karen Horney's assumption that ancient Jewish culture had no maternal goddesses ; and Gunnar Myrdal's misinformation that Patriarchal/Matriarchal unions were slave/master relationships, apparently acquired from reading George Fitzhugh's *Sociology for the South*. See Betty Roszak and Theodore Roszak, eds., *Masculine/Feminine* (New York : Harper and Row, 1969) 111, 70.
37. The words are mine, the spirit is Hasidic, specifically that of Rabbi Michel Twerski, Milwaukee, 1976.
38. Rabbi Twerski, Milwaukee. 1976.
39. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. *Human Energy* (London : Collins, 1969) 75.
40. Hertz 158.
41. Alicia Ostriker, *The Nakedness of the Fathers : Biblical Visions and Revisions* (New Brunswick, NJ : Rutgers UP, 1994). All further references to this text will be cited internally.