

Reflection on Judaism, Art and Chochmat Halev
Cheselyn Amato
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I live my life as an artist and as a person as if every day is a sanctuary itself. I make art to create sanctuary for myself, and as prayer, and as offering of sanctuary for others. I feel compelled – both within ordinary and extraordinary time, that is, in everyday time and sacred ritual time – to create a meeting place between the two – to bring above and below together and to allow all of life to be sanctified in all its dimensions.

Within a Jewish perspective/frame of reference, I make work in a similar form to how the Torah is read and to the Jewish mystical Tree of Life of Kabbalah is structured. The Torah is read on four levels, PaRDeS: Peshat, the plain or literal reading; Remez, the allegorical reading given as hints and allusions in the text; Derash, the metaphorical and homelitic reading, interpretive and authoritative commentary regarding truths and principles given within the text; and Sod, the secret and hidden mystical meaning embedded and encoded in the text. Intrinsic to the Judaic way of being and doing is the amazing room to ask really big questions and to recognize the true inclusiveness that Torah is and wants to be.

The Tree of Life of Jewish mysticism exists on four levels or in four worlds: Atzilut, World of Emanation and Nearness (Chayah, Spirit, Fire); Beriah, World of Creation (Neshamah, Thought, Intellect, Mind, Air); Yetzirah, World of Formation, (Ruach, Emotion, Feeling, Sensation, Heart, Water); and Assiyah World of Action and Body (Nefesh, earth, matter and energy) – of spirit, of mind, of heart and of body. This is a love affair between Adonai, the masculine aspect of G-d, standing outside of time and Shekinah, the Presence that Dwells Amongst Us, standing close inside of time. Baruch Hu and Baruch Hee. Blessed is the Union of the Masculine and the Feminine and All Fluidity Betwixt in Time as Sanctuary, and in every unique formation within each of us. How wonderful the earth ...; the water, mem, mayim, mother, womb that loves us always and unconditionally; the air...; and the fire, esh, aysh, ayin shin, ner tamid, unwavering flame, beacon of light, kindled and burning, always and forever.

I have been so grateful for our community that has encouraged me to let my passion rip, to kvell, and to find camaraderie, full embrace, and robust expression with ecstatic amplitude of my chutzpahnick self! More and more and more, I am understanding why Chochmat and I have met...namely, that it is a community in which goodness, beauty, and truth – equality, justice, equity, and plain out deep love for every last drop of humanity – are honored, nurtured, protected and celebrated with the utmost reverence for our Judaic ways, that, thank G-d, include subversion when necessary. The word “transgressive” only exists so long as there is a set of laws that is static and not committed to full inclusiveness of everyone as we are. Enlightened Judaism is all about laws that not only allow for, but actually invite, encourage and equip us with tools to create our way to One/Echad.