

## TEXTS ABOUT SHEKHINAH

### BIBLICAL ROOTS: GOD DWELLS (*l'shakhen*) AMONG US

Exodus 25:8

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָם.  
Let them make Me a Holy Place, that I may dwell [v'shakhanti] among them.

Exodus 40:34-35

וַיִּכֶס הָעֶנָן אֶת-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיִּכְבֹּד יְהוָה מְלֵא אֶת-הַמִּשְׁכָּן: וְלֹא-יָכֵל מֹשֶׁה לְבוֹא אֶל-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד כִּי-שָׁכַן עָלָיו הָעֶנָן וַיִּכְבֹּד יְהוָה מְלֵא אֶת-הַמִּשְׁכָּן:  
The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence [*kavod*] of Adonai filled the *mishkan* [dwelling place]. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting, for the cloud dwelled [*shakhan*] upon, it and the Presence of Adonai filled the *mishkan*.

### RABBINIC DEVELOPMENT: SHEKHINAH AS DIVINE PRESENCE ACCOMPANYING US IN SUFFERING, ILLNESS, AND EXILE...

Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 12b

וְאָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: כָּל הַשּׂוֹאֵל צְרָכָו בְּלִשׁוֹן אַרְמִי -- אֵין מְלַאכֵי הַשְּׁרֵת נִזְקָקִין לוֹ, שְׂאִין מְלַאכֵי הַשְּׁרֵת מְכִירִין בְּלִשׁוֹן אַרְמִי שְׂאִין חוֹלָה דְשָׁכִינָה עִמּוֹ... תִּנְיָא נְמִי הֲכִי: הַנִּכְנָס לְבַקֵּר אֶת הַחוֹלָה לֹא יֵשֵׁב לֹא עַל גְּבִי מִטָּה וְלֹא עַל גְּבִי כִסֵּא, אֶלָּא מִתַּעֲטֹף וְיֹשֵׁב לְפָנָיו, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁשָּׁכִינָה לְמַעְלָה מִמְרַאשׁוֹתָיו שֶׁל חוֹלָה ...

Rabbi Yohanan said: When one prays for one's needs in Aramaic [not Hebrew], the ministering angels are not attentive, as the ministering angels don't know Aramaic. It is different with one who is ill, for Shekhinah is with him [therefore no intermediary is needed]... It was also taught: One who visits the sick should not sit on the bed nor on a chair, but wrap themselves [in a tallit], and sit in front [of the ill person], because the Shekhinah is above the head of one who is ill...

Mishnah Sanhedrin 6:5

אָמַר רַבִּי מֵאִיר, בְּשַׁעָה שְׂאֵדָם מְצַטְעֵר, שְׁכִינָה מַה הַלְשׁוֹן אוֹמֶרֶת כְּבִיכּוֹל, קִלְנִי מִרֵּאשֵׁי, קִלְנִי מִזְרוּעַי...  
Rabbi Meir said: When a human being suffers, how does the Shekhinah (as it were) speak? "My head hurts Me, My arm hurts Me!"

Talmud Bavli, Megillah 29a

רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחִי אוֹמֵר: בּוֹא וּרְאֵה כִּמָּה חֲבִיבִין יִשְׂרָאֵל לְפָנֵי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, שֶׁבְּכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁגָּלוּ -- שְׁכִינָה עִמָּהֶן. גָּלוּ לְמִצְרַיִם -- שְׁכִינָה עִמָּהֶן... גָּלוּ לְבָבֶל -- שְׁכִינָה עִמָּהֶן... וְאַף כְּשֶׁהָ עֲתִידִין לִיגָאֵל -- שְׁכִינָה עִמָּהֶן, שְׁנֵאמַר: "וְיֵשֵׁב ה' אֵלֵהֶיךָ אֶת שְׁבוּתֶךָ." "וְהָשִׁיב" לֹא נֵאמַר, אֶלָּא "וְיֵשֵׁב". מְלַמֵּד שֶׁהַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא שָׁב עִמָּהֶן מִבֵּין הַגְּלוּיֹת.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai says: Come and see how beloved the Jewish people are before the Holy Blessed One, for **in every place they were exiled, Shekhinah went with them.** They were exiled to Egypt, Shekhinah went with them... They were exiled to Babylonia, Shekhinah went with them... So too in the future when they will be redeemed, Shekhinah will be with them, as it says "And Adonai your God will return your captivity"; "will cause [you] to return" [v'heishiv] is not said, but rather "will return" [v'shav], to teach that God also will return from exile along with them.

### ... AND WITH US ONLY WHEN WE ARE RIGHTEOUS

Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 7a

אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר רבי יונתן כל דיין שדן דין אמת לאמיתו משרה שכינה בישראל שנאמר (תהלים פב, א) אלהים נצב בעדת אל בקרב אלהים ישפוט וכל דיין שאינו דן דין אמת לאמיתו גורם לשכינה שתסתלק מישראל שנאמר (תהלים יב, ו) משוד עניים מאנקת אביונים עתה אקום יאמר ה' וגו'  
Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani says that Rabbi Yonatan said: Any judge who renders a judgment in complete truth [*emet*] causes Shekhinah to dwell in Israel, as it is stated: "God stands in the congregation of God; in the midst of the judges." (Psalms 82:1). But any judge who does not judge in complete truth causes Shekhinah to depart from Israel, as it says: "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says Adonai" (Psalms 12:6).

## FLOURISHING IN THE JEWISH MYSTICAL TRADITION: SHEKHINAH AS DIVINE FEMININE

**The Zohar** (the great masterwork of Jewish mysticism, likely composed in 13th c Spain) opens with an image of Shekhinah as 13-petalled Rose, alluding to God's 13 attributes of mercy. These 13 attributes are hinted at in the fact that there are 13 words between the Torah's first mention in Gen. 1:1 of Elohim (a name of God associated with judgment), and the second mention of Elohim in the next verse:

**Rabbi Hizkiyah opened, "It is written, as a rose among thorns." (Song of Songs 2:2) What is the Rose? It is the Assembly of Israel. Because there is a rose, and there is a Rose. Just as the rose among the thorns is tinged with red and white, so is the Assembly of Israel affected by the qualities of Judgment and Mercy. Just as a rose has thirteen petals, the Assembly of Israel is surrounded on all sides by the thirteen attributes of Mercy. Thus, between the first mentions of the name Elohim, these [thirteen] words surround and guard the Assembly of Israel. --Zohar I:1a**

The Zohar uses the following equivalences or "code language" in reference to Shekhinah:

**Knesset Yisrael (Assembly of Israel) = Shekhinah Malkhut, (Queen)= Shekhinah**

**Mother, Daughter, Sister = Shekhinah**

Shekhinah is sometimes described specifically as a mother suffering the pains of childbirth.

Shekhinah is the consort of the Holy Blessed One/YHVH/Tiferet.

YHVH is associated with the Written Torah, and Shekhinah with the Oral Torah.

Other Zoharic images connected with Shekhinah include: moon, sea, field, well of water, the doe yearning for water, the doe awaiting the dawn.

Each aspect of God in the Kabbalistic tree (picture here) is associated with a particular color. Shekhinah/Malkhut includes and reflects all colors.

Moshe Cordovero, Ein Yaakov (16th c. Tzfat, Kabbalist)

כי המלכות היא הנטרדת עמנו, עולה עמנו ויורדת עמנו, נגאלת עמנו וגולה עמנו. והיא הדבקה תמיד עמנו, לא תפרד בשום אופן בעולם. והיא השוכנת אתנו. אנו גורמין במעשינו יחודה או פירודה או רחמיה.

For Malkhut (Shekhinah) is the one who is expelled with us. She ascends with us and descends with us. She is redeemed with us and exiled with us. She is the one attached to us always, never separated from us under any circumstance. She is the One who dwells [*hashokhenet*] with us. Through our deeds, we cause her unification or her separation or her mercies.

