Kabbalah Intensive Session One Rabbi Naday Caine

Text 1: Torah:

ּבְּרֵאשָׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהָים אַת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאַת הָאָרֶץ:

When God began to create heaven and earth— (Gen 1:1)

וַיִּאמֵר אֱלֹהָים יִהָּי אֲוֹר וַיִּהִי־אְוֹר:

God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. (Gen 1:3)

וַיָּרָא אֱלֹהֶים אֵת־הַאָּוֹר כִּי־טָוֹב וַיַּבַדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הַאָּוֹר וּבֵין הַחְשֶׁךְ:

God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. (Gen 1:4)
And God said, "Let there be light-makers... the fourth day." (Gen 1:14)

Midrash:

It was taught: The light which was created in the six days of Creation cannot illumine by day, because it would eclipse the light of the sun, nor by night, because it was created only to illumine by day. Then where is it? It is stored up for the righteous in the Messianic future, as it says. Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of the seven days (Isaiah 30:26). *Midrash Rabbah Bereishit (c. 200-500 CE)*

Text 2: The very first midrash on the Torah in Midrash Rabbah Bereishit:

Rabbi Hoshaya the Great began: "I was with Him as an amon, a delight day after day..." (Proverbs 8:30) – amon means a child's caretaker, amon means covered, amon means hidden, and some say amon means greatness. Amon means a child's caretaker, as it says: "As a caretaker [omen] carries a nursing child" (Numbers 11:12). Amon means covered, as it says: "Those covered [ha'emunim] in scarlet..." (Lamentations 4:5). Amon means hidden, as it says: "He was omen Hadassa" (Esther 2:7). Amon means great... Also, amon means artisan [uman]. The Torah is saying: 'I was the tool of craft of the Holy One blessed be He.' The way of the world is that when a flesh-and-blood king builds a palace he does not build it based on his own knowledge, but rather based on the knowledge of an artisan. And the artisan does not build it based on his own knowledge, but rather, he has [plans on] sheets and tablets by which to ascertain how he should build its rooms, how he should build its doors. So too, the Holy One blessed be He looked in the Torah and created the world. The Torah says: "Bereshit God created" (Genesis 1:1), and reshit is nothing other than the Torah, as it says: "The Lord made me at the beginning of [reshit] His way" (Proverbs 8:22).

Text 3: Kabbalist Moshe Cordovero (Tsfat, 1500's):

Everything exists solely through the divine energy that flows to things, large and small, and clothes itself in them. If God's gaze were withdrawn for even a moment, all existence would be nullified. This is the secret meaning of the verse: "You enliven everything." So divinity flows and inheres in each thing that exists. This is the secret meaning of the verse: "God's presence fills the entire world." Contemplating this, you are humbled and your thoughts purified.

Text 4: *Liqqutim Chadashim,* Chayim Vital (1500's-1600's, disciple of Cordovero and Isaac Luria):

When the infinite, divine flowing energy wished to create this material universe, it withdrew its presence. At first Ein Sof [Infinity] filled everything. Now, still, even an inanimate stone is energized by it; otherwise the stone could not exist at all – it would disintegrate. The energy of Ein Sof clothes itself in garment upon garment.

At the beginning of creation, when Ein Sof withdrew its presence all around in every direction, it left a vacuum [empty space] in the middle, surrounded on all sides by the energy of Ein Sof, empty there in the middle. The energy withdrew like water in a pond displaced by a stone. When a stone is dropped in a pond, the water at that spot does not disappear – it merges with the rest. So the withdrawn energy merged with the rest, and in the middle remained a pocket of vacuum. Then one frequency of the divine energy – like a drop in the ocean – was extracted. Descending into the vacuum, it transformed into a mass of shapeless matter, surrounded in every direction by the energy of Ein Sof. Out of this mass came energized matter. For in its simple desire to realize its intention, the divine energy of Ein Sof re-energized the matter with a ray of the energy which had been withdrawn – not all of the energy, because if it had all returned, the original state would have been restored, which was not the intention.

To fashion pottery, the potter first takes an unformed mass of clay (*golem*) and then puts his hand inside the mass to shape it. So the divine flow put its hand into the shapeless mass of matter: that is, a ray of energy returned into it. As this energy began to enter the mass, vessels were formed which were combinations of matter and divine energy. The first vessel, Keter, could contain the energy, but almost immediately the other vessels, not having Keter's capacity, started to break. As the ray of energy continue to enter the vessels, they exploded, shattering. Their spiritual essence – the energy – ascended back to the mother's womb, while the shattered vessels became our universe.

Still today our universe requires the inflow of divine energy, even though the energy can never exist in its pure form in our universe of matter. It's like when you sit in the shade: though the sun does not shine on you directly, it illuminates the shaded area. Otherwise all would be dark. Just like this, the energy of Ein Sof illuminates the world of creation indirectly: without it, we could not exist at all.

Questions to Discuss:

- If "Torah" is a word that describes the underlying structure of the universe, then how is the book/scroll of the Torah also the Torah?
- Take the following verses from the Siddur:

Friday Night Kabbalat Shabbat Service: אוֹר זָרֶע לַצַּּאָדִיק Light is stored for the righteous (tsaddik). (Ps.97).

Ma'ariv Barkhu: Barukh Ata Adonai, who brings on the dusk (literally: mixes mixtures [of light and dark].

Shacharit Barkhu: Barukh ata Adonai, eloheinu melekh ha'olam, who fashions light and creates darkness, who is doing shalom and creating everything.

Shabbat Morning continuation of the Barkhu is El Adon, a piyyut of all the various words for light emanating.

What would these lines from the prayerbook mean to you if you were a mystic who believes the passages above?

- How might **you** pray these lines differently now?
- How can you make sense of the statement that our entirely reality is "living in the shade" where God is the light?