

# A Study of the Book of Revelation

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## THE RIVER OF EDEN AND TREE OF LIFE - PART 2

(Last updated 7/3/00)

*As noted earlier, the mystical teachings introduced in this section will be developed in detail in Section V of our Revelation background articles.*

## THE TREE OF LIFE

Earlier in this study, we made mention of the Shekinah guarding the way of the tree of life. Upon her marriage to the Messiah, this "tree of life" will appear again with the River of Eden:

**Revelation 22:2** - *In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

**Revelation 22:14** - *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

It should be noted that Revelation make it clear that it is those who *do God's commandments* that enter the city. Any "faith" that does not involve submission to God's Torah is not a valid faith. This will be addressed more fully when we begin the textual analysis of this study.

As in Revelation, the Zohar states that the *Tree of Life* provides for the need of everything -- above and below:

**Soncino Zohar, Shemoth, Section 2,Page 58b-59a** - *'There is a mighty and wondrous tree in the celestial sphere which supplies nourishment to beings above and below. It has twelve boundaries and stretches along the four sides of the world which encompass it. Seventy branches ascend from it and imbibe nourishment from its roots. Each branch, as the time arrives for it to be dominant, endeavours to drain the whole life of the tree, which is the essence of all the branches, and without which they would not exist. Israel clings to the main body of the tree, and when its time comes to be dominant, it endeavours to protect the branches and to give peace to all. This is also symbolized by the seventy oxen offered on the feast of Tabernacles. Therefore it says: "Who is like unto thee among the gods (elim), O Lord?"; elim in the sense of "trees", as in the passage, "for ye shall be ashamed of the elim (terebinth) which ye desired" (Isa. I, 29). "Who among these is like unto Thee, Who hast pity on all? Among the surroundings of the tree is any like unto Thee, eager to be the guardian of all, even when it dominates them", not wishing to destroy them? "Who is like unto Thee, glorified in holiness?" Namely, in that supreme power called "Holiness", "power of the Lord", "pleasantness of the Lord", as already stated.'*

**Soncino Zohar, Shemoth, Section 2,Page 64b** - *Blessed are the Israelites who "sow beside*

*the water”-the water which is under the branches of the Holy One's Tree, a Tree great and mighty, containing food for the whole universe. This Tree is encompassed by twelve frontiers and adjoins all four sides of the world, and has seventy branches, and Israel is in the “body” of the Tree, and the seventy branches encompass her. This is symbolized by the “twelve wells of water and the threescore and ten palm trees”, as we have often explained.*

The following section associates the Tree of Life with "Tifereth." As we will see in the following section on the *Image of God*, Tifereth is directly associated with the Messiah.

**Soncino Zohar, Shemoth, Section 2, Page 62b** - *It has been said at that hour Israel was perfected below according to her prototype above, for it is written, “and they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water and threescore and ten palm trees” (Ex. xv, 27). Now the Holy Tree [Tr. note: Tifereth.] spreads to twelve boundaries on the four quarters of the earth, and to seventy branches closely intertwined, so that what was above should have here its counterpart below.*

## WATER, WELLS AND ROCKS

In the following Zohar passage, the *River of Eden* is linked to the digging of wells by the Patriarchs, which is seen as a symbol of faith. The wells and the river are further associated with the end of days and resurrection of the dead.

**Soncino Zohar, Bereshith, Section 1, Page 141a** - **AND ISAAC DIGGED AGAIN THE WELLS, ETC** . R. Eleazar said: *‘In digging these wells Isaac acted fittingly, for he discerned from his knowledge of the mysteries of Wisdom that in this way he could attach himself more firmly to his faith. Abraham likewise made a point of digging a well of water. Jacob found the well already prepared for him, and he sat down by it. Thus they all looked for a well and strove through it to preserve their faith pure and undiminished. ...*

*Hence our ancestors strengthened themselves in the true faith in digging the well, symbolic of the supernal well, which is the abode of the mystery of perfect faith.’ AND HE REMOVED FROM THENCE, AND DIGGED ANOTHER WELL. R. Hiya discoursed on the verse: And the Lord will guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in brightness, and make strong thy bones (Is. LVIII, 11). ‘The true believers’, he said, ‘have derived strength from this verse, where promise is made to them of the world to come, for the word "continually" includes both this world and the world to come. Again, the term "continually", which seems superfluous, is an allusion to the continual burnt-offering which is offered at dusk, and is held firm underneath the arm of Isaac and is symbolic of the world to come. The term "guiding" is similarly used by David in the verse: "He guideth me in straight paths for his name's sake" (Ps. XXIII, 3). "And satisfy thy soul in brightness"; this is the "clear mirror" from the contemplation of which all souls obtain delight and benefit. "And make strong thy bones": these words do not seem to harmonise with what has gone before, which we have interpreted of the souls of the righteous ascending on high. We interpret them, therefore, to allude to the resurrection of the dead, when the Holy One, blessed be He, will reconstitute the bones and restore the body to its former state. The soul will then derive stronger illumination from the "clear mirror", so as to illumine the body to the full extent of which it is capable. Hence: "And thou shalt be like a watered garden" (Is. LVIII, 11), that is, like the celestial garden*

*whose supernal waters never fail, but flow on for ever and ever; "and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not" (Ibid.), alluding to the river that issues from Eden and flows on for all eternity. Observe that **the "well of living waters" is a symbol within a symbol for guiding faith.** There is the well which is the very source of the waters, and there is the well which is fed by that source of water. There are thus two grades, which are, however, really one with two aspects, male and female, in fitting union. The well and the issue of waters are one, designated by the name of "well", it being at once the supernal **never-ceasing fountain** and the well that is filled by it. And **whoever gazes at that well gazes at the true object of faith.** This is the symbol which the patriarchs transmitted in digging the well, in such a way as to indicate that the source and the well are indissoluble.*

The idea of wells and water being associated with faith is found throughout Scripture.

Note that the Zohar section above (Bereshith, Section 1, Page 141a,b) refers to the well:

- that Jacob sat by
- having waters who never fail or cease, but flow on forever
- being "a symbol within a symbol for guiding faith."
- being the true object of faith

We see a connection to the Zohar's view of the waters of Eden in John's Gospel. (For those not aware, John's Gospel is very much at the "Sod" or mystical level.) John gives an account of an incident at the well of Jacob (who as we've discussed was a picture of Messiah), and the living waters that Yeshua offers.

Yeshua engages a Samaritan woman in a discussion that is far deeper than appears on the literal ("*p'shat*") level. Yeshua, who sits by the well as Jacob did, says that He is the true object of faith and that His living waters never fail. He also makes reference to the "*gift of God*" - the Ruach haKodesh (Holy Spirit):

**John 4:6-15** - *Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*

Later in John's Gospel, we find Yeshua appearing to the people at the end of the feast of Succot (John 7:2), again associating water with the Ruach haKodesh:

**John 7:37-39** - *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture*

*hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)*

This same source of "living water" is found in the Tenakh, which tells of a "rock" that followed Moses and the Children of Israel in the wilderness. That rock was also a "well" that provided for them. God says that He would be found at this rock/well:

**Exodus 17:5-7** - *And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, **I will stand before thee there upon the rock** in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?*

Rav Sha'ul (Paul) tells us that this rock/well was also Yeshua:

**1 Corinthians 10:4** - *And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Messiah.*

What does Paul mean when he says, "... that rock was Messiah?" This certainly cannot be understood at a literal level. Recall that the portion of the Zohar quoted earlier in this section (Bereshith, Section 1, Page 26a), stated that, "*This river is the Central Column.*" As we have touched on lightly in this study, the "central column" is directly associated with Jacob, Jacob's "ladder" and Messiah.

It is also interesting to note that Yeshua's first miracle has to do with water and the mikvah - and a wedding. The waterpots were specifically those used for mikvah:

**John 2:6** - *And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.*

The rock, well, water and mikvah all connect back to the River of Eden, and as Yeshua shows us, to salvation. These are all physical manifestations of what God does spiritually.

## LINKING WITH THE RIVER OF EDEN THROUGH TORAH

The Torah is seen at having multiple levels of meaning. (See our [section on PARDES](#) for some basics concerning this.) The following Zohar section connects Torah to water, and the Torah student to a Tree by this water. The student, through diligent study and with the guidance of the Ruach haKodesh, can attain deeper understanding of the Torah.

**Soncino Zohar, Bemidbar, Section 3, Page 202a** - *'How goodly', he said, 'are the ways and paths of the Torah, since it is full of good counsel for man, and every word of it radiates light in many directions. This verse can be taken literally, and it can be expounded homiletically, and it contains also a lesson of the higher wisdom. He who constantly occupies himself with the Torah is compared by the Psalmist to "a tree planted by streams of water" (Ps. I, 3). Just as a tree has roots, bark, sap, branches, leaves, flowers and fruit, seven kinds in all, so the Torah has the literal meaning, the homiletical meaning, the mystery of wisdom, numerical*

*values, hidden mysteries, still deeper mysteries, and the laws of fit and unfit, forbidden and permitted, and clean and unclean. From this point branches spread out in all directions, and to one who knows it in this way it is indeed like a tree, and if not he is not truly wise.*

The Zohar links the idea of connecting ourselves to the River of Eden (a symbol of faith as discussed above) to the study of Torah. In a similar fashion to Paul saying that the rock in the wilderness was Yeshua, this passage also contains a mystical association between the rod of Moses and Metatron (whom we have seen is an allusion to the Messiah):

**Soncino Zohar, Bereshith, Section 1, Page 27a - AND THE LORD GOD TOOK THE MAN AND PUT HIM IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN, ETC.** *From whence did he take him? He took him from the four elements which are hinted at in the verse "and from there it parted and became four heads". God detached him from these and placed him in the Garden of Eden. So does God do now to any man created from the four elements **when he repents of his sins and occupies himself with the Torah**; God takes him from his original elements, as it is said, "and from there he parts", i.e. he separates himself from the desires which they inspire, and God places him in his garden, which is the Shekinah, "to dress it", by means of positive precepts, "and to keep it", by means of negative precepts. If he keeps the law, he makes himself master of the four elements, and becomes a river from which they are watered, and they obey him and he is their ruler. But if he transgresses the law, they are watered from the bitterness of the tree of evil, which is the evil inclination, and all his limbs are full of bitterness; but when the members of the body are kept holy from the side of good, it may be said of them that "they came to Marah and were not able to drink waters from Marah, for they were bitter" (Ex. XV, 23). Similarly, the study of the Talmud is bitter compared with that of the esoteric wisdom, of which it is said, "And God showed him a tree" (Ibid.); this is a tree of life, and through it "the waters were sweetened". Similarly of Moses it is written, "And the staff of God was in his hand." **This rod is Metatron**, from one side of whom comes life and from the other death. When the rod remains a rod, it is a help from the side of good, and when it is turned into a serpent it is hostile, so that "Moses fled from it", and God delivered it into his hand. This rod typifies the Oral Law which prescribes what is permitted and what is forbidden. When Moses struck the rock God took it back from him, and "he went down to him with a rod" (II Sam. XXXIII, 21), to smite him with it, the "rod" being the evil inclination, which is a serpent, the cause of the captivity. A further lesson can be derived from the words "and from there it parted": happy is the man who devotes himself to the Torah, for when God takes him from this body, from the four elements, he is detached from them and **ascends to become the head of the four Hayyoth**, as it is written, "and they shall bear thee on their hands" (Ps. XCI, 12).*

Note the reference above to man, through faithfulness to Torah, becoming *the head of the four Hayyoth* (Ezekiel's highest angels). This is confirmed by Rav Sha'ul:

**1 Corinthians 6:3** - *Know ye not that we shall judge angels?*

The section below associates the "wise" (those who study Torah) with penetrating the real essence of wisdom. This knowledge is compared to the River of Eden. Again, the Tree of Life is mentioned as bringing forth blessings to God's creation. Here again, the Zohar says that within this Tree is a light, which is related to *Tifereth*, a term which we will see, is connected to Messiah:

**Soncino Zohar, Shemoth, Section 2, Page 2a** - *It is written: And the wise shall be resplendent as the splendour (zohar) of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness shall be like the stars for ever and ever (Dan. XII, 3). "The wise" are those who penetrate to the real essence of wisdom; "they shall be resplendent", i.e. illumined with the radiance of the supernal Wisdom; "as the splendour", this is the flashing of the Stream that goes forth from Eden (Gen. XI, 10), this being alluded to as "the firmament". There are suspended the stars, the planets, the sun and the moon, and all the radiant lights. The brightness of this firmament shines upon the Garden of Eden, and in the midst of the Garden stands the Tree of Life, whose branches spread over all forms and trees and spices in fitting vessels. All the beasts of the field and all the fowls of the air shelter beneath the branches of this Tree. The fruit of the Tree gives life to all. It is everlasting. The "other side" has no abode therein, but only the side of holiness. Blessed are they who taste thereof; they will live for ever and ever, and it is they who are called "the wise", and they are vouchsafed life in this world as well as in the world to come. The Tree rises to a height of five hundred parasangs, and its circumference is six myriads of parasangs. Within this Tree is a light [Tr. note: Tifereth.] out of which radiate certain colours: they come and go, never being at rest save in the Tree.*

The Zohar suggests that a person involved in diligent study of the Torah, enables himself to receive the blessings of the waters of the River of Eden in this lifetime. He is thus, in a sense, seen as already being "outside of time" and connected with the World to Come.

**Soncino Zohar, Bereshith, Section 1, Page 92a** - *Happy the portion of the man who rises at that hour to study with zest the Torah, for the Holy One, blessed be He, and all the righteous listen to his voice; for so it is written, "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken for thy voice, cause me to hear it" (S. S. VIII, 13). Nay more, God draws round him a certain thread of grace which secures him the protection both of the higher and the lower angels, as it is written, "By day the Lord will command his grace, and at night I shall chant his song" (Ps. XLII, 9).' R. Hizkiah said: 'Whoever studies the Torah at that hour has constantly a portion in the future world.' Said R. Jose to him: 'What do you mean by "constantly"?' He replied: 'I have learnt that at midnight, when the Holy One, blessed be He, enters the Garden of Eden, all the plants of the Garden are watered more plenteously by the stream which is called "the ancient stream" and "the stream of delight", the waters of which never cease to flow. When a man rises and studies the Torah at this hour, the water of that stream is, as it were, poured on his head and he is watered by it along with the other plants of the Garden of Eden. Moreover, because all the righteous in the Garden listen to him, he is given a right to be watered by that stream, and in this way he has a portion constantly in the future world.'*

The idea of connecting to the heavenly realm is not foreign to the "New Testament." Paul instructed believers to do just this:

**Colossians 3:1-3** - *If ye then be risen with Messiah, seek those things which are above, where Messiah sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Messiah in God.*

**Colossians 3:10** - *And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.*

Paul's statements of; *seeking things which are above*, and being *renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him* are speaking of the same thing, (Torah study) and enter into the mystical areas of Judaism.

It is not possible to fully understand the mysteries of the River of Eden, the Tree of Life, the rock of Exodus, the well of Jacob, Jacob's ladder, and the rod of Moses, at anything but the [Sod level](#) of Hebrew Biblical interpretation. This requires an understanding of how the invisible and indefinable God who created everything, reveals Himself to us in the finite realm that we exist in.

Submission to Torah, and the study of Torah with the enlightenment of the Ruach HaKodesh, is the first step to understanding the greater mysteries. It is through Torah that we learn of what the *Image of God* is. This in turn allows us to more fully understand and connect to the infinite *Eyn Sof*. This will be an important part of the next major section of this study.

We conclude this section with a verse from the Talmud that links faithfulness in teaching Torah in this life, to the rewards in the next, associating this with the theme of water:

**Talmud - Mas. Sanhedrin 92a** - *R. Shesheth said: Whoever teaches the Torah in this world will be privileged to teach it in the next, as it is written, And he that watereth shall water again too.*

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