

Ruth Kara-Ivanov Kaniel

Birth in Kabbalah and Psychoanalysis

Perspectives on Jewish Texts and Contexts



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All human life on the planet is born of woman. The one unifying, incontrovertible experience shared by all women and men is that months-long period we spent unfolding inside a woman's body.

Probably there is nothing in human nature more resonant with charges than the flow of energy between two biologically alike bodies, one of which has lain in amniotic bliss inside the other, one of which has labored to give birth to the other. The materials are here for the deepest mutuality and the most painful estrangement.

–Adrian Rich, *Of Woman Born*

We seem to diverge rather far in the role we assign to intuition. Your mystics rely on it to teach them how to solve the riddle of the universe; we believe that it cannot reveal to us anything but primitive, instinctual impulses and attitudes – highly valuable for *an embryology of the soul* when correctly interpreted, but worthless for orientation in the alien, external world.

–Sigmund Freud to Romain Rolland, January 19, 1930

Come and see: All those plants and all those burning lamps all shine and glow, are watered and blessed, from that flowing, gushing river, in which all is comprised, totality of all. This is called Mother of the Garden, above the garden, for Eden joins with Her, not parting from Her. Consequently, all springs issue, flow, and water in every direction, opening gateways in Her. So Compassion derives from Her, Compassion is opened in Her. Yet since we call Her Mother, Female, Gevurah and Judgment issue from Her [. . .] אהיה (Ehyeh asher ehyeh), “I am that I am (Exodus 3:14), and I do not fathom it.” Mystery of the matter is as follows: אהיה (ehyeh), I am – totality of all, for when paths are concealed, not diverging, included in one place, then it is called Ehyeh, totality of all, hidden and not revealed. Once a beginning emerges and that river is impregnated, to channel all, then it is called אֶשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (asher ehyeh), that I am, meaning: “Until here I am; I am ready to convey and give birth to all.” “Ehyeh, I am – meaning: ‘Now I am totality of all, generality with no particular.’” Asher ehyeh, that I am – for Mother is impregnated and ready to receive all particulars and reveal the supernal Name [. . .] Afterward, He generated that river – supernal Mother – and She became pregnant, ready to give birth; and He said, asher ehyeh, that I am, prepared to give birth and arrange all.

–Zohar 3:65a–b (Matt, 7, 427–430)

