

MILA YOMIT 14: TEHOM

תְּהוֹם

Meaning: The Deep, or the Depths (also deep water, abyss, unfathomable)

OTIOT:Letters

ת TAV (T)

ה HEH (H)

ו VAV (V)

מ MEM Sofit(M)- final MEM- root for MAYIM: water.

Related to conception and associated with the womb because of its enclosed shape, "the closed MEM can be pictured as an underground fountain, whose waters are sealed below ground. The form of the MEM resembles a womb, which for the fetus is a 'fountain of life'. The fetus 'swims' in an all-encompassing environment of water." (Ginsburgh,Alef Bet, p. 196)

MEANING, RELATED WORDS AND WORDS CONTAINED WITHIN:

תְּהוֹם-is a M. and F. noun meaning 'depth, deep, abyss

Klein's etymological dictionary connects it to the Akkadian 'tiamtu', 'ti'amat' is the sea monster in the Babylonian creation myth.

Ugaritic similar word is 'thm"

תהם is a three letter verb root 'to bring down to the depths'.

תְּהוֹמִי-TEHOMI- is an adjective meaning 'abysmal, unfathomable'.

תהו-TOHU -Mila 9, relates to a 'state of desolation, primordial matter without substance'.

The MEM at the end places this in an environment of liquid; the womb out of which substance will emerge.

תהום is the vessel containing the **תהו**-TOHU.

תהום contains the same letters as **מהות** MaHUT which means 'essence, being, content'.

Is **תהום** TEHOM that which **מהות**-MAHUT- Being emerges from? This seems to correspond with our oral tradition about TEHOM.

This is an example of the exegetical tradition of exploring different words which are made up of the same letters in different order. We can then speculate about the relationship between the seemingly different words.

CONCEPTUAL MEANING:

Zohar: In the "TEHOM" there are rocks out of which emerges water.

The commentary, Emek HaDavar explains it as the "deep underground out of which the elemental fire emerges". This seems to resemble the 'primordial soup' pot.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch relates **תהום** TEHOM to

תהה TOHEH-astonishment, and **המם**-HAMAM- stunningly tumultuous/noisy.

" **תהום** TEHOM: does not (only) mean the abyss, the deep, but (also) the surging bellowing of the waves, turmoil. The earth, which as the end of the verse shows, comprised water too, solid and liquid in this indiscriminate

‘ **וְהָיָה תְהוֹמוֹ וְבוּהוּ** TOHU VE’VOHU’ condition was a confused seething mass. And the darkness lay on the turmoil, there was no light to penetrate the mass to awaken the germs slumbering in this mass to individual separate development." (Hirsch, p. 8)

Midrash Rabbah, an early collection of the oral tradition exp:

“ **עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹמוֹ** AAL PNAI TEHOM refers to the generation of the flood, as it is written

‘On That Day All The Fountains Of The Great TEHOM-Deep burst apart’. (Genesis 7:11)

AAL PNAI TEHOM refers to the exile inflicted by the evil empire [Rome, and all subsequent exiles] which was boundless. Just as there are no limits to the deep, so those evil people know no limits.”

TEHOM:

The unfathomable, undifferentiated womb out of which existence or HAVAYA, (rabbinic name for existence that contains within it the same letters as YHVH) as we experience it, emerged.

In this primordial energy all potential exists;
no'thing' has yet emerged out of it.

In the psychological realm this may be related to the wellspring of creativity; that unknown place that we avoid and yet are drawn to. Beyond that which we know consciously.

Meditation may be a tool for reaching back into the TEHOM. The Kabbalists would imagine the back of their heads, which of course one can not see, as a way of going past differentiated thought. Backward into the TEHOM.

תְהוֹמוֹ

A note on Sefer Yetzira:

Sefer Yetzira is the earliest and most 'basic' explanation of the letters that comprise this extraordinary language.

A Kabbalistic tradition is that Lag B'Omer is actually connected to the day in which Rabbi Akiva introduced Sefer Yetzira to his student Shimon Bar Yochai who became the voice/channel for the Zohar. For our times and consciousness Sefer Yetzira and Zohar are probably two of the most important re-sources that we need to re-learn.

The Zohar itself teaches that the stories of the Torah are her 'garments', the commandments are her 'body'. It invites us to go beyond these to the Soul of the Torah, to her inner teachings.

"The soul is the Beauty of Israel, who is real Torah. The soul of the soul is the Ancient Holy One. All is connected; this one to that one."
(Zohar, Matt, P. 44-5)