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Charles Williams and the Stone

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Abstract

Relates Islamic and Jewish creation stories to the Stone of King Solomon (the Shekinah) in *Many Dimensions*.

Additional Keywords

Creation in Islam; Creation in Judaism; Stone of King Solomon in Islam; Stone of King Solomon in Judaism; Williams, Charles. *Many Dimensions*—Stone of King Solomon

CHARLES WILLIAMS

AND THE STONE

RONA BEARE

The Stone in Many Dimensions is not only the jewel in King Solomon's crown, the jewel that fell from Satan's crown when he was defeated, the jewel that Adam had in paradise; it is also the means by which God created the world. In chapter 3 the Hajji says "When the Merciful One made the world, first of all He created that Stone and gave it to the Divine One whom the Jews call Shekinah, and as she gazed on it the universes arose and had being." Shekinah - originally the glory or the presence of God - is sometimes spoken of as a female emanation or bride of God, and as an agent in creation. I have not met a creation myth in which she gazes into a stone, but there is a Mohammedan story that God did so. In the late fourteenth century a Sufi poet called Jili gave a philosophical version of it, identifying the stone with the Idea of Ideas, which means Divine Reason or what St. John's Gospel calls the Word. R. A. Nicholson in Studies in Islamic Mysticism, pp. 121-2, writes: "Jili combines mystical ideas with an old cosmological myth in the following manner. The Idea of Ideas is called in another tradition 'the White Chrysolite, in which God was before he created the creatures'. When God willed to bring the world into existence, He looked on the Idea of Ideas (or the White Chrysolite) with the look of Perfection, whereupon it dissolved and became a water; for nothing in existence, not even the Idea of Ideas, which is the source of all existence, can bear the perfect manifestation of God. Then God looked on it with the look of Grandeur, and it surged in waves, like a sea tossed by the winds, and its grosser elements were spread out in layers like foam, and from that mass God created the seven earths with their inhabitants. The subtle elements of the water ascended, like vapour from the sea, and from them God created the seven heavens with the angels of each heaven. Then God made of the water seven seas which encompass the world. This is how the whole of existence originated."

E. W. Gibbs in his History of Ottoman Poetry, Vol. 1 p. 34, gives a similar story: "Their elaborate cosmogony was borrowed almost wholly from Rabbinical traditions. When God determined to manifest Himself through the creation of the world the first thing that He summoned into being was a glorious Radiance derived from His own Light. This is now generally called the 'Light of Mohammed' (Nur-i Muhammed) because in after ages it was incarnated in Mohammed. God looked on it and loved it and uttered this sentence, 'But for thee, verily I had not created the heavens!' And it was through this Light, and for its sake, that all things were made. For when God looked in love upon this Light, it 'perspired,' abashed before the Divine gaze; and from the subtlest essence that arose from its perspiration He created the First Soul, and then in a descending scale the souls of all the various orders of beings. After a while God looked again upon the Light, and from its perspiration He created the corporeal world. The first thing that arose was the 'Throne of God.'" Gibbs goes on to say that beneath the Throne, and of its light, God created the Footstool, the Tablet and Pen, and the Eight Paradises. Beneath them are six seas and seven heavens. Below the lowest heaven is the world we know: sun, moon, stars, air, earth.

The Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, under NUR MUHAMMADI, explains the pre-existence of the soul of the Prophet, which was created first of all things in the form of a dense and luminous point.

The Jewish Encyclopedia under CREATION, p. 340, gives another form of this Mohammedan myth. "The first object created was a tree with four thousand branches - the tree of knowledge; the second, the light of Mohammed - a pearl in the shape of a peacock, which was placed on the tree. Then

God made the mirror of shame, placing it so that the peacock saw his reflected image; whereupon shame seized him and he prostrated himself five times before God. The light of Mohammed, too, blushed before God, and in consequence perspired. From the beads of perspiration taken from various parts of the body were created the angels, the upper and lower thrones of God, the tablet of revelation or of decree, the pen, Paradise and Gehenna, sun, moon, and stars, the dividing interval between heaven and earth, the Prophets, the Sages, the martyrs, the pious, the celestial and the terrestrial Ka'bah, the Temple in Jerusalem, the places for the mosques, the Moslems - men and women, the souls of the Jews, the Christians, the Magi, and, finally, the earth from east to west, and all that it contains. This apocalyptic account is comparatively late but echoes rabbinical traditions concerning the light of the Messiah."

The same encyclopedia under MESSIAH p. 511 gives an account of the pre-existence of the Messiah, taken from Pesik R. "The former of these two passages says: 'At the beginning of the creation of the world was born the King Messiah, who mounted into God's thoughts before the world was made'; and in the latter passage it is related that God contemplated the Messiah and his works before the creation of the world and concealed him under His throne; that Satan, having asked God who the Light was under His throne, was told it was the one who would bring him to shame in the future, and, being then allowed, at his request, to see the Messiah, he trembled and sank to the ground, crying out, 'Truly this is the Messiah who will deliver me and all heathen kings over to Hell.'"

The pearl in the shape of a peacock was created, it was not divine; the White Chrysolite may be divine, since "God was in it". In Many Dimensions the Stone is created, being First Matter, but is called "the divine stone".



The Shell

A shell on the sea-shore
Deserted, brittle and dead
Within whose concave whorl
The wind whispered and said,
"Fear not - you are not dead;
Majestical, star-led,
The Sea will come - The Sea!"
So is my soul in me.

Norman Power