The One: God's Unity and Genderless Divinity in Judaism
Hagar Lahav
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This article examines the cultural ways in which traditional Judaism understands the relationship between an individual and Divinity. The article shows that this understanding has deep gendered dimensions. Grounded in feminist critiques of theology, as well as in Jewish studies and cultural studies, the article shows that the conceptualization of God-person relationship, in both Orthodox and Kaballic Jewish streams, is based on a hierarchical division to three different spaces. These spaces are: Mitzvah (Commandment, Duty, Law), Grace, and Desire or Will. The Mitzvah is perceived to be the highest space and is represented as ‘manly’. The intermediate space—Grace—is represented as a ‘good woman’ or as ‘mother’. This space is characterized by a sacred yearning, as well as by lack of stability and continuity, paralysis, and even death. The lowest space is the space of Desire and personal will, which is culturally represented by a child or a whore-woman. This space is characterized by an attitude of disregard, resistance and fear. The article demonstrates how this cultural division of Divinity into three, contradicts the declared Jewish position that God/Divinity is ‘One, Sole and Unique’ (Echad, Yachid ve-Meuchad), and points at the inherent need of genderless conceptualization of Divinity in Judaism.

**Keywords**: Divinity, faith, gender, genderless, God, Hebrew, Jewish culture, Judaism, Kaballa, Mitzvah

**Introduction**

Judaism is generally defined by its monotheistic perception of Divinity as One, United, and Indivisible Force. A deeper cultural and linguistic analysis such as that presented in this article reveals that this concep-

tion of the Divine is really fragmented by the patriarchal in at least two basic ways: first is God-language, including male images. This well-known critique, discussed widely in Jewish as well as Christian feminist theology,\(^2\) is part of the background but not at the centre of this paper. The second gender fragmentation of the supposedly indivisible God in Judaism can be found in looking at the traditional conceptualization of the relationship between the Divine and a person. I claim that such an approach reveals that—Divinity is divided into three different aspects or spaces that correlate two basic patriarchal images: the image of the patriarchal family (i.e., a hierarchical, genealogical structure that includes one father, one mother and a child or children) and the dualistic perception of the woman as either a mother or a whore. This paper aims to illuminate the latter form of cultural fragmentation of the indivisible Deity in Judaism and to propose a new conceptualization, one that re-unites the existing fragments in a free, equal, un-hierarchical, a-gender, and liberating manner.

**Linguistic Gendering of the Divine**

Although Judaism is a complex composite of perceptions and beliefs, one might argue that Jewish thinking is characterized by the perception of Divinity as an all inclusive, indivisible whole.\(^3\) Whether the Divine is conceived of as an essence, an existence, a being, a system, an energy, or the like, it is always one and inclusive: *Eyn od mil’vado*—‘There is nothing but him’, and also ‘there is no one else but him’.

In order to preserve the notion of such Divinity—One as an all inclusive, indivisible Unity, Judaism affirms that it is impossible—indeed forbidden—to describe Divinity in human terms; as stated in the commandment ‘Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness’ (Exod. 20.4).\(^4\) Accordingly, one might assume that such a conception of non-human Divinity, one that resists anthro-

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pomorphic visions of God, cannot be gendered. Yet, in Judaism, as in other religions, God is gendered and described as male.

This paradoxical situation has not escaped the eyes of feminist Jewish scholars who have concentrated their critique on three complementary linguistic forms that gendered the Divine. The first is the totalizing domination of male, hierarchical, and patriarchal images of God in Judaism; such as Father, King, Lord, Warrior, Hero, and so forth, and referring to God as ‘he’ or ‘him’. These verbal images incorporate assumptions about manhood, and concomitantly about womanhood, as well as about the hierarchical, patriarchal relationship between men and women. Here one can easily relate, for example, to the oft-repeated description of the Divine as One who relates to the disobedient/devoted people of Israel as husband does to his whoring/loyal wife. This very well-known critique by feminist theologians, together with the understanding that religious language does not merely create a certain social pattern but also grants its legitimacy, led one of the most important Jewish Orthodox feminist theologians to ask herself, as well as her readers, ‘Can we still pray to “Our Father in Heaven”?’. The second linguistic form that is the subject of critique, in a way stronger than the first, relates to the fact that Hebrew speech about — and to — God is always performed in the masculine. Such a form of denotation is a-priori masculine as it is rooted securely and substantively in the structure of the Hebrew language, which is among the most gendered of languages. The entire world is gendered in Hebrew and so it is impossible to relate to any essence — be it an object, a living entity, a person, or the Divine — in a genderless manner. Since Divinity must be gendered linguistically and since according to patriarchal principles it cannot be defined as a female, which represent the inferior, then all forms of reference to God must be in the masculine.

The third complementary linguistic form critiqued is that the universal is referred to in Hebrew, as in other languages, only in the masculine. For example, in Hebrew the word *adam* means a person. In doing so, it


6. See, for example, the book of Hosea.


refers not only to a particular historic/mythic (male) figure but also to all human beings (a phrase that in itself identifies the universal with the masculine). In Simone de Beauvoir’s words, the language itself defines maleness as normative and femaleness as the Other. From this perspective, it is impossible to relate to the Divine as feminine and still keep the notion of One, because any feminine reference (such as referring to the Goddess, for example) automatically implies, linguistically, that there is also a second, male, existence. In other words, ‘God’ can exist for itself, as a universal One, but ‘Goddess’ obligates the linguistic existence of (at least) two Divines—one male and one female.

As noted above, this linguistic critique is well established in feminist theology, from both Jewish and Christian perspectives. However, the patriarchal attribution of the conception of God in Judaism does not begin and end with the a-priori gender linguistic identification. From here on, I would like to focus on a less obvious aspect of the patriarchal notion of the Jewish God—descriptions of God’s nature through a denotation of characteristics that result in a division of what I claim is, in essence, indivisible.

Dividing the Divine

Traditional Judaism claims that God can be realized, touched, or connected to humans in their lives via three different personal aspects that complement one another:

- **Mitzvah** (Commandment, Duty, Law) — What must a person do to satisfy the will of Divinity?
- **Chessed** (Grace) — What has a person been given by the Divine? What are the capabilities with which God blesses a person? And accordingly, what is a person capable or incapable of doing in order to satisfy the Divine will?
- **Yetzer** (Desire, Will, Lust) — What does a person want? What does a person desire from the Divine? Does a person desire to satisfy God’s will? Does a person have other desires, stronger that this desire?

9. This linguistic pattern creates, of course, an illogical relation in which B (woman) is being described as totally different from—and as inferior to—A (man), and at the same time, as being a part of A (universal = man).


11. See nn. 2 and 5.

A critical reading of Judaic texts reveals that these three components reflect two basic complementary patriarchal conceptions in mainstream Judaism. The first is the structure of the family and relations between its members—father, mother and child, as perceived in the patriarchal-heterosexual conception of the world. The second are the roles allocated to women according to the patriarchal conception of their relations with males—as a mother or as a whore. Those two polar extremes are represented in the Midrash in the figures of Lilith (the demon, the temptation, Adam’s first wife who refused to surrender to him and left the Garden of Eden) versus Eve (the mother of all living beings who is created from Adam’s body to be his helper) (Gen. 2.18, 21-24; 4.1).

Also, it is worth noting the similarity between these two complementary perceptions of the three Divine components—the Mitzvot/Law, Grace and Desire—and the Freudian psychic structures—super-ego, ego, and id. The table below summarizes these four relations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jewish terms</th>
<th>Family Position</th>
<th>Gender Position</th>
<th>Freudian concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Mitzvah’ (Duty,</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Man (normative,</td>
<td>Superego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commandment, Law)</td>
<td></td>
<td>universal)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Chessed’ (Grace)</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Mother (good woman)</td>
<td>Ego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Yetzer’ (Desire,</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Whore (bad woman)</td>
<td>Id</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will, Lust, Sin)</td>
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According to this patriarchal conception, ‘Desire’ (Yetzer) — representing childishness or prostitution — has the lowest ranking and is least valued. It is defined principally in negative terms as narcissism, on the one hand, and social threat, on the other hand. As such, Desire is perceived along a spectrum from fear to disregard. Many times it is predefined as sin. These are the threatening depths of the subconscious, as well as the body, which disrupt mature adults’ attempts to control their lives.

‘Grace’ (Chessed) is attributed a middle ground, one located in the maternal world. This is the space of forgiveness, embodiment, love,
and the understanding of the limited nature of human life in the face of the temptations of Desire and difficulties of obligation. However, it is perceived to be the place of ‘non-action’, ‘non-progression’, and in certain ways is a place of paralysis and even death. Accordingly, in some Jewish traditions, Grace is represented as being achievable only in the next world.\(^7\)

The highest status is reserved for Mitzvot (duties, laws); actions taken to fulfil God’s plan. This is assumed to be the essence of existence and responsible for the quality of a person’s life. Accordingly, a person is rewarded for performance of a Mitzvah and punished for its non-performance. And, of course, it is masculine. This masculinity manifests itself, for example, in the fact that Mitzvot are directed mostly to men. Moreover, some claim that men’s Mitzvot are designed to reflect the ‘special relationship’ between men and God.\(^8\)

**Orthodox Conceptualization**

According to this triangular patriarchal conceptualization, these three essential components are portrayed existing in a strict hierarchical order. This order assigns the Mitzvot, the laws, a privileged position and, thereby weakens God’s Grace, as well as, human Desire. In Orthodox-Halachic Judaism, belief in ‘Our Father in heaven’ has been preoccupied for hundreds of years with the Mitzvot.\(^9\) For example, the Orthodox claims that there are 613 obligatory Mitzvot (only three of which are directed solely to women). Volumes have been written about each mitzvah in order to

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explain and to interpret its deepest meanings and the Halachic (Law) literature constitutes the largest body of Jewish writing.

At the same time, Orthodox Judaism seems driven to suppress human desire for the Divine. In relating to the family structure, presented earlier, where Desire is ascribed to the child, an associated form of this symbolization, the demand to repress Desire is represented by the repeated sacrifice of children by their fathers in biblical accounts, either in a symbolic or in an historic act: for example, the near sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22) and the symbolic sacrifice of Ishmael (Genesis 21) by Abraham; the symbolic sacrifice of Esau by Isaac (Genesis: 27); the actual sacrifice of Jephthah’s daughter by her father (Judges 11); and the symbolic sacrifice of Michal by King Saul (1 Sam. 18.20-21, 1 Sam. 25.44, 2 Sam. 3.13-16).

And, in a complementary way, the mother-whore perception associates Desire with the ‘bad woman’ the Bible continually compares ‘the sons of Israel’ who desired to worship gods or goddesses others than YHWH with a whoring wife who prostitutes herself. Such a conceptualization, for example, is the key conception in the Book of Hosea. From this conception one can easily understand the almost obsessive way in which the Mishnah and the Talmud are preoccupied with the control of sexuality, in general, and women’s sexuality in particular.

At the same time, Grace / Motherhood is both glorified and trivialized in the patriarchal conception that is the foundation of Orthodox Judaism. It is glorified as the source of life, as the essence of life, as God’s presence: ‘Return YHWH, rescue my soul, save me for your grace’ pleads the biblical writer(s) to God (Ps. 6.5). However, at the same time in Orthodox Jewish praxis, Grace is trivialized in all manner of rhetorical and practical forms. It is articulated either as marginal to the obligation of the law (private instead of public, imaginary instead of real, passive instead of active, concrete instead of transcendental, emotional instead of rational etc.), or as unreachable in ‘this world’.

However, in my point of view, in seeking to preserve the integrity of this complex of mutual conceptualizations, traditional Orthodox Judaism fights a losing battle by attacking the inner forces of a person’s soul. Furthermore, it loses the power of the non-masculine components of both the Divine and its creation, for the following reasons:

20. Texts, which are not included in the Bible, but are considered to be sacred.
21. For a deep discussion of this phenomena from feminist perspective, see Plaskow, Standing Again at Sinai, pp. 170-210. See n. 2 for details.
22. ‘Shuvah Yah’ chaktsah nafshi hoshieni lemaan chasdecha’.
23. For further elaboration of this subject see the Kabbalistic perceptions of the Shechinah in the next section.
1. *Desire* is not solely a craving and a drive that represses responsibility; it is also the source of belief in other, better options. It is not only a source of danger and threat, but also an opportunity for growth and progress; it is a source of creativity and hope.

2. *Grace* does not belong solely to the next world. Love and forgiveness can—indeed should—be realized first and foremost in the here and now. It is the essence of existence, no less reasonable than action and obligation. It has the capability of connecting past—present—future, will and action, and the other dichotomist categories referred to previously.

3. *Mitzvot* are not only ‘obligations’, accompanied by ‘reward’ and ‘punishment’. They are also expressions of responsibility and choice whose acceptance or rejection has consequences. As such *Mitzvot* are not only undertaken on behalf of a commanding, all-knowing Father. They exemplify a person’s right, ability, and desire to act and to take responsibility for the outcomes of such actions.

Historically, alternative forms of religious Jewish discourse have attempted to restore a balanced inter-relationship between these three approaches to the Divine. However, rather than undermining the hierarchical order, such attempts end up preserving it. For example, Hasidism and the Kabbalah (see the next section) tried to reform the hierarchical conceptualization, but eventually surrendered to the supremacy of the law in Judaism (at least until the mid-20th century). Other reformist attempts that refused to surrender to this strict priority of the Jewish law were banished from Judaism (such as, Christianity, on one hand; and Gnosticism and the Sabbatean movement and on the other hand).

**Kabbalistic Revision**

Critical and mystical approaches within Judaism, including the *Kabbalah* and the *Hasidism*, have long been aware of the consequences that Orthodox Judaism suffers for domination by *Mitzvah* of Desire and Grace.

24. I cannot resist citing Irigaray’s insightful words: ‘Hell appears to be a result of culture that has annihilated happiness in earth by sending love, including divine love, into a time and place beyond our relationships here and now’ (*Irigaray, Thinking the Difference*, p. 112. See n. 17 above for details).


27. This section is based primarily on my understanding of the important Kabalist Rabbi Yehudah Ashlag (See: Y. Ashlag, *Sefer Hahakdanot* [Jerusalem: Press of the
They do so by re-conceptualizing Desire and Grace in a manner that enhances their value. For example, Kabbalistic approaches added feminine aspects to the masculine references to the Divine by reserving the masculine to the transcendental parts of Divinity and assigning the feminine to the Shechinah, the Divine presence. In calling for restoration of what they call ‘the lost honour’ of the Shechinah-femininity in the Jewish tradition, they reduce the difference in value between the Law and Grace; and by talking about Desire for God’s presence (the Desire for Geula = salvation from the Galut = exile), they reduce the differences in value between Grace and Desire.

In doing so, the Kabbalistic reformation does not undermine the traditional philosophical perspective, but rather preserves it in three important ways:

The first preservation is of the notion of hierarchy. Even if the gaps between the ranks are diminished, they still remain. The gap between Mitzvah and Grace, between God and the Shechinah, is hierarchical in many ways: The Shechinah is God’s Shechinah. She belongs to him. She is God’s wife. God can exist without Shechinah, but God’s Shechinah cannot exist without God. She is weak, can be exiled, can be lost, and cannot be trusted. An example is the phrase ‘Kiss of the Shechinah’ which is a euphemism for death. He, on the other hand, is always the All-Good, the Almighty.

The gap between Grace and Desire presents itself in different ways in the works of different writers. In general, it can be summarized as a perception that sees Desire (Yetzer) as the basic drive of creation (Yetzira). In its raw state, however, Desire represents temptation, a great
danger to the bodily, bestial and unstable nature of ‘this world’ (Olam ha-zeh). Only a transformation of Desire from a ‘will to accept’ (id, lower ego) to a ‘will to give’ or the ‘will to influence (good)’, is capable of transforming people from the bodily existence of raw Desires to the spiritual loving world of the Shechinah, and from there—onto God. Only such transformation can bring people from the state of ‘this world’ to the ‘next world’.29

The second preservation of the traditional perspective lies in the retention of the gender assumptions included in each component, as can be seen in the last paragraphs. In other words, narrowing the gaps is accomplished without opposing the gender identity associated with these different aspects of Divinity. God remains only male; the Shechinah remains only female, his bride; and Desire remains as either the bad woman or the immature parts of the male personhood. From this perspective, for the mature Jewish male, Desire is a drive to attain unification that is achieved by pairing with the female-Shechinah, in order to reach the ultimate male—God.

There is almost no Kabbalistic writing about how the Jewish woman reaches either God or the Shechinah. Unsurprisingly, the very few extant references are only to ‘good women’—the mothers, and not to ‘bad women’—the whores. Generally, the common suggestion is for them to pair with their husbands, who in parallel pair with the Shechinah, which in turn pairs with God. This pairing will enable ‘good women’ to fulfil their role in the creation, which is, of course, the role of wifehood and motherhood.

This articulation of the Divine-human relationship obviously preserves patriarchal, dualistic, and hierarchical conceptions of gender. Women fulfill themselves through their bodies, men—through their spirituality; men can reach God by themselves, women need men; the only worthwhile sexual relations are heterosexual relations that should take place only within an official family, one that has received its ‘blessing from Heaven’; the only purpose of pairing is creation; and, of course, in doing so there is a total unification between sex and gender.

The third Kabbalistic preservation of the traditional perspective is that of divisibility itself. Here, as in the Orthodox perception, the supposedly un-divided, stays, in effect, divided. Unlike the Orthodox vision, in the Kabbalah the parts of the One can be paired with each other, but they remain nevertheless substantively different from one another. Those parts can never truly dissolve entirely into one another, and the strict boundaries between them are retained. And thus complete unity of the One remains unattainable.

29. See Ashlag’s writing, n. 27.
Based on this critique, I claim that the Kabbalistic gender revision is far from sufficient. In my view, not only does the understanding of each component, their application to gender, their assumed values, and the nature of their inter-relationship need to be revised in order to retrieve a less patriarchal conception of the Jewish God, but more fundamentally—the actual conception of the divisibility of the Divine must be reformed. In other words, the conception of unity needs to be reaffirmed based on the axiomatic notion with which I started this discussion; namely that Divinity in Judaism is One. As One, it is neither human nor divisible, neither familial nor gendered.

All forms of patriarchal thinking disguise and in doing so prevent us from experiencing God’s unity. Thus, the spirit of the Divine, the holy—in which will, capabilities, and responsibilities are unified—becomes inconceivable. Since these components are presented in patriarchy as separate entities—and even as contradictory to one another—it becomes impossible to conceive of, let alone believe in, such unity.

Accordingly, in my view the feminist project includes a reconceptualization of the Jewish God. As such, this project involves both of the two meanings of the Hebrew word *drash*: it is both a demand and a process of interpretation.

The result of such a process should be a reinterpretation and a reclaiming of a genderless Divinity. In this notion, I do not mean that Divinity does not have different faces. I do mean, however, that these faces of the Divine should not be contradictory, nor even conceived to be complementary to each other. Instead, they are different aspects of the same force that manifests itself through all of its aspects, throughout each one of us. Such a conceptualization does not include an indispensable connection to gender and/or to sex.

Moreover, this notion should not be understood to exist only at the declarative level, as denotation, but primarily as essence. In other words, this return to the universal must resist strongly and openly the patriarchal tendency to identify the universal with the masculine. It should insist that the non-human Divinity manifests itself in hu-wo/man life in all of these aspects. In the patriarchal conception criticized above, some of these aspects are articulated as feminine and others as masculine; some as mature and others as childish; some as spirit and some as body: and so forth. However, according to the reconceptualization they exist indivisibly within the One, as part of the Unity. Not only is there no hierarchical division between components, there is actually no division whatsoever.
Though there is continuous unity of all aspects of the Divine, some can be dominant, just as certain aspects are dominant in a particular society, in a particular personality, in a particular moment of an individual’s life. Similarly, all aspects always exist together, admitted or not, in women as well as in men, in adults as well as in children; in all of us. All these different articulations co-exist within Divinity, and accordingly the Divine can neither be conceived of as a human/man being, nor be symbolized, as such.

In my view, such a project of a genderless conceptualization of the Divine does not contradict the principles of Judaism. On the contrary, it restores it to an original path that has been lost. Only a genderless Divinity preserves, truthfully, the principle of unity. Such a conceptualization not only exists beyond the differential value of masculinity and femininity and maturity and childishness in patriarchal thinking, but also beyond the dichotomies that characterize such thinking. In such a conception, there would be no division by gender, nor any of the other types of divisions referred to throughout this essay. Furthermore, worship through such a conceptualization of Divinity may bring a person to the point where Mitzvah, Grace, and Desire are unified/one; in which the mother, father, and the child are one within it.

Such a project is not unique to Judaism. Similar attempts have been undertaken in other religions. However, such an effort is unique in Judaism in two ways. In a positive direction, two principles support advancement of this feminist conceptualization. The first is the emphasis in Judaism on God as non-human existence and the prohibition of representation in human form, as discussed earlier. The second is the tradition of investigating Divine intentions. Within this tradition the ‘meaning’ of the sacred is considered to be greater, richer, and more dynamic than the strict literal interpretation, and thus the evolution of ideas is considered to be a cumulative manifestation of God’s divine providence in itself. From this perspective, novelty in God-perception is not only accepted, but encouraged. These two principles make the attempt to fashion a genderless Divinity through the use of Jewish resources relatively ‘user-friendly’.

In a negative direction, it is impossible to escape the gendered nature of the Hebrew language, discussed earlier. These linguistic forms, along with the longstanding, strict patriarchal practices of the religious establishment, which lie outside the purview of this dissertation, are a difficult challenge for this project.

30. For a brilliant analysis and use of this tradition from a feminist perspective see Ross, *Expanding the Palace of Torah*, pp. 197-212. See n. 2 above.

31. The subject of the patriarchal practices of the Jewish religious establishment is
Personal Epilogue

I wish to conclude on a personal note. As a feminist believer who is not attached to the religious establishment, prayer (in Hebrew) is my most difficult challenge today. In my view, one of the basic reasons for believing in the existence of a system, energy, a law that is greater than myself, and in which I have a place, is that such a belief brings into my life a force that I can turn to and from which I can receive. Belief such as this requires the existence of prayer—as a medium of communication between a person and the Divine. Yet, how can one pray to a genderless Divinity if the language employed does not include words that enable any form of genderless expression?

‘God is my answer’, I said to myself when I chose to believe in the Divine. However, there is no Hebrew expression, such as the English ‘is’, that conceals gender, only HIM. And, thus, this one embryonic sentence presents the challenge with which I am struggling today: the challenge to close the verbal gap between myself—a feminist woman—and my genderless Divinity.

I still do not have an answer to this challenge. At the end of the day I still have to speak of the Divine in Hebrew, a language in which God only can be referred to in the masculine form. Yet, when I speak in such a manner now, my kavanah—my intention, as well as my direction—is to something else. Given my language’s limitations, I am incapable of speaking, indeed even thinking, of the Divine in the most ultimate of senses—as a unity—in genderless terms. But while it seems that this may be the case forever, I have succeeded recently in creating a complete prayer—in Hebrew—to a genderless Divinity. Speech in this prayer is directed neither to a Female nor to a male. This may seem a minor achievement, as it is only one short prayer. Yet, it has taken me three years to articulate.

Is the effort to refashion a Genderless-One-Divinity worthwhile? And, if so, why? My answer is yes, most definitely. First, I have in my life Divinity in which I can participate, with all of the strength, hope, and affirmation that this concept has for me. Such belief is a primary

the key consideration of most Jewish-feminist thinking, which tends to neglect theological questions in favor of practical concerns that are assumed to be more urgent. See H. Lahav, ‘Reviewing Plaskow’s “The Coming of Lilith”’, in Nashim 12 (Fall 2006), pp. 301-308.

32. The Hebrew word kavanah, meaning both direction and intention, is a key notion in Kabbalistic thinking. It symbolizes, on the one hand, the inner changes that a person must undertake in order to reach divinity; and, on the other hand, the attempt to repair oneself as well as the world.
aspect of my personal development. Second, I see a similarity between belief in such Divinity and my feminist belief. Both differ, significantly, from the hegemonic secular-liberal belief surrounding me. In proposing an alternative to it, they fracture it and thus allow new options to present themselves. Both offer a vision, a dream, a belief in the possibility of a better existence, on both personal and social levels. Both suggest tikun,\(^{33}\)—a repairing of the world and of the individual. Hope is the essence of my belief both in the Divine and in Feminism.

And thus I say to my Divinity: Bruchi Eti El’Yha, Ruach Ha’Olam.\(^{34}\)

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33. The Hebrew word *tikun*, meaning renewal, repair or fixing, is a key notion in Kabbalistic thinking. It symbolizes the human ability to reach not only expiation, but to repair the world, as well as, themselves through devotion to Divinity.

34. This phrase is a deliberate distortion of the traditional Jewish blessing ‘Baruch ata Adonay melech ha’olam’ that can be translated as ‘Blessed be you (in masculine) Lord, king of the world’. ‘Bruchi’ is a non-existent word: neither Baruch (masculine) nor Bracha (feminine) but a non-gendered form which is not possible in the Hebrew. The ending ‘ei’ applies to First Person Singular. So Bruchi means, ‘blessed genderless-you/me’, referring to the genderless nature of Divinity and its ability to blur the boundaries between first, second and third person. The same applies to ‘Ati’. El is ‘God’, but also ‘to’ or ‘towards’. Yha is one of the names of the Jewish God (referring to the explicit name Y-H-W-H). Putting together those two words I create the word elyah, which means ‘to/towards her’. So there is a game of words here, creating a feminine figure out of two masculine manes of God. Also El-Yha refers to the biblical story of Hagar, how was the only woman in the Bible who gave God a name, El-Hay (God-is-alive or Living-God). ‘Ruach’—spirit or wind. This is one of the rare words in Hebrew that can be used both in masculine and feminine forms. And of course, it represents different power relations from the traditional ‘king’. ‘Ha’olam’ is the world or the universe. The resulting blessing is, ‘Blessed be (the genderless) you/me, El-Yah (named God/to her), the (genderless) Spirit of the Universe’. 