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BABEL

Interpreting the Manifest | Confronting Chaos

A MASTERS DISSERTATION

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CHAOS AND TRANSLATION
THE LEGACY OF BABEL

Interpreting the Manifest | Confronting Chaos and the Search for a Unified Field of Meaning.

"There are only two ways to live a life one is that *nothing is a miracle*, and the other, is that *everything is a miracle*." – Albert Einstein.

DECLARATION

I declare that the writing of BABEL - INTERPRETING THE MANIFEST | CONFRONTING CHAOS is entirely my own work. All the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete referencing. It is submitted for the degree of Masters of Fine Art in the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university. Should the dissertation or sections from the dissertation be quoted or referred to in any form this must be acknowledged.

Jonathan Gecelter

15 February 2017

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ABSTRACT

The physicist, Albert Einstein's startling statement, **"**There are only two ways to live a life, one, **is that nothing is a miracle,** and the other, **is that everything is a miracle."** prompted a series of questions in relation to my own questioning as to the miraculousness of life itself and the disconcerting coexistence of uncertainty, apparent chaos and seeming randomness of the world around me. Paradigms of the mystical and the scientific, in the succeeding chapters, compete and coalesce within a process of interpretation in an attempt to investigate the structural ambiguity of holding both views simultaneously.

The scope of my investigation has focused on an analytical interplay between the biblical narratives of Babel and Abraham, with the scientific psychosocial theory of Danah Zohar's *Quantum Self*. These seemingly dramatically different paradigms are used as a lens to analyze the complex structure of a series of random or miraculous events in Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu's 2006 film, titled *Babel*.

Ultimately, the insights gained from these texts and the analysis of the film had a profound effect on the production of a body of work, which also engaged, with multiple modes of translation and interpretation. Significantly, in a personal attempt to engage with a unified field of meaning a criticality emerged, which personally empowered me to challenge yet integrate my deep-seated Judaic beliefs with a contemporary scientific paradigm profoundly affecting my art practice.

METHOD AND PRESENTATION

I have included a number of footnotes where necessary. These appear at the end of each chapter. Also included is an appendix that enhances an understanding *Gemmatria*, the numerology of the Hebrew language.

The word-count may need justification. I have used the film *Babel* as my case study. It is extensive and has resulted in two lengthy chapters in which I include large extracts of dialogue from the original film script, and if excluded, would render the chapters indecipherable and incomplete. These two chapters alone total over thirteen thousand words.

The analysis of the case study, *Babel*, is based on two paradigms, which have had to be developed in the remaining chapters. Here again, editing out sections in these chapters would compromise their reading. The word-count for the remaining chapters is around the twenty three thousand mark, a number within the required range between twenty and twenty five thousand words.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 08

CHAPTER 1: CASE STUDY: DESCRIPTION 13

CHAPTER 2: THE QUANTUM SELF. 26

CHAPTER 3: BABEL 37

CHAPTER 4: ABRAHAM'S PARADIGM 48

CHAPTER 5: FILM ANALYSIS: TRANSLATING *BABEL* 63

CHAPTER 6: A UNIFIED FIELD 96

CHAPTER 7: MY PRACTICE 102

CONCLUSION 130

BIBLIOGRAPHY 131

APPENDIX 133

Introduction

"There are only two ways to live a life, one, is that nothing is a miracle, and the other, is that everything is a miracle." – Albert Einstein.[1]

The question is how would Einstein possibly have defined what a miracle is? Miracles are generally understood to be extraordinary beneficent events that are associated with divine intervention. However, with Einstein's Judaic background, miracles may also be interpreted rather to be situations that are challenging, destructive as well as being beneficent, always acting as a divine molding-principle, since all manifestation is regarded essentially as being a divine intervention. The corollary in Einstein's statement is the possibility that precludes the divine, yet nevertheless, investigates the essential intelligence of life itself, in a search for an underlying order to the complexity of manifestation.

The fundamental question arising from Einstein's quote is whether or not there exists a divine order that underpins the chaotic; a system in which the chaos of the everyday is an illusionary facade that obfuscates a miraculous order; a causal system reflecting a universal purpose ingrained with laws defining paths of traversal. Or, is the apparently inexplicable randomness of everyday events simply the unfolding of uncontrolled, unrelated, accidental occurrences reflecting an inherent disorder. Is chaos, simply chaos?

A universal disorder seems to negate the notion of a system. It becomes an entity that defies control, a volatile unfolding of the random where rules are defunct. Interpreting the everyday in this way seems to be open to all possibility; an overwhelming notion. It thus raises a second question: Are there discernable patterns within the chaos that may be explained without the notion of the miraculous? Interpreting chaos in terms of patterns begins to impose structure on the chaotic, and to describe an alternative worldview that may reject the notion of a divine order but nevertheless contains an order.

Einstein's injunction regarding two worldviews frames my investigation. The one evolves from the narrative of Babel; it addresses the chaos emanating from the proliferation of languages as an act of God, while the other emerges from the

comprehensive endeavors of contemporary science that envisages the world as unpredictable and random. One model evolves through myth and its commentaries, while the other derives from scientific discovery and its extrapolations.

Attendant questions pertaining to each worldview relate to its functionality, and pivotal is the notion of free will and its manifestation within the confines of each interpretation. How is free choice reflected in a life lived as miracle, and how does it manifest within other embedded patterns in chaos?

Questions of free will versus obedience, divine intervention versus random chance, and order versus disorder are consistently re-visited throughout each chapter in a bid to remain close to Einstein's opening quotation, the quotation that inspires me to explore and articulate my relationship with apparent chaos of the everyday.

> 'Articulations are not simply descriptions … On the contrary, articulations are attempts to formulate what is initially inchoate, or confused, or badly formulated. But this kind of formulation or reformulation does not leave its object unchanged. To give a certain articulation is to shape our sense of what we desire or what we hold important in a certain way.' (Zohar: 180)

Babel - Interpreting the Manifest / Confronting Chaos … articulates my personal vision as an artist. I have translated various texts and narratives, developing interpretations that have explored my questions. I have attempted to establish integrity between my *inner perspective* of the chaos in the everyday with *its articulation* in both my written work and my visual practice.

Babel - Interpreting the Manifest / Confronting Chaos … begins with a description of a case study. It frames Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu's film *Babel* (2006) as a template for interpreting chaos in a contemporary context.

The title of the film may be traced to a narrative of the same name, Babel, in *The Book of Genesis* of the *Old Testament*[3]. *Babel* the film, thus illustrates repercussions initiated in the original narrative as they might manifest in the year 2006. Interpretation of the film naturally invokes an interrogation of its source, the ancient text.

As metaphor, the original text of Babel embodies the shift from a unified to a splintered reality. It is the shattering of a singularity, the dissolution of one unifying language that marks the onset of multiple languages and the reality of confused communication. As myth, it represents a traditional historical imperative that initiates the concept of translation itself.

I have constructed an interpretation of the narrative that embraces aspects of Hebraic traditionalism so as to make sense of the narrative and also to initiate a parable, Abraham's paradigm that facilitates the translation of chaos in terms of the miraculous. The paradigm frames chaos in terms of the miraculous and describes a worldview that orientates toward a reunion with the lost one language, the 'elusive ultimate' in a field of chaos.

The underlying aim of my investigation is to trace disrupted communications that define contemporary chaos to their source in Babel, where the Hebraic narrative provides a terminology unique for the interpretation of the disjuncture.

Safah[4] the mystical intuitive language of 'pure' divine communication is shattered into *Lashon*[5], the language of broken communication, of 'difference', which requires translation. *Safah* and *Lashon* are terms that connote different aspects and ways of communication. Synonyms for the English equivalent of 'language', they each reflect divergent manifestations of the flow of communication.

Safah refers to a holy language characterized by an intuitive unambiguous understanding between intention and reception of any message while simultaneously embracing the will of God. It is the one unifying language that dominated communication prior to the building of the tower of Babel.

Lashon connotes language that divides; it augurs translation. Messages that always require translation are the elements of *Lashon*, where intention can only be surmised and multi interpretations are possible and probable.

The splintering of the unity of *Safah* into the confusion of *Lashon* defines the divine retribution in the Babel narrative, and remains the condition of communication into the contemporary, as depicted in the film *Babel*. It is *Safah* that Abraham's paradigm aspires to re-attain thereby resolving the confusion implicit in *Lashon*, thus elucidating chaos.

Miracles infer influences of the ineffable and embrace interdependency between the mysterious and human consciousness. Abraham's paradigm is a model that embraces the notion that 'everything is a miracle', a manifestation of divine order. It is presented in chapter four tracing Abraham's altruistic journey, a journey to the self and simultaneously an attempt to return to an untrammelled divine order; an attempt at mending the rupture that occurred between God and humans as they engaged in selfish ways of attainment in the original parable of Babel.

A balanced interpretation of the narrative of Babel, however, demands an unbiased perspective, one that is not rooted only in language dedicated to traditional texts. *The Quantum Self*, a book by the American-British author Danah Zohar[2], facilitates this requirement. Chapter two - *Quantum*, the source that interrogates patterns in chaos from a scientific perspective, therefore precedes the central translation of Babel, allowing its precepts to juxtapose mystical and traditional terminologies.

Zohar's *The Quantum Self* proposes a model of consciousness that defines a worldview based on principles derived from quantum physics theory. It is a theory centered on consciousness and interpersonal relationship as they parallel subatomic reality, where action is solely dependent on free will and problem solving, and the evolution of consciousness is attributed its mechanisms. It is predicated on extant neural patterning, and human physicality in relation to the chaos of life, being translated as devoid of the miraculous; it represents living a self-directed life, a life of infinite potential, where 'nothing is a miracle'.

The dual interpretation, both mystical and scientific of Babel, is presented in Chapter Three - *The Original Narrative*, its principles carry-over into the translation of the film, which is the subject of chapter five.

Iñárritu's film *Babel* is the contemporary doorway through which an analysis of Babel's linguistic repercussions is intercepted. The paradigms based on *The Quantum Self* and the developed model around Abraham's archetype address the conundrum within Einstein's statement and attempt alternative resolutions for chaos. The mystical is counterpointed with the scientific, forming the analytical framework for translating chaos, as they are both applied to selected 'critical moments' within the film, thus 'confronting chaos'. Two distinct interpretations of free will emerge as factors that

negotiate the everyday, each suggesting authentic impacting on the evolution of consciousness.

Chapter six – A Unified Field of Meaning, explores convergence and divergence of the two worldviews as they are collated in a conclusion that seeks to articulate a unified field of meaning; its findings are interwoven with my visual practice, the subject of chapter seven - My Practice. This chapter investigates the integration and resolution of personal events that inform the work and processes, with a visual language that addresses concepts of the spiritual in abstract painting drawn from a major compendium of essays that appear in *The Spiritual in Art – Abstract Painting 1890 – 1985,* dealing with the ineffable in art. It questions the miraculous versus the random as the creative process unfolds and thus draws on the mystical and scientific as articulated here.

Translation and interpretation are thematic and permeate the investigation. Narrative and text are translated to enable an interpretation of the case study and my practice. My interior experience is translated visually as it manifests in the text-like works, and its symbolic use of form and color become the elements that initiate a reverse translation into a verbal articulation. Source texts, case study, and practice are interrelated and interpreted as a unified field of meaning. The extensive body of work involved an ongoing questioning, within the creative process, to balance personal insight with the acute observations of the scientific and of the immensity of a divine order, internalizing Einstein's seemingly contradictory but all encompassing notions regarding the miraculous and the chaotic.

Footnotes

1. Albert Einstein was a German-born theoretical physicist. He developed the general theory of relativity, one of the two pillars of modern physics. Einstein's work is also known for its influence on the philosophy of science.1879 – 1955.

2. Danah Zohar is an American-British author and speaker on physics, philosophy, complexity and management. Zohar studied Physics and Philosophy at MIT and did postgraduate work in Philosophy, Religion & Psychology at Harvard University. She is Visiting Professor in the College of Management at Guizhou University in China. She was included in the 2002 Financial Times Prentice Hall book *Business Minds* as one of "the world's greatest management thinkers". She proposed spiritual intelligence as an aspect of intelligence that sits above the traditional measure of IQ and the various notions of emotional intelligence, at the conscious level of meaning and purpose, and that is derived from the properties of a living complex adaptive system. She advocates quantum physics as a guiding metaphor for personal psychology and corporate and social organization, in contrast with the deterministic Newtonian mechanics and machine metaphor found in the scientific management of Frederick Winslow Taylor and other early management thinkers.

3. *Hashem* Hebrew term literally, 'The Name', denoting God.

4. *Safah* Hebrew term denoting a holy (or dedicated) language

5. *Lashon* Hebrew word for language – the spoken tongue

Chapter One Case Study – Description

The 2006 film *Babel* directed by Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu encompasses four cultures and their interaction. It is a narrative that studies the breakdown of communication. It goes beyond the difficulties between the differences of Arabic, Spanish, English, Japanese and sign language as it addresses a fragmented reality of the human condition in a seemingly chaotic contemporary 'global' world that facilitates the crossing of borders. Iñárritu talks of the aftermath of Babel into the present. The communicative confusion instituted in the bible narrative persists into the contemporary context. In a foreward to the film he comments that all things were possible when one language existed thus implying the struggle imposed by it's shattering. The film thus represents a reality made of the shards of that broken language as it reflects the difficulties of manifest chaos in contemporary culture.

Four cultures predominate the narrative. The viewer is transported from Morocco to the United States of America, to Mexico and to Japan, linking contrasting cultures through the actions of the protagonists.

Richard's family is central among the principle characters within the plot of the film. He links Amelia and her family in Mexico to incidents that transpire through the interactivities of a Japanese family, father Yasujiro and his daughter Chieko who are bound to Abdullah's family in Morocco through Hassan who once acted as a safari guide to Yasujiro. The details of their inter-relationship are pivotal to the unfolding of the events in the film.

Although the camera constantly shifts between countries, all events are causally interconnected. The shooting of an American tourist through the window of a bus initiates the unfolding drama. It is the beginning of the narrative within the film, and also represents the end of a cycle, as it reflects the end point of a causal chain of events within the story.

The gun is significant as the object that integrates the script. By tracing its history the causal connections are revealed. It is with this backdrop that communicative fragmentation of Babel is evidenced. The miscommunication and incomprehension that defines the narrative reflects the title of *Babel* and alludes to the repercussions of the

original parable Babel. *Babel* is the manifestation of miscommunication in a contemporary context. It illustrates a splintered reality, the aftermath of an ancient error.

> *Hashem* descended to look at the city and tower, which the sons of man built, and *Hashem*[1] said, "Behold, they are one people with one language for all, and this they begin to do! And now, should it not be withheld from them all they proposed to do? Come, let us descend and there confuse their language, that they should not understand one another's language."

EXT. SMALL EATERY, MOROCCAN DESERT -- LATER

The group of tourists spread about a small eatery with open-air tables on a dusty terrace. A bus is parked behind them.

At a table, on one end of the terrace with views to a cluster of mountains, Richard and Susan look through some menus. Richard seems at ease in this place. Susan appears to be bothered by the dust and otherness.

A waiter brings a plate and some cutlery.

WAITER (in broken English.) You want to order?

RICHARD I'll have a chicken couscous and a Coke, please.

SUSAN What do you have that doesn't have fat in it?

WAITER everything is delicious.

Susan reads the menu again.

SUSAN I'll have the fried eggplant and a diet Coke.

WAITER We don't have diet Coke.

SUSAN Then a regular Coke.

The waiter smiles and goes to place the order. Susan takes out a small bottle with antibacterial gel, cleans her hands and then starts wiping the plate and the cutlery

thoroughly.

Richard looks at the mountain range through a pair of binoculars. He spots a hawk flying over the plains.

RICHARD Look, look: a hawk.

Richard follows the hawk with his binoculars for a few seconds and then puts them down.

RICHARD This country is incredible.

Susan remains silent and then turns to look at him.

SUSAN Richard, why did we come here?

RICHARD What d'you mean why? I thought you would like it.

SUSAN Really: why are we here?

Richard knows that Susan's answer implies something else.

RICHARD To forget everything, to be alone.

Susan, sardonically gestures toward the other tourists with her chin.

SUSAN Alone?

Richard sighs in disappointment. The waiter arrives with the Cokes and the food, which does not look particularly appetizing. He leaves everything on the table and goes.

Richard is about to pour his drink when Susan stops him.

SUSAN Throw out the ice.

RICHARD The Coke is warm.

SUSAN Yeah, but you don't know what kind of water is in there.

She grabs Richard's glass and tosses out the ice. Then she does the same thing with hers. They are quiet for a moment.

RICHARD Why can't you ever relax. You're always stressed.

SUSAN You're the one stressing me out. You're why I can't relax.

RICHARD You could if you tried.

SUSAN Tried? Don't you think I tried?

RICHARD You're never going to forgive me, are you?

SUSAN Do you even know what I'm talking about?

RICHARD Susan, please, we didn't come all this way just to argue. Susan gets angry and faces him.

SUSAN Oh, we didn't? Then when are we supposed to "argue"? Or are you planning on running away again?

Richard sighs, defeated. They stop speaking at the mountains.

(Excerpt from transcript of *Babel*)

This conversation reflects their recent history. They lost an infant to cot death recently, causing Richard to temporarily abandon the family. Richard, on reflection has found his initial reaction to have damaged his position in the family and disrupted his relationship with Susan. He has made the choice to coerce Susan into accompanying him on the trip to Morocco in the hope of rectifying his blunder and re-establishing the unity that had existed prior to the tragedy. Susan however, had been compelled to endure the tragedy alone and she is unable to forgive her husband. As they sit in the outdoor restaurant the impasse remains unresolved.

The scene captures something of their respective attitudes. Richard seems to love the open spaces of the desert and marvels at the presence of a hawk, while Susan seems placed in a preconception of potential disease in the strange place. She seems blocked from allowing her self a fresh unbiased experience and focuses instead on ensuring a level of hygiene of the utensils that she feels is lacking. She seems to impose American standards thus abiding within that culture whereas Richard seems to abandon his self to new possibility. Their respective focus seems to reflect their relative positions within their relationship. Richard hopes for resolution, Susan resists change as she holds on to her resentment.

EXT. BUS -- MOMENTS LATER

The tourists crowd around to board the bus. Some boys in rags approach to sell them trinkets.

BOYS Stilo...stilo... and sit looking

Some of the tourists buy them. They come to Susan, who becomes instantly uncomfortable. She gestures with her hand to say they have no money, but the kids insist.

BOYS Stilo...stilo...

SUSAN I don't have any money... I don't have any...

Richard takes off his binoculars and gives them to the youngest of the boys (7), who receives them with wide eyes.

RICHARD Here

SUSAN What are you doing?

Richard just gets in the bus. Susan stares at the boy with the binoculars for a moment and then gets in.

(Excerpt from transcript of *Babel*)

A simple interaction between husband and wife as their vacation in the Moroccan desert unfolds is saturated with miscommunication and prejudice. And they are speaking the *same* language. The conversation touches on the theme of contamination in non-western cultures, it emphasizes their differences while simultaneously embracing the generic globalism Coke that is regarded as 'safe' and can be ordered as a in shared commercial language. Global mass communication of Coke contrasts the local communication of 'contaminated' ice - water.

(Excerpt from transcript of *Babel*)

Richard and Susan, a couple from the States are members of a tourist group ostensibly visiting the sights of Morocco. Somewhere in the storyline it becomes apparent that they have lost a young child and that Richard's reaction at that time had been to flee the family, abandoning Susan and their other two children Mike (5) and Debbie (4). Susan is still very much caught up in the aftermath (of the double loss) his action causing the two

to be alienated from each other. Richard has embarked on a mission of reconciliation, and hopes the trip to Morocco may resolve their separation and restore their communication and relationship. This is not overtly discussed but seems a fair inference.

They have left their children in the care of a long time au pair, Amelia (multilingual), an immigrant from Mexico. She is currently anticipating her son's wedding in Mexico and expecting to be relieved of her duties with the children for the occasion. The family's suburban life is revealed through the interaction of Amelia and the children in their home in America. Apart from local visits to other residences, this is the extent of what is shown of the U.S.A. within the context of the film. It portrays the living standards of suburban America where all conveniences and comforts have been installed. Sufficient affluence is evidenced to allow for the employment of an au pair and for international travel. Conditions in Morocco are contrasted.

The Moroccan desert landscape is background to Moroccan village life. The film opens with the visit of one shepherd to his neighbor. Rural Morocco.

> 'Day breaks. Hassan (50) arrives at a solitary house made of adobe, in the southern deserts of Morocco, carrying a satchel and a large bundle wrapped in cloth.' (Excerpt from the film script)

He has come to the house of Abdullah and his family. He has a wife Yasira (38), two daughters Yamil (16) and Zora (17), and two sons Yussef (13) and Ahmed (14). Yussef and Ahmed are central to the plot.

Hassan has come to sell a rifle that he received as a gift from a Japanese acquaintance that he previously accompanied on a hunting safari. It is this rifle that finds its way into the hands of Yussef and Ahmed as protection of the flock against jackals, and is the weapon that was used to wound Susan when Yussef ignorantly aims and fires at a passing bus. (Give some clue about the boyish testing of the range of the guns firing possibility.)

The gun has been passed from Japan to Morocco, through an indiscriminate shot, in an instant, connects all the principle characters, Susan and Richard's family from the U.S.A. and their au pair Amelia from Mexico, with Abdullah's family in Morocco to Yasujiro and his daughter Chieko in Japan, thus setting the diverse cultural backdrop.

Yasujiro is the Japanese businessman from Tokyo who gave Hassan the gun, and the viewer encounters him as he drives with his daughter Chieko (16) after a volleyball game in Tokyo. This fact however, is unrevealed within the script at the time and only becomes known toward the end of the film. The camera shifts continuously between contexts leaving the viewer to negotiate and integrate the narrative.

The drama in the Moroccan context plays out in a number of prime locations. One, a deserted road through the desert flanked by mountains where Susan is shot, then within a small room in an isolated village where her rescue unfolds. Then in the homestead of Abdullah and on the surrounding hillside where Ahmed and Yussef tend their sheep and out of bravado shoot at the bus and later flee from the authorities.

The house of Anwar, the bus driver, is offered by Anwar as the nearest place to treat Susan. It is located not far from where the bus is parked, leaving its occupants to their own devices. The tourists aboard seem frightened by their surroundings. They have not paid for an excursion of this kind where they are exposed and in close proximity to the unknown element of rural dwellers who, by cultural prejudice seem threatening.

The sole occupant of Anwar's house is an ancient woman who accepts the wounded woman (Susan) without question and attends to her. The short burdensome journey of transporting Susan to its location as Susan is physically carried from the bus to the house allows one to observe the character of the village. As the locals carry her, the other tourists observe them through the windows of the bus observe them.

The village seems to be an extension of the surrounding desert, mud dwellings along dusty winding roads punctuated by shallow stairways. It is the scene of a place populated by flocks of sheep, children running in the dusty streets, wandering goats, all amid rudimentary mud architecture; at once modern by virtue of the tourist bus and simultaneously as ancient as a biblical depiction.

The rural population displays their curiosity as Susan and her entourage pass. They remain passive observers in the background with the exception of a group of children who appear at the door of the house. The old woman summarily evacuates them as she protects the patient.

It is in this small mud house in Morocco that Richard and Susan, in a deep moment of need, are brought closer together. They begin to re-establish their intimacy as they share the work of ensuring her survival. She has wet herself and his compassion and

empathy and love are renewed. She says that she needs to relieve herself again and he aids her with the chamber pot. In her moment of gratitude all barriers between them vanish and Richard's hope is realized. Their communication is the intuitive wordlessness of a holy language.

It is through the phone calls for assistance from the village made by Richard as he runs between the house and a local store that the political mechanisms are revealed. He ensures that the American embassy is informed so that an American aided rescue can be initiated. Their reaction reflects their cultural bias and adds to the ethos of miscommunication that leads to it being escalated into being perceived as an international incident. Eventually a helicopter arrives, and as it hovers in a dramatic scene, it contrasts high-tech machine from another world with the ancient village. As they are transported through the night over the Moroccan city, the global is again juxtaposed with the local and the personal. CNN reports, and the world receives a biased, incomplete and erroneous narrative.

It is through the calls that Richard makes from Morocco that the viewer is introduced to Amelia, the au pair, and the two small children in America. The drama in this context plays out partially in suburbia but mostly through a short, but highly dramatic road trip that Amelia initiates, taking the children with her to her son's wedding across the border to Mexico. Santiago, her cousin, is the young driver who transports the four of them. They cross the border between San Diego and Tijuana into Mexico. This situation has arisen as a result of the unfolding drama in Morocco. Originally Richard and Susan were to have returned to the States to resume their parental roles thus freeing Amelia to attend her son's wedding. Them not having returned, places Amelia in her current conflicting predicament. She thus opts to risk taking the children with her as she journeys toward Mexico. The children are excited and apprehensive about the trip. Mike comments that his mother thinks that Mexico is a 'very dangerous'. Santiago makes a joke of this as they enter Tijuana. In retrospect, danger may have aptly described their experience. As they drive through the streets a new world is revealed. Everything is mixed on the streets. Motels, barbershops, religion, food emporiums, vendors, prostitutes, a zebra is being led along the sidewalk, a young girl in fancy-dress hand in hand with a woman, followed by the sprawl of low buildings. And the daughter Debbie smiles at Amelia from the backseat of the car. It is a new world for the children. They are enthralled. Soon they are on a sand road and entering what appears to be a farming cowboy type community – the venue of the wedding. Mike and Debbie are briefly introduced to Amelia's son, the groom, and summarily dispatched into the care of the

local children. Mike protests but is ignored.

The innocence of the children, especially Mike, is shattered as their experience progresses. The wedding reception confronts them with the unusual slaughtering of chickens as food for the guests runs out. Santiago includes them in the practice as he insensitively wrings the chicken's neck and pulls off its head as Mike stands by horrified, a portent of worse things to follow.

Cultural mores are displayed as the wedding of Luis Amelia's son unfolds. It is the celebration of a vibrant but struggling community, Amelia comments 'And it's been 15 years since I last wore this dress,' as she prepares for the reception. The celebration is vibrant and in high spirits, with folk music accompanied by dancing. At one point Santiago fires his pistol as part of the festivities. Mike is shocked by the sound of gunfire.

The return trip takes place at night with Santiago taking a shorter back-road route. He is drunk and tired and doses off at the wheel several times. Amelia is anxious and concerned. Trouble begins at the border post where cultural differences create a prejudiced communication. American authorities view the Mexican occupants in the car with suspicion and are concerned for the sake of the white children travelling with them late at night. While they attempt to satisfy themselves of the safety of the children, Santiago takes off and a high-speed chase ensues. Santiago finally evicts his passengers into the darkness of the desert road. They are stranded as he flees on his own disappearing from the narrative, his outcome unknown.

Amelia stumbles through the night and into the next day. She is exhausted and totally lost as she carries Debbie, who is either unconscious or asleep. Mike passionately protests as she tells him that she wants them to stay here (beside a bush) as she goes for help. She leaves, and stumbles on. Eventually a border patrol encounters her. She is unable to direct him to the location of the children and finds herself in custody. The American border officials interrogate her and later reveal that the children are safe without elaborating on their condition, and that their parents would not lay charges against her. She however, is deported, looses her long-time position as au pair with the family, and is seen finally being re-united in Mexico with her son Luis.

The Japanese component of the narrative evolves from the perspective of Chieko, the sixteen year old deaf mute. She is passionate and rebellious and seems desperate to have a sexual experience. One wonders whether her desperation reflects the pain of losing her mother to suicide, or the natural urge for teenage sexual experimentation, or

a combination of both. She complains that her father is never there for her, and the fact of her mother's suicide is compounded by his seeming ineptitude. She seems to long for the comfort of 'union' and awkwardly reaches out, hampered by the limitations of a deaf mute. She attempts to seduce various teenage boys, who pass over her, her dentist and later invites a detective into her home and greets him naked. All her efforts are colored by her mute-like communication as her attempts to seduce fail. Chieko seems protected from potential abuse as each attempt is defused. The teenage boy chooses her friend instead of her, the dentist is shocked and expels her, and the detective is compassionate and comforts her by covering her with his jacket. Ultimately, her father finds her standing naked outside on the balcony of their high-rise. He approaches, and they poignantly embrace with the Tokyo metropolis as the vast panoramic background. She has finally achieved a profound connection, a connection that may allay some of the pain of her mother's suicide.

The suicide itself, however, is shrouded in some mystery.

> EXT. BALCONY, CHIEKO'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT
>
> She opens the door to the balcony and points at the void: it's over twelve floors. Kenji looks over; the distance is dizzying. Chieko writes in her notebook and shows him the piece of paper.
>
> KENJI You saw her jump?
>
> She nods and writes again. She looks perturbed.
>
> (Excerpt from transcript of *Babel*)

She claims here that her mother jumped from their apartment, and as she stands naked above Tokyo, presumably in the same position of her mother' final moments, one wonders if she too is not contemplating accelerating her own death. This is compounded by a statement made later by her father.

> Kenji, the detective, approaches and Yasujiro, Chieko's father, awaits, expectant.
>
> KENJI (CONT'D) Your daughter told me about your wife on the balcony. I'm very sorry.

YASUJIRO. What balcony?

KENJI About how your wife killed herself by jumping off the balcony.

YASUJIRO My wife never jumped off a balcony. She shot herself in the head. My daughter was the first to find her.

Kenji is left speechless.

YASUJIRO (CONT'D) I've explained it to the police several times. Don't bother us with that anymore, please.

KENJI I'm very sorry sir, we won't bother you anymore. Good night. He turns around and leaves the building.

(Excerpt from transcript of *Babel*)

It is unclear what Chieko has in mind save an association between suicide and jumping off the balcony. One also wonders whether there is a connection between the gun, Yasujiro's penchant for hunting, the suicide of his wife, and the giving of the gift to Hassan.

{Gun control in Japan is the most stringent in the democratic world. The weapons law begins by stating 'No one shall possess a fire arm or a sword or swords', and very few exceptions are allowed. The only type of firearm that the Japanese citizen may contemplate is a shotgun. Sportsmen are permitted to possess shotguns for hunting and for skeet and trap shooting but only after submitting a lengthy licensing procedure. Psychological and personal family histories are compulsory. Handguns are absolutely forbidden. Small caliber rifles were once legal but this has been revoked. Once a license holder dies, the rifle is to be handed into the police. Illegal possession results in a minimum of one-year imprisonment with a maximum incarceration of ten years. Only shotgun or air rifles are owned and the number of these has reduced to 493,373 in 1989. (Japanese gun control – GunCite)}

As the camera moves away in the final scene, the profundity of the individual is juxtaposed with the impersonal metropolis. The vastness of the city contrasts the insignificance of the individual as the two figures are swallowed up; disappearing as the camera withdraws. Is the irony not perhaps that real greatness resides within the

physical smallness of the individual, in the thoughts that originally constitute the ideas and design of the city itself, the basic element of consciousness? Individual consciousness is the indispensible foundation. Could the dividing of languages not reflect a desire to protect the integrity of consciousness, rather than simply restricting of building a city and a tower, which has in effect manifested many times since the advent of Babel? And could contemporary high-rise Tokyo not supplant the problematic ancient aspirations of Babel? In the film, despite the confusion of multiple languages being compounded by a deaf-mute, the achievement of communion seems to signify the pinnacle of achievements, while the impressive technological structure of Tokyo remains the backdrop. Does the closing scene of the film not raise the causal issue central to Babel, the central reason for originally confusing language? Is the legacy of Babel contemporary? Does the cacophony of languages and conflicted life experiences of all in the contemporary chaos of the film still point to the shattering of the singularity, the 'one' language? Or is it the result of pure chaos?

The film represents the contemporary form of the aftermath of a biblical episode. Throughout the film bias and ambiguity confound clear communication and persistently posit the necessity for translation and interpretation. The viewer observes human frustration without resolution. The issue seems not to be the building of the skyscrapers of Tokyo, or any other city, but seems rather to confront the viewer with the oppression and frustration of communicative barriers.

Japan is a highly technological and sophisticated society as evoked by scenes of Tokyo, yet it is the eradication of human alienation, rather than human aspiration towards technological heights, that seems central to the narrative. Power structures, whether economic or ideological, seem to conspire against free will, accentuating the plight of the individual, and while technology seems to overshadow, forcing man to attempt living humanely within a machine, it is ultimately, the individual's triumph over alienation, like the bonding of Chieko and her father, that overshadows technology. This raises the question of the original motive for dividing the one language. Was the divine design directed as a restriction of the building the tower, or was the goal subtler? Contemporary Tokyo seems to defy the former and indicate either divine impotence, or an alternative understanding of the divine purpose.

It is Yasujiro, the Japanese businessman's, gift that ignites Moroccan tragedy. The gift most probably motivated by kindness, sets in motion a chain reaction that unleashes a torrent of violence culminating in tragedy. Abdullah, the father of Ahmed and Yussef,

hands the gun that he has recently purchased from Hassan to his two sons as a safeguard against jackals while they tend their sheep. Later, in an act of teenage bravado, while the two compete, Yussef aims at a passing bus on the desert road, and fires. At first he seems to have missed his target, but then the bus draws to a halt, and in their unexpected shock they fearfully run and hide. On returning to his home, Abdullah announces the reason for his lateness; an American tourist has been shot and killed he says, thus confirming the boys worst fears.

This partial misconception terminates in the untimely death of Ahmed the eldest son, as the small family attempts to escape the police. In their mistaken belief that the tourist has died they naturally attempt to escape. Yussef the twelve year-old boy, out of fear for their safety, takes the responsibility for his family's survival. Perhaps foolishly, he opens fire on the police. The ensuing gunfight ends with Ahmed, his thirteen-year old brother, being shot. Amid the chaos of the shooting Yussef senses his error and suddenly and courageously reverses his position by surrendering. He runs out toward the police with his hands in the air, caring only for the safety of his family, all the while shouting of his brother's innocence, and finally taking responsibility for the shooting of the tourist. He sacrifices his freedom for the safety of his brother and father. Tragically, he is too late and Ahmed dies in Abdullah's arms. This concludes the journey of the gun.

There is a causal thread that connects the broken narrative in the film. A disruptive sequence of events and disparate settings are played off against each other in a seemingly illogical disconnected pattern, which surprisingly aligns eventually to reveal an obscured, intermittent continuity in the narrative. It is pattern that enhances the notion of chaos yet also contains a resolution within the film. It reflects the chaos of the contemporary and, as in life; one often only obtains discovery and insight in retrospect. And it is the rush of events that overwhelms and calls for an attempt to untangle, and make sense of the patterns that confront us. Translation and interpretation thus become central not only to the issues inherent in *Babel* but also to understanding everyday reality. How are judgments made, judgments regarding death, deportation, and survival? Are there worldviews that might elicit convincing clarity? Can life be perceived as a miracle? Or is all life purely random, the outcome of chance?

Each of the dramatic events can be read as a miracle or a random act, depending on the conceptual framework with which it is interpreted.

Footnote Hashem, literally "the name", refers to God.

Chapter Two Quantum

"There are only two ways to live a life, one, **is that nothing is a miracle,** and the other, is that everything is a miracle." – Albert Einstein.

Introduction – Quantum

Through her studies of Physics and Philosophy at MIT and her postgraduate work in Philosophy, Religion & Psychology at Harvard University, Dinah Zohar has developed a psychosocial worldview that mirrors quantum mechanics. She advocates quantum physics as a guiding metaphor for personal psychology and social organization, in contrast with the deterministic Newtonian[1] mechanics and machine metaphor. It is a system that is initiated as a metaphor, where the wave-particle function displays what seems to be a conscious response to its subatomic context in a way that may be extrapolated to describe a system that defines human free will in terms of self-actualization and the evolution of human consciousness. However, the system ultimately transcends the level of metaphor and physically anchors consciousness in the material structure of the brain as Zohar locates quantum functionality within the human structure itself, rendering subatomic and human realms a cohesive whole.

Free will is regarded as being truly free with the ability to choose from all and any possibility. Consequences are apprehended in terms of their effects on relationship, the central objective in a system that orients toward a natural cohesion; 'good' choice enhances and facilitates a deeper union within relationships while 'bad' choices divide or disrupt cohesion. The model represents living a self-directed life, a life of infinite potential, where 'nothing is a miracle'.

Derivation and Details – Quantum

Apprehending the universe through meticulous investigation of phenomena defines the scientific method. The evolution of science itself arises through discovery, and it is this acquiring of knowledge that shifts existing paradigms. The contemporary micro and macro theories of quantum mechanics and relativity respectively, have thus supplanted Newton's classical physics. Zohar remarks that

> '… Newton's three laws of motion and his mechanical model of the solar system were the blueprint for an entirely lifeless design.' (Zohar: 2)

> 'Throughout history we have drawn our conception of our place and ourselves in the universe from the current physical theory of the day. Thus physicist and non-physicist alike these 300 years have found their personal philosophies, their own sense of identity and their notions of how they relate to the world and to other people colored by this bleak Newtonian vision.' (Zohar: 2)

The discourse originating from Newtonian physics and Cartesian[2] philosophy has dominated western culture for centuries. These systems have given rise to a western socio-scientific lexicon, creating a language that has permeated the deepest level of functioning. She targets this language as a cultural root of human alienation.

> 'In our relationship both to ourselves and to others the Newtonian influence runs deep. If we are nothing but an accidental by-product of creation and a pawn in the play of larger forces wholly beyond our control, how can we exercise much meaningful responsibility either for ourselves or towards others.' (Zohar: 3)

Zohar aspires to remedy the situation and has constructed a psychosocial model based on the new language of quantum mechanics. As such, quantum physics is a metaphor for human interaction; a metaphor that has evolved in the hands of Zohar to become a physical, philosophical paradigm pertinent to a new way of viewing ways of being and interpreting the complexity of human existence. It is a bid to challenge and override the consciousness experienced via classical physics where, broadly speaking, humanity perceives itself as being separate and alienated from the world by an over arching mechanistic scientific paradigm. The overriding notion is to defy the classical and initiate a worldview that mirrors the quantum and promotes social cohesion rather than alienation. She seeks to install a system that is soft and pliable, one that describes humans as human in a way that is inclusive and accommodating; one that replaces the hard causal model where the mode of functioning is through the application of laws like

'every force is opposed by an equal and opposite force', a statement that, if used to describe human behavior, renders it simplistic, harsh, and mechanical. *The Quantum Self* begins to define this paradigm shift. Zohar in positioning her view states,

> 'More particularly, it is a book whose central theme is about getting beyond a particular form of alienation that has plagued life in this century. This is the sense of alienation which follows from a feeling that we conscious human beings are somehow strangers in the universe, merely an accidental by-product of blind evolutionary forces with no particular role to play in the scheme of things and no meaningful relationship to the inexorable forces that drive on the larger world of brute, insensate matter. To pursue the theme, I shall be looking very closely at the relationship between matter and consciousness in quantum theory and proposing a new, quantum mechanical theory of consciousness, which promises to bring us back into partnership with the universe.' (Zohar: 1)

In the world of quantum, sub-atomic particles exist in states that evoke wonder. They fluctuate between 'solid' and 'wave', one minute they are a 'particle', and the next they are a 'wave', fluctuations that are unpredictable. At times they behave in ways that seem unrelated to local influences, yet at other times they uncannily display significant responsiveness to observer manipulation. Laws governing their patterns seem elusive, and Quantum reality remains enigmatic, open to the multiplicity of possibility and probability.

> 'When an electron, in the guise of a probability wave, intends to move from one orbit to another, it at first behaves as though 'it were smeared out over a large region of space', displaying a kind of eerie omnipresence in many orbits. It puts out 'feelers' towards its own future stability by way of trying out – all at once – all the possible new orbits into which it might eventually settle, in much the same way that we might try out a new idea by throwing out imaginary scenarios depicting its many possible consequences.' (Zohar: 15)

Subatomic reality is the metaphor on which the complex worldview of the quantum self is built. The nature of quantum is the fundamental component on which man is modeled. Zohar describes this world,

> 'The most revolutionary, and for our purposes the most important, statement that quantum physics makes about the nature of matter, and perhaps being itself, follows from its description of the wave/particle duality – the assertion that all being at the subatomic level can be described equally well either as solid particles, like so many minute billiard balls, or as waves, like undulations on the surface of the sea. Further, quantum physics goes on to tell us that neither description is really accurate on its own, that both the wave-like and the particle-like aspects of being must be considered when trying to understand the nature of things, and that it is the duality itself which is most basic. Quantum 'stuff' is, essentially, *both* wave-like and particle-like, simultaneously.' (Zohar: 9)

The implications are that the human condition is at one moment one of instability and unpredictability, and in the next anchored and stable; any moment is subject to multiple eventualities. Anything is possible at any time. Creative choice defines a consciousness that exists in a kind of creative limbo, as a state of formlessness 'waiting' for its form in response to context, a conceptualization that reflects the world of quantum. 'Wave' and 'particle' await free will.

> This Janus-like (two-faced) nature of quantum being is summed up in one of the most fundamental tenets of quantum theory, the Principle of Complementarity, which states that each way of describing being, as a wave or as a particle, complements the other and that a whole picture emerges only from the 'package deal.'' (Zohar: 9)

> 'For quantum physics, however, both waves and particles are equally fundamental. Each is a way that matter can manifest itself, and both together are what matter is. And while neither 'state' is complete in itself and both are necessary to give us a

> complete picture of reality, it turns out that we can never focus on both at once. This is the nub of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle[4], which, like the Principle of Complementarity, is one of the most fundamental principles of being in quantum theory. According to the Uncertainty Principle, the wave and particle descriptions of being preclude one another. While both are necessary to get a full grasp of what being is, only one is available at any given time. Either we can measure the exact position of something like an electron when it manifests itself as a particle, or we can measure its momentum, its speed when it expresses itself as a wave, but we can never get a measure of both, exactly, at the same time.' (Zohar: 10)

This uncertainty defines the state of someone in the process of making a choice. They have in a sense become unhinged, being neither fixed in their current position nor yet on the move. They are simultaneously particle and wave and yet neither particle nor wave. Once a choice has been reached however, movement or 'wave' might be discerned as the individual proceeds toward their next position before coming to rest as 'particle' once more.

> 'The essential fuzziness is the uncertainty referred to in the Uncertainty Principle, and it replaces the old Newtonian determinism, where everything about physical reality is fixed, determined and measurable, with a vast 'porridge' of being where nothing is fixed or fully measurable, where everything remains indeterminate, somewhat ghostly and just beyond our grasp.' (Zohar: 11)

The Uncertainty Principle and the Principle of Complementarity are transposed beyond the microscopic. The world seems to hover in a condition of expectation where anything and everything is possible. The outcome of free will remains hidden until actualized, and every moment represents another shift from potential into actuality, creating incremental changes in a world that is constantly being revised. It is a perpetual self-directed mutation forming an ever-new reality.

Free will thus seems to be unencumbered and seems truly to be free and may take on any form. Yet conversely there are always consequences that accompany choice. Free choice

thus becomes a combination of possibility blended with a quantum value system. The central value of relationship is clearly expressed by Zohar:

> 'We all, both men and women, have a feminine side, a 'wave aspect', an aspect which surrenders rather than grasps, which 'gives up' to things beyond the nuclear self rather than concentrating on building boundaries around that self. This is the side we must cultivate if we are to transcend isolation and the consequent and needless, terror of death.' (Zohar: 134)

The implication is one of morality implicit in the paradigm that embraces a system orientated towards integration rather than alienation, a path that proposes a way to negotiate the world by translating the 'wave' into an ideal 'particle'.

> 'But the surrender called for to make the most of quantum relationship and quantum memory is not a passive surrender. It is not the surrender of the mystic or the dropout.
> The I-and-you of intimate relationship exists only to the extent that I relate to you in the first place, and all relationship is an effort. Two chemical substances often won't give up their inert existence to combine unless they are excited by the addition of heat. They must overcome the threshold of their potential energy. In the same way, just as I get my own self 'together' only to the extent that I work on myself, to the extent that I strive energetically and with concentration to integrate the many sub-selves within myself, so I am interwoven with you only to the extent that I commit myself to that task.
>
> I must focus all my passion, my loyalty and care onto the ongoing, evolving process of I-and-you – both the I-and-you of more personal, one-to-one relationships and the I-and-you in its broad sense, the family, the group, the nation, life as a whole – each of the many layers of relationship where my own being can co-mingle, overlap, and entwine, with that of others. To the extent that I do that, I ensure my place in the on going ness of things.

> The kind of surrender required to make the most of quantum process is like Christ's saying, "… and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." On a quantum view, he who would find himself a place in eternity must fully wed himself to life's processes of relationship now.' (Zohar: 134)

Quantum free will is thus driven by a fundamental morality. It is not simply the 'smearing' of one's self over all the possible choices and becoming 'particle' without close regard to consequence, on the contrary, each choice is profoundly colored by a specific type of service to one's self and the community at large. The proposed psychosocial construction may best be viewed as a 'network system', an entity that seeks to integrate humanity by emulating subatomic phenomena in a way that reflects free behavior of quantum but is simultaneously managed by a profound sense of responsibility to oneself and to others. All changes within the system affect the entire 'network reality'. As a strand within the 'net' is 'tugged' fluctuations occur throughout the system, thus altering the extant state of the system. It is a reflexive system, a creative and dynamic system of cohesion that excludes the notion of causality embracing rather the notion of multiple possibilities as free choice ebbs and flows in response to the self-directed life of the individual. Individuals choose and act in response to their context and then reflect and articulate their self-actualized condition; their state of consciousness informs future choice.

All consciousness is continually linked through this 'network' in which every strand in the 'net' is susceptible to incremental changes, and in this way a coherent global consciousness evolves. The network symbolizes a dynamic coherency as the default position, a coherency that is fluid; each individual is affected by each choice of every other individual as the shared network fluxes in response to the multitude. Thus individuals alter relationship, and relationship alters individuals, and cohesion rather than alienation is the shared experience as all combine in a system of evolution.

The quantum metaphor however leaps beyond a metaphor as consciousness is linked to the physics of the brain. The neural patterning described by Zohar presents human biology as another facet within the quantum field and the quantum functioning of the brain becomes the source of quantum consciousness. The metaphor of subatomic observation thus evolves in the hands of Zohar to become a firm construct of the human

physical condition. The central ephemeral element of consciousness has been grouted to its supposed physical location, the materiality of the brain.

Consciousness can now be said to exist physically and may thus be subject to the laws of physics, particularly those of quantum mechanics. Wave-particle processes within the atom become processes within the brain that physically anchors the consistency and constancy of consciousness that underpins experiential processes. The catalyst that facilitates this condition is known as a condensate, and makes this possibility feasible. Zohar explains,

> 'Imagine, for example, a large number of electromagnetic compasses lying on a table in a shielded room. Because the room is shielded, the compass needles point in no particular direction, and if the table jiggles, they swing randomly in every direction possible. A physicist wanting to describe the motions of the needles would have to write many equations – one for each needle. But if the electromagnetic energy in each compass is increased, the needles begin to exert a pull on each other, and slowly they line up into a uniform pattern. At the point where the electromagnetic current becomes strong enough to outweigh the effect of jiggling the table (the equivalent of thermal noise in a real system, where heat makes the molecules jiggle about), it would have the dramatic effect of making all the needles point in the same direction. All the separate compasses would then behave as one super-compass, and the physicist could write just one equation to describe the motion of the ensemble. We would say that the compass needles have gone into a condensed phase. ' (Zohar: 64)

It is this kind of condensed phase that needs to be found to exist within the brain, in support of a material base that is compatible with the aspect of constancy within consciousness.

> 'What kind of neurobiological mechanism would be required to 'line up' neurons (or some constituent of them) in the way the compass needles of the example were lined up by their own internal magnetic fields?' (Zohar: 65)

She responds as follows,

> 'If the physics of condensed phases is to prove relevant to consciousness, then there would have to be some such mechanism that functions at normal body temperature. And, in fact, there is one. The 'pumped system' first described by Professor Herbert Froehlich[5] of Liverpool University in England some twenty years ago, and known to exist in biological tissue, seems to satisfy all the necessary criteria.
> Froehlich's 'pumped system' is simply a system of vibrating electrically charged molecules ('dipoles' – positive at one end and negative at the other) into which energy is pumped. The vibrating dipoles (molecules in the cell walls of living tissue) emit electromagnetic vibrations (photons), just like so many miniature radio transmitters, as they jiggle. Froehlich demonstrated that beyond a certain threshold, any additional energy pumped into the system causes the molecules of that kind to vibrate in unison. They do so increasingly until they pull themselves into the most ordered form of condensed phase possible – a 'Bose-Einstein condensate'.
> The crucial distinguishing feature of Bose-Einstein condensates is that the many parts which go to make up an ordered system not only *behave* as a whole, but they *become* whole – their identities merge or overlap in such a way that they lose their individuality entirely.' (Zohar: 65-6)

The Bose-Einstein condensate therefore becomes a physical basis for consciousness in that it fulfills a chemical condition that mirrors and embraces the consistent wholeness of consciousness. This conceptualization of consciousness as a function of physicality eliminates the long held Cartesian mind-body duality, and initiates a conceptualization of a humanity that is firmly based in the physical world. Consciousness (soul) and body are components of a unity.

> 'In summery, the quantum world-view stresses dynamic relationship as the basis of all that is. It tells us that our world comes about through a mutually creative dialogue between mind and body (inner and outer, subject and object), between the individual and his personal and material context, and between human culture and the natural world. It gives us a view of the human self which is free and responsible, responsive to others and to its environment, essentially related and naturally committed, and at every moment creative.' (Zohar: 220)

Does human behavior mirror the subatomic reality of the wave function? And does human choice, as is the case with the microscopic, resemble the electron's response to observer's manipulations? When perusing events within the film, imagined possibilities become pivotal, with outcomes assessed in quantum terms. In the final analysis, however, one questions persists: Is there a tendency in the 'field' towards cohesion? Is there a universal drive that explains quantum behavior?

Consciousness is central to *The Quantum Self*. It absorbs and reflects the nuances of everyday existence as human kind negotiate the chaos that surrounds them. Consciousness, or the soul, is firmly embedded in the physical (via the Bose-Einstein condensate) and is regarded as a unitary totality, thus replacing Cartesian (see footnote) notions of duality. Free will is intricately connected to consciousness and its functioning mirrors the functioning of the quantum, where possibilities abound and final choices do not reflect causality, but rather are evaluated through post-choice articulation. Self-actualization occurs in this way and as the self evolves its constant renewal reverberates initially into close relationships and later into the extended world. There is a cohesion that seems natural to the system, yet aspects of observed behavior, such as the notion of non-locality, where distant events can be seen to 'cause' local responses or vice-versa, seem to escape explanation. It is thus a worldview that recognizes its limitations yet endeavors to resolve its complexities, making it a perpetual process. The miraculous is a foreign concept within the system; miracles are simply absent.

There are many instances where the reaction to chance and circumstance within the *Babel* script lead or manifest as a cohesive tendency and among them is Chieko's mission to form bonds throughout the narrative; Richard's prime agenda is to reunite

with his wife; Amelia expresses this need through her obsession to be present at her son's wedding; and later when she returns to Mexico she immediately bonds with her son; Yasujiro struggles to break the barriers between himself and Chieko. All these attempts at cohesion are fraught by communicative impediments, the legacy of Babel.

Footnotes

1. Newton: 'English physicist and mathematician (1642 – 1726) who is widely recognized as one of the most influential scientists of all time and a key figure in the scientific revolution. His book Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica ("Mathematical Principles of natural Philosophy"), first published in 1687, laid the foundations for classical mechanics.

2. René Descartes the French philosopher (1596 - 1650) the French philosopher, mathematician, and scientist, who furthered the notion of a mind-body duality that constitutes human 'structure', and the founder of Cartesian philosophy.

3. Niels Henrik David Bohr (Danish: 7 October 1885 – 18 November 1962) was a Danish physicist who made foundational contributions to understanding atomic structure and quantum theory, for which he received the Nobel Prize in physics in 1922. Bohr was also a philosopher and a promoter of scientific research.

4. Werner Karl Heisenberg (German: 5 December 1901 – 1 February 1976) was a German theoretical physicist and one of the key pioneers of quantum mechanics.

5. Herbert Fröhlich (9 December 1905 – 23 January 1991 was a German-born British physicist.

Chapter 3 Babel The Original Narrative

Introduction

The narrative is found in the Book of Genesis between the narrative of Noah and The Flood, and *Lech Lecha,* the opening chapter that narrates the life and journey of Abraham. It consists of only three paragraphs. Below is the concise enigmatic text of Babel as it appears in the Stone version of *The Book of Genesis.*

> The whole earth was of **one language** and of common purpose. And it came to pass when they migrated from the east they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to one another, "Come, let is make bricks and burn them in fire." And the brick served them as stone, and the bitumen served them as mortar. And they said, "**Come, let us build us a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens**, and let us make a name for ourselves, **lest we be dispersed** across the whole earth."
>
> *Hashem*[1] descended to look at the city and tower, which the sons of man built, and Hashem said, "**Behold, they are one people with one language for all, and this they begin to do!** And now, should it not be withheld from them all they proposed to do? **Come, let us**[2] **descend and there confuse their language, that they should not understand one another's language."**
>
> And *Hashem* dispersed them from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. **That is why it was called Babel, because it was there that *Hashem* confused the language of the whole earth**, and from there, *Hashem* scattered them over the face of the whole earth. (Stone: 49)
> (Bold highlights are mine)

The people of Babel 'conspired' to build a city centered on a tower of renown. As a pioneering architectural project it seems remarkable within its temporal context, yet in contemporary terms would conform to the everyday. It seems unclear why God was so

repulsed that He not only disrupted its formation, but also established in its wake so seemingly permanent a legacy of communicative chaos. Several question arise in this regard.

If the building of a city was the issue and was to be prohibited, then, since God is not known to change His mind, surely Tokyo or New York, or Marrakesh would not exist today? Surely this suggests the possibility that a more sinister agenda resided in Babel, and that it was this that needed to be dissolved. Further, if such were to be discerned, would it begin to explain the divisive nature of the punitive response that devastated communication? What was the significance of the one language and how was its disruption a solution? And more fundamentally, how could a God who personifies 'One-ness' ensure its opposite? These questions become the cornerstone for my personal translation and yields an interpretation that initiates an explanation for the relevance and significance of Abraham's paradigm (the subject of the ensuing chapter) through which a translation of the film *Babel* is facilitated.

Derivation and Detail

The word 'Babel' connotes 'the tower', 'language', 'free will', and 'judgment'; historically, its narrative marks the onset of translation and interpretation in the world. Babel has come to symbolize aspiration and technological advancement on the one hand, and a metaphor for the chaos and confusion arising from linguistic disruption on the other. Taken at face value it seems that man's architectural avant-garde was devastated through divine judgment thus bringing the concept of 'free will' into question.

The splintering of the singularity is the devastation of a communicative unifier, every syllable becoming potentially ambiguous. Decreed, is that translation and interpretation are to exist between intention and meaning, with repercussions that are extensive. Steiner elaborates:

> 'Translation is fully implicit in the most rudimentary communication. It is explicit in the coexistence and mutual contact of the thousands of languages spoken on the earth. Between the utterance and interpretation of meaning through verbal sign systems on the one hand, and the extreme

> multiplicity and variety of human tongues on the other, lies
> the domain of language as a whole.'(Steiner: 471)

Translation lies beyond imperative and becomes indispensible. Its effects are embedded in all understandings and misunderstandings, including the symptoms of disagreement, strife, violence, and war. Confusion of language translates as fragmentation and chaos, as the breakdown of communication and the dissolution of unity. The narrative of Babel thus becomes a metaphor for chaos and offers a tangible text for its confrontation.

The twofold approach to the text, those of the scientific and mythical perspectives render parallel interpretations; the contemporary thus balances the traditional.

The scientific focuses on that aspect of the narrative that describes the destruction of a technological aspiration, of the halting of a pioneering urban experiment, and in so doing raises the question of freedom of choice. If man truly embodies freedom of choice, how is disobedience of any kind explained? How is it possible that free choice ends in so harsh and enduring a punishment?

Quantum physics conjures the wave-particle phenomenon. Entities are neither solid nor fluid; they fluctuate in a state of readiness until their direction is resolved. The community of Babel are in this condition as they arrive at the '…valley in the land of Shinar and settled there…' In a quantum worldview all is random, their circumstances being the unfolding of accidental happenstance. They 'smear' themselves as 'wave' over all possible options as they confront their future. Their options might include remaining nomadic or becoming sedentary as agricultural settlers. 'And they said, "Come, let us build us a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed across the whole earth."' They choose to settle and build a city with a tower of unprecedented proportions reflecting ambition and enterprise; the ramifications seem inspiring. "Come, let us make bricks and burn them in fire." Their agenda is matched by a rudimentary technology, and with innovation they extend the use of fire from cooking to building. And the brick served them as stone, and the bitumen served them as mortar.'

Sociologically they chose uniformity. The tendency for cohesion through relationship, the ultimate objective of the quantum self thus seems to have been addressed. Quantum thought has no qualms regarding freedom of choice. There is no implicit judgment that

may curtail any eventuality. 'Wave' simply settles as 'particle'. Cohesion may take any form provided it satisfies the need, which is embedded in the wave-particle entity. And further, bound by untrammeled communication of the one unambiguous language their choice to dedicate themselves to the task of building seems unanimous. Their attitude is one of independence in which they have taken control of their destiny. But, despite this, there is one thing that rankles; since free will must be limitless in the model, how is uniformity explained?

Quantum choice initiates far-reaching repercussions within the system. As 'wave' becomes 'particle', interrelationship alters, and energy and influence permeate the entire system; every individual action reverberates throughout the world, initially affecting intimate and then more distant relationships. Surely, if the natural ebb and flow of quanta were interrupted through imposed strictures, might this not herald an illness within the system?

If everyone is enjoined in agreement in pursuing one uniform activity, what might happen if an individual wishes, for example, to spend his or her life as a subsistence farmer living independently apart from the mainstream; an endeavor unrelated to constructing a city? Might this be permitted in a homogenized society that compelled its citizens to be ensconced in construction? Might the freedom to choose an outside activity (from multiple possibilities) not be curtailed? And, if so, would this not constitute a condition that contradicts the structure of the paradigm? Would a quantum worldview be totally at ease with everything that was done in Babel? Might dedication to a communal and unalterable task limit free will? Might this not be suggestive of an oppressive system? Communal agreement seems to contradict the notion of quantum free will, which is fundamentally an individualistic phenomenon.

The exclusion of divine intervention in scientific paradigms also seems to problematize its use in the translation of a biblical text. The very narrative is incomprehensible without acknowledgment of God's presence and power, yet scientific discourse conceives a world that evolves through natural selection and biological accident. It is a world that denies the concept of a God as creator. It excludes the notion of divine purpose. God may be acknowledged within a scientific text, as He is in *The Quantum Self*, yet He somehow remains undefined; and seems to be an abstract entity that resides outside of scientific reality. Who then, might have imposed the splintering of language? For this to be acknowledged within the text, God must be seen to be all-powerful as the

controlling Being of His creation and to confuse language indefinitely through His judgment.

The quantum paradigm is not deterministic. Free will is free. The concepts of God, divine purpose, and quantum judgment are absent. Consequences arise randomly and become the fertile ground for further choice, but they do not reflect causal repercussions. So the God of the narrative, who must be acknowledged, by virtue of the text itself, as the judge who imposes the splintering of the singularity with its aftermath of perpetual translation, simultaneously frames a contradiction to the quantum paradigm, which conceives events as random happenstance. This standoff seems an irreconcilable conundrum. Yet the text insists that a 'punitive judgment exists' since translation and its undeniable effects in contemporary life may be traced back mythically to Babel.

The question of disobedience versus free will cannot be adequately addressed if God is to be denied, as is the tradition in scientific thought. This raises fundamental questions that demarcate the scientific from mystical paradigms. The conundrum of whether there is a God or not, and if there is, how is divine dialogue recognized, are barriers when confronting the Babel text. Yet if the narrative explicitly presents such a dialogue, and further, takes the form of condemnation and punishment resulting from disobedience, how is it to be encountered? In *The Quantum Self* free will is construed as being devoid of judgment and miracles, hence no condemnation and no punishment. If God were to be acknowledged then the nature of quantum free will without causality would come into question, since God embraces judgment. Can judgment itself be regarded as an aberration to be ignored, or does it take on the aspect of one of the possibilities among the multiple possibilities of quantum free choice? How might the quantum model, in a scenario where the condition of confused language does exist, while God does not, be explained? How did division of language and incumbent translation come about? Is the narrative of Babel purely myth, as in fairy tale, or is there a direct scientific response? Is the particular judgment in question to be regarded as inexplicable and possibly unrighteous random response '*of life'* in a godless world? These questions are beyond the scope of this text and therefore persist in abeyance.

The quantum ideal of an evolved consciousness through relationship also seems at odds with a community that jointly subscribes to a contrived unity. Uniformity engraves standard responses that, once again, deny the individual; the fluidity of the wave-particle function of free will seems frozen in the face of imposed compulsive behavior,

suggesting that the quantum paradigm may be ill equipped to translate the events of Babel adequately.

A literal reading of the myth initiates a mystical translation. The narrative is accepted at face value and its details are interrogated for hidden meaning. In the case of Babel a discrepancy arises from the use of particular words and their contexts in the original Hebraic text, thus forming the basis of the interpretation.
The key Hebrew words are *Safah*' – שפה and *Lashon*' – לשון; equivalents for 'language' in the English version of the text; '*Lashon* –שון also meaning 'tongue' refers to the spoken word indicating speech or verbal communication and appears repeatedly in this context:

> 'From these the islands of the nations were separated in their lands – each according to *its language* by their families, in their nations'. (Genesis: 10: 5, Stone: 45 – *italic mine*)

However, in the Babel passages of, "The whole earth was of one *language* and…" **and** "Come, let us descend and there confuse their *language*…" the Hebrew word used is '*Safah*' – שפה, an obscure word whose meaning is only hinted to in one the commentaries by Rashi, a renowned Talmudic scholar.[6] The comment reads simply as: '*Safah* - the holy language'. (Stone: 48) Why the distinction? And why is *Safah* specific only in this context?

The nature of the 'shattered singularity' is thus framed in terms of the type of language and communication that had been dissolved. Was *Safah* disrupted into *Lashon*? Was a holy, clearly understood language, replaced with diverse spoken languages that initiated confusion and communicative chaos?

What is the implication of the term 'holy'? Is *Safah* referring to a divine dialogue? Is it suggesting a spoken language without the need of translation? Does it refer to an intuitive communication that approaches telepathy? Is it a dedicated language that always includes a divine element? Does it have a written component? Could Hebrew be a remnant or reference? A tentative definition may be "an intuitive 'spiritual' language that adds a wordless component to communication; a component that renders communication unambiguous, while simultaneously linking it to a written form as hinted at by the word *Safah* as an element of a divine dialogue." Regardless of the accuracy of the details of this definition, there seems nevertheless to be a suggestion of a cohesive system of communication that facilitated a united humanity.

Walter Benjamin, in *The Task of the Translator*, seems to be linking *Safah* to *Lashon* in a bid to incrementally eliminate the division between different languages:

> 'Rather, all suprahistorical kinship between languages consists in this: in every one of them as a whole, *one and the same thing is meant*. Yet this one thing is achievable not by any single language but only by the totality of their intentions supplementing one another: the *pure language*.'
> (Benjamin – italics mine)

The 'whole' inclusive original language is to be found 'partially' within all languages, and must combine for completion, where all intentions somehow blend and eradicate ambiguity. It suggests a reverse process of the shattering of the singularity where each shard of the singular 'pure' or 'holy' language had retained some aspect of the original that might be accessed. It seems that the dissolution of *Safah* was the dissolution of a conceptual unity that pervaded all communication; a mystical unity manifested through language.

Ken Wilber, in the following excerpt from his book *The Marriage of Sense and Soul* enhances the notion of unity as the central purpose of the divine:

> 'Because the absolute Self (which is Spirit itself) gives rise to the entire manifest world, Fichte[3] maintained that part of the task of philosophy was to reconstruct what he called the 'pragmatic history of consciousness' – that is, to reconstruct the actual path that consciousness has taken in its creative unfolding of the universe. Fichte was thus one of the very first to introduce the absolutely crucial and historically world-shaking notion of development (or evolution). The world is not static and pre-given; it develops, it evolves, it takes on different forms as Spirit unfolds the universe.
> And the Idealists maintained, understanding this unfolding or development is the secret key to understanding Spirit itself.'
> (Wilber: 105)

This begins to describe a system that combines humankind and language with a divine source that coalesces towards a universal purpose. Wilber continues,

> 'Friedrich Schelling[4] took that initial development insight and worked it into a profound philosophy of spiritual unfolding, and Georg Hegel[5] hammered out the details in a series of brilliantly difficult treatises. The general points may be summarized as follows.
> Absolute Spirit is the fundamental reality. But in order to create the world, the Absolute manifests itself, or goes out of itself - in a sense, the Absolute forgets itself and empties itself into creation (although never ceasing to be itself). Thus the world is created as a "falling away" from Spirit, as a "self-alienation" of Spirit, although the fall is never anything but a play of Spirit itself. Having "fallen" into the manifest and material world, Spirit begins the process of returning to itself, and this process of the return of Spirit to Spirit is simply development or evolution itself. The original "descent" (or involution) is a forgetting, a fall, a self-alienation of Spirit; and the reverse movement of "ascent" (or evolution) is thus the self-remembering and self-actualization of Spirit. And yet, the Idealists emphasized, all of Spirit is fully present at each and every stage of evolution as the *process* of evolution itself.' (Wilber: 106)

Each element within the creation is unified as an essential ingredient of its source, and each is oriented towards that source on the journey of return; and the consciousness and intelligence of the source is perpetually present. This conception aligns with the notion of a miraculous worldview that functions in dialogue with the divine. All divine interventions, or miracles, thus serve the purpose of maintaining a course of evolution to the ultimate reunion.

In the instance of Babel the divine intervention is the disruption of *Safah*, the demise of the then extant unity, and a paradox, if we are to assume unity as the universal purpose. But even more than this, "The whole earth was of one language and of common purpose." (Stone: 49) Unity already existed!

Had the innovative exploits of an ambitious construction project been the cause, contemporary cities would not have emerged; the persisting need for translation, traced to the same narrative, bears witness to the continuance of divine will. The resolution of the conundrum seems to reside in the statement, "Come, let us build us a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed across the whole earth." (Stone: 49)

They proposed a project that would propel them to a level on par with God 'in the heavens' and in so doing achieve inflated stature '…make a name for ourselves', a greatness that ostensibly would secure their position, preventing even God from being able to compel them to do His will 'lest we be dispersed across the whole earth'. Why would 'dispersion' be an issue if they were unaware of God's intention?

> 'God blessed Noah and his sons, and He said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land…" and "… And you, be fruitful and multiply: teem on the earth and multiply on it."' (Stone: 41)

God's injunction of populating the world required 'dispersion', as would seem obvious after the flood. And yet they proposed the opposite, thus defying God's will and replacing it with their own. It seems that they felt empowered, possibly through the unity afforded via access to the one language and knowledge of their birthright to free will.

They rebelled against God, but the replacement mode of being was an innately oppressive system. Communal co-operation is not the same as imposed communal stricture. Agreement to build a city may have been unanimous but their proposed choice was uniformity, becoming homogenized and denying their individual prerogative of free will. They set out to subjugate themselves to the sole task of the building, making it their sole priority to the exclusion of inherent individual diversity. They seemed to be denying their 'essence' and relinquishing their individual power and responsibility to make individual choices. It seems as though they acquiesced to tyranny and subjugated themselves to uniformity. It was a 'free choice' that ended further free choice, and defied their divine essence of having been created in the 'likeness of God'. And they were empowered by *Safah*. Their rebellion halted repopulating the earth, disempowered

individual freedom, while maintaining unity through *Safah* and a common communal agenda.

Divine intervention shattered *Safah* thus disrupting uniformity, and reinstated repopulation of the earth. The error of protracted individual injury was thus curtailed and the intervention took on the aspect of 'protection', rather than 'punishment'.

Abraham's paradigm, the subject of the next chapter describes a worldview that centers on the individual's significance in God's purpose of ultimate union. Redemption is implicit within the model and the return to *Safah* aligns with the messianic concept.

Sarah Dudek has this to say about Walter Benjamin's *Task of the Translator*:

> 'It is remarkable that in the English translation of "The Task of the Translator" by Harry Zorn the religious connotation of Benjamin's terms is sometimes less obvious than in the German original. It might be the alienation one has towards such a mystical way of thinking and towards the ambiguity of Benjamin's style of writing. Nevertheless, Benjamin's theory of translation can only be understood in religious terms. It is bound to the Kabbalistic tradition, which is in itself enigmatic and contradictory—and so is Benjamin's essay. Its magic is evoked by its ambiguity and its holistic aesthetics. In it, translation can live in its extraordinariness. Although it is not a theory of untranslatability, it is hard to think of its practical influence on translators. As mentioned before: the presupposition of his theory of translation is his "messianic" theory of language. It is hard to think of seriously accompanying Benjamin in looking to language for such a messiah.[7]

Benjamin's messianic conceptualization may lack practicality, but his mystical references seem to be indicative of an intuitive language that transcends the spoken word, a language not unlike *Safah*. His theory seems also to be extending the translation process towards a universal unity, akin to the agenda of Abraham's paradigm, thus

linking the two in a remedial orientation that subsumes the miraculous. This link, in itself, suggests the miraculous.

Benjamin, a known non-religious Marxist, created a linguistic theory based on the religious narrative of Babel conjoined to Kabbalistic principles; a theory that 'coincidentally' follows Abraham's tenets yet was independently conceived, and developed three thousand years after the life of Abraham. Could this have been an act of God? Is it divine intervention? Or is it just accidental co-incidence, serendipity that has unfolded through the myriad random possibilities? The question of the miraculous is pursued in the next chapter.

God's resolution of Babel: 'Nevertheless they were scattered '… over the whole face of the earth.'(Stone: 49) and humanity became disempowered with a communicative impediment as its sole option. This persistent and consistent legacy of translation has remained fixed, as narrated in the contemporary film *Babel* an illustration of a condition without reprieve. Perhaps Abraham's paradigm is a beacon of return to *Safah?*

Footnotes

1. *Hashem*, literally, the name, is synonymous with the word 'God'.

2. The wording around 'us' is enigmatic.

3. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, a German philosopher, became a founding figure of the philosophical movement known as German idealism, which developed from the theoretical and ethical writings of Immanuel.

4. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, later von Schelling, was a German philosopher. Standard histories of philosophy make him the midpoint in the development of German idealism.

5. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was a German philosopher of the late Enlightenment. He achieved wide renown in his day and, while primarily influential within the continental tradition of philosophy.

6. Rashi is the prime commentator in the study of the Torah, and is known to every Torah scholar.

7. Dudek, S., *Walter Benjamin and the Religion of Translation*. Available at: <http:// www.cipherjournal.com/html/dudek_benjamin.html>

Chapter 4 Abraham

"There are only two ways to live a life, one, is that nothing is a miracle, and the other**, is that everything is a miracle."** – Albert Einstein.

Introduction

The biblical figure of Abraham was that of an individual whose stature supported the elevated position of an archetype and the purveyor of a paradigm for renewal. The concept of renewal derives from the narrative of Babel with its legacy of confused communication. A Kabbalistic based analysis of segments of the text in Genesis reveals why Abraham emerges as the link that connects *Safah*, the unambiguous holy language pre-Babel, with its chaotic aftermath and initiates the possibility of a return to *Safah*; translating the narrative via these principles inaugurates him as the archetype for the individual's restitution.

Implicit in the constructed relationship between the holy language and Abraham's journey is the notion of 'return'. Steiner, with mystical reference comments on this notion,

> 'The Kabbalah, in which the problem of Babel and the nature of language is so insistently examined, knows of a day of redemption on which translation will no longer be necessary. All human tongues will have re-entered the *translucent immediacy of that primal, lost speech* shared by God and Adam.' (Steiner: 474 - italics mine.)

This idea resonates with Hegel's return to Spirit (Wilber: 106) as quoted in *Chapter Three*, and also aligns with Walter Benjamin's return to 'pure language', all of which seem to indicate an unfolding towards a redemption from *Lashon* to a reunion with *Safah*; and, instrumental in this reversal are the concepts implicit in *Lech Lecha,* the initiating and defining words of Abraham's narrative and journey in the Book of Genesis. *Lech Lecha,* literally, "go for (to) you", a divine command that maps Abraham's mission and describes the essence of his paradigm. The words form a metaphysical template that constitutes the central guiding principle within the paradigm's conceptualization and praxis for free will. Abraham's journey is intricately inclusive of a divine dialogue, thus initiating a platform for denoting the miraculous.

Miracles are generally understood to be extraordinary beneficent events that are associated with divine intervention but in the case of the Abraham paradigm miracles may be situations that are challenging, destructive or beneficent and are all seen as a divine attempt to redirect the recipients to act in accordance with divine principles.

Miracles are discerned through a dynamic context. All consequences are regarded as miraculous in that they 'answer' the consciousness of the individual as precise divine contextual responses designed toward facilitating God's purpose for the individual towards unity. The dynamism of the changing context of consciousness, including intuition and everyday events, forms the divine 'input' in an ongoing dialogue. For the sake of clarity, *context* may here be interpreted as the all-encompassing environment experienced by conscious cognition; Abraham's paradigm functions as a partnership within this dynamic dialogue between of the individual and the divine.

Derivation and Details – Abraham's Paradigm

Introducing the paradigm

> 'Hashem said to Abram, "*Lech Lecha* (Go for / to yourself) from your land, from your relatives, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you, and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and him who curses you will I curse; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you"' (Stone: 55)

Translating as metaphor the message contained in the opening paragraphs of Abraham's narrative, as it appears in the Book of Genesis of the Old Testament, yields a description of this worldview. Integral are the concepts of divine purpose, free will, miracle, and their inter-relationship. The paradigm also defines a remedial pathway through which the demise of Babel may be reversed. It is this aspect that justifies Abraham's paradigm as a worldview for interpreting the manifest chaos of confused communication.

The narrative of Abraham is thus introduced, yet prior to unpacking its details is the derivation of a rationale that indicates the significance of Abraham as an archetype

who is related to Babel, and this is framed via Kabbalistic principles articulated by Geshom Scholem[1], in his book *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*.

The Kabbalah (mystical – literally-tradition) is intricately bound to the Hebrew language. The Kabbalistic conception of Hebrew is singularly that of a 'holy' language, *Safah*, in its written form. All creation is regarded to have come into effect through the Hebrew alphabet. The letters are thus directly linked to the divine, while the *Torah*[2] is the divine text that communicates with man. Scholem elaborates some aspects of this notion,

> 'These ideas are excellently formulated in the writings of Moses Cordovero, from which they were taken over by many other authors. He too starts from the assumption that the Torah in its innermost essence is composed of divine letters, which themselves are divine configurations of divine light. Only in a course of a process of materialization do these letters combine in various ways. First they form names, that is names of God, later appellatives and predicates suggesting the divine, and still later they combine in a new way, to form words relating to earthly events and material objects.' (Scholem: 71)

At this juncture I digress slightly to note related aspects of the letters for the sake of the ensuing discussion on Abraham's paradigm. Implicit in the letters are their numerical values. These are not merely quantitative, but are assigned strict values that enable intrinsic interpretations with counterparts in reality.

For instance, pertinent to a translation of Abraham's defining quality of *Chessed* is the concept of love. The gematria[3] (numerological value) of *ahavah* (love) and *echad* (one) both have the same value of thirteen (if each letter within each word were to be added together: one - א ח ד (numerical values: ד=4, ח=8, א=1: 4+8+1=13); love- א ה ב ה (numerical values: ה=5, ב=2, ה=5, א=1: 5+2+5+1=13); indicating the real component that speaks of an intrinsic relationship between the concept of 'love' and the concept of 'one'. Therefore it may be assumed that 'love' and 'one' (as in 'unity' – א ח ד ו ת (achdut), a derivative of the word for one, א ח ד) have elements that are conceptually synonymous. The defining phrase of Abraham's journey, *Lech Lecha* may also be translated through its *gematria*.

Lech Lecha appears in the Hebraic text as לְךָ לְךָ, the same one word being repeated, yet each time it is used it has another meaning. The word is first used as the verb to ***go*** and suggests, not only through its *gematria*, but also through the repeated word itself, that there is an intrinsic relationship between 'to ***go***', the verb, and '***for/to, one's self***', its second meaning. The letter ל (LAMED) in the one case becomes a preposition meaning either ***to*** or ***for***. The same word may thus be translated as the verb '***to go***' and/or it may be translated as, '***for you'***, or, '***to you'***, that is ***for***, or ***to*** yourself. The implication is that the very act of '***going***', seems by default always to imply a movement either ***for*** *one's self*, or ***to*** *one's self*. ***For*** one's self translating as the basic orientation of all selfishness; and ***to*** one's self implying an inner exploration or journey towards self-actualization; a pursuit aimed at the discovery and attaining of a 'higher' essential aspect of the self that manifests as in evolution of consciousness.

Continuing the discussion of the letters in general… The latter form, that of '…relating to earthly events…' arises from the way in which free will is apprehended and expressed.

> 'For He had before Him numerous letters that were not joined into words as is the case today, because the actual arrangement of the words would depend on the way in which this lower world conducted itself.' (Scholem: 74)

Components of a holy language begin to coalesce as a combination of several concepts. Letters are seen to be the building blocks of the narrative of the Torah, literally the Hebrew version the Old Testament, or the five books of Moses. This book however, is conceptually believed to have existed mystically prior to creation (a concept implicit in this interpretation) and that its manifestation fluctuates in relation to the choices made by humankind. Man's history thus determines the manifestation of a holy language of infinite possibility, where the specified number of letters in the Torah is maintained in abeyance until choice evokes the responsive text, similar to quantum's wave-particle function, its changeability dependent only on its (humankind's) choices, and as such may represent a dimension of historical dialogue between God and man. Unpacking this Kabbalistic principle facilitates a particular translation of the text that initiates Abraham's narrative of *Lech Lecha,* his journey towards his self and to God. To elaborate, Scholem quotes Cordovero saying,

> 'He illustrates his conception by the example of the Biblical ordinance forbidding the wearing of clothes made of wool mixed with linen. In Hebrew this mixture is termed *sha'atnez.*
>
> The *Torah* says (Deut. 22: 11): 'Thou shalt not wear *sha'atnez* – this could not have been written before Adam himself had clad himself in the coarse, material stuff which in mystical language is known as 'skin of the serpent.' Thus the Torah could not have contained such a prohibition, for what bearing could *sha'atnez* have had on the soul of man, which was originally clothed in a purely spiritual garment? And indeed the original combination of letters in the Torah before the fall was not *sha'atnez tsemer u-fishtim* (sha'atnez of wool and linen), but the same consonants in another combination, namely, *satan-'az metsar u-tofsim*, a warning to Adam not to exchange his original garment of light for the garment of serpent's skin, symbolizing the demonic power named *satan-'az,* 'insolent Satan.' Further, the words embodied a warning to the effect that these powers would assuredly bring fear and affliction, *metsar*, upon man and attempt to gain possession of him, *u-tofsim*, and thereby bring him down to Hell. But what brought about this change in the combinations of letters, so that we read *sha'atnez tsemer u-fishtim?* It came about because when Adam put on the skin of the serpent his nature became material, so necessitating a Torah that gave material commandments. This called for a new reading of the letters to convey the meaning of a commandment. And so it is with all the commandments based on the corporeal and material nature of man.' (Scholem: 72)

To clarify, Scholem draws on other rabbinic sources that refer to this principle:

> 'The same letters would have been joined into words telling a different story. That is why the scroll to the Torah contains no vowels no punctuation, and no accents, as an allusion to the *Torah which originally formed a heap of unarranged letters*.' (Scholem: 74)

It should be borne in mind that Hebrew is written only with consonants – vowels, when used, (optional) comprise dots and dashes placed around the nearest consonant (similar in appearance to punctuation marks) the ultimate potential of the letters to be rearranged without the strictures of punctuation.

By applying the above principle of shifts in meaning by the re-arrangement of letters to translate the opening line of *Lech Lecha,* the narrative of Abraham in the *Book of Genesis*, a radical interpretation emerges.

> 'Hashem said to **Abram, "Go for yourself from your land …** '
> (Stone: 55)

אברם לך לך מארצך || **אבר** לך לכם מארצך

Members go for/to yourselves from your land || ***Abram*** go for/to yourself from your land

A single letter moved changes the entire meaning and structure of the sentence. The one meaning is an injunction to Abraham as an individual, while the other is an injunction to a group, the community of Babel. The members of this community had previously, in the narrative of Noah, been divinely commanded to populate the world, both as an act of geographical migration and self-actualization.

> 'God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land"', and
>
> 'And you, be fruitful and multiply; teem on the earth and multiply on it.' (Stone: 41)

The narrative of Babel describes their rebellion.

Note: ך = כ is one letter but written differently with respect to its position within a word. If the letter occurs at the end of the word it is written as 'ך', otherwise it is formed as 'כ'. The '||' lines above separate the two possible renditions as they are translated from the English.

Only two letters are relocated within the context of the sentence and highlighting in red shows this. The ם changes its position being moved four places to its left, while the ך becomes a כ since it now occupies the inner position in the new word ל כ ם. The same consonants, when slightly rearranged, produce two entirely different meanings; without change, the text to the right of '||', reads as a command to Abram (later Abraham). By moving the letter ם from its position at the end of the word: א ב ר ם (read from right to left), and placing it thus: ל כ ם, as it appears to the left of '||', the meaning changes from ***Abram*** go for/to yourself from your land, to ***Members*** go for/to yourselves from your land. The significance of this interpretation is that it defines a specific relationship between the community and events of Babel and the narrative and nature of Abraham.

Basing the translation on the principle that the text takes its form in response to man's choice, suggests that the building of the tower may conceivably have been the motive for a shift in the text. Had the choice to 'build' *not* occurred, the text may well have taken the form of addressing the *members* of the 'one language', rather than introducing the character of Abraham, who is then instructed to *Lech Lecha* – to 'go for/to yourself', an instruction in which is embedded the remedy that potentially may reverse the Babel 'error' (in God's view). In fact, the entire narrative of Abraham may have taken an entirely different form had Noah's progeny followed God's original instruction to populate the entire earth.

The embedded concepts within *Lech Lecha* define a way of being in the world that places the individual in a centrally significant and pivotal role for evolution to proceed toward Wilbur's conception of return, '…the reverse movement of "ascent" (or evolution) is thus the self-remembering and self-actualization of Spirit.' Within the model, it becomes incumbent on the individual, and only on the individual, to exercise free will individually; the 'design' of free will was never assigned as a group function. By negotiating the manifest world as individuals, each choosing independently, a return to Spirit becomes possible. Each individual is empowered with the contributing ability of uniting with the divine, and through this union to all manifestation, similar to the quantum notion where free will ultimately serves cohesion through renewed and improved relationships. The uniformity that was instituted by the community of Babel replaced this fluid ability of the individual, and inserted the type of coercion that stagnated choice itself, by ensuring everyone become dedicated, thus compelling them to the group function of the building process.

Lech Lecha, as a mode of being, uproots uniformity. It sharply contrasts with the homogeneity of a totalitarian system that demands each individual subordinate themselves to one outward activity that nullifies the need to continually be an a state of readiness; a readiness to diversely respond via free choice, to the dynamics of the unfolding world as it becomes manifest. Intuitive understanding unifies on another level, a level of the pure individual in relation to God.

Originally the divine 'task of return' may have been addressed to the group, but the communal choice under *Safah* to defy the nuances of the divine purpose deposed them. Abraham's paradigm usurps the group's mandate and establishes a model of individuality that can only function in unison with the divine, and is designed ultimately to remove the confusion and chaos of the type of language connoted by *Lashon*, that divided language necessary to disrupt the group uniformity of Babel. It was not the architectural aspirations of the group that displeased the divine, but rather the inner quality of its construction methods that needed correction. By creating Abraham and his path of *Lech Lecha* to self-actualization, God remedies the harsh judgment that He imposed on Babel.

One may ask if free will was served by this outcome. If humankind was indeed free to choose without limitation, is it palatable that they be so severely impugned? Does this not seem to be a dictum for obedience to the divine? Is free will thus a farce?

There are always consequences for every choice. Are these ever attributed to God's intervention? In a chaotic context consequences seem random, but in light of Abraham's paradigm of *Lech Lecha* they take on a different aspect and are framed, due to their acute nature, as divine responses (miracles) to free will, that act as guidelines that steer man forward in collusion with the divine, and for his own sake. Within this paradigm consequences are divine judgments, and are always ultimately beneficial even when appearing as malicious; appearing radically different to the quantum paradigm where consequences are seen ambiguously as random or direct outcomes of the initial choice made. The judgment to divide though *Lashon* is ultimately aimed at establishing unity through *Safah*; God breaks up the holy language into *Lashon* and places Abraham as the initiator of the return to *Safah*.

Ultimately it is to resolve Einstein's implied question regarding the "living of a life of miracles" that motivates an exploration into this paradigm, and a closer reading of the

character of Abraham and further details regarding the paradigm of *Lech Lecha* facilitate insight into the framework for the miraculous.

> 'Hashem said to Abram, "Go **for / to** yourself (*Lech Lecha*) from your land, from your relatives, and from your **father's house** to the **land** that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation; I will **bless** you, and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and him who curses you will I curse; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you"' (Stone: 55)

The metaphor: To go for / to … ' defines a two fold process, to go ***for*** one's own agenda, and to go ***to*** one's own essence. Going ***for*** defines worldly pursuits, while going ***to*** defines the process of self-actualization and the evolution of consciousness. '***Father's house'*** is the place of familiarity and comfort; '***The Land'*** is the unknown 'new place' within all future possibility; '***To bless'*** is the reward for engaging free will, either perceptibly positive or negative; in Abraham's case always positive since he always chooses from the vantage of *Chessed*, his defining characteristic. It is a paradigm whose agenda is self-actualization, in effect, the evolution of consciousness.

Self-actualization is the realization of spirit in the material world; it entails translating essential potential into a self-actualized perpetually renewed self. Abraham epitomizes this individual. What qualifies Abraham to facilitate this model?

> 'The first thing we can't help but notice is that the founders of the great traditions, almost without exception, underwent a series of profound *spiritual experiences*. Their revelations, *their direct spiritual experiences*, were *not* mythological proclamations about the parting of the Red Sea or about how to make the beans grow, but rather direct apprehensions of the Divine (Spirit, Emptiness, Deity, the Absolute). At their peak these apprehensions were about the direct union or even identity of the individual and Spirit, a union that is not to be thought as a mental belief but lived as a direct experience, the very *summum bonum* of existence the *direct realization of which* confers a great liberation, rebirth metanoia, or

> enlightenment on the soul fortunate enough to be immersed in that extraordinary union, a union that is the ground, the goal, the source, and the salvation of the entire world.' (Wilber: 168)

Abraham was an individual of this ilk.

> '"… His heart probed continuously for insight until at last he discovered the course to truth and the just balance using his own cogent cognition. He knew then that there was One God…" MISHNE TORAH, HILCHOT AVODAH ZARA: 1:3' (Weinberg: 49)

And this realization became the fundamental concept for a new path in the world with *Lech Lecha* as the mode for its traversal.

> 'It is not the teaching of the holiness of spirit, it is the teaching of the holiness of the physical.'[5]

> 'Abraham did not begin the path of the spirit; he began the path of bringing spirit into flesh. His contribution was not in the sphere of knowledge. Others had already explored the higher reaches of the spirit and were well versed in the highest wisdom when Abraham began his journey. What he pioneered in the world was the process of bringing that wisdom down into the physical, showing how to express the highest level of consciousness in fingers and toes of flesh.' [4]

The paradigm describes a mode of functioning in the world that integrates the notions of divinity and pragmatism through an emulation of Abraham's mode of *Chessed*, loving-kindness.

> *Chessed* is not equivalent to "niceness" or "generosity." It is a profound commitment of Life itself, a commitment that may lead to confrontation; conflict and even war if such are required to assure Life's definitive triumph. *Chessed-kindness*: examine the word, kind means "of one type" the deepest kinship of all, a shared existence. (Weinberg: 51)

The instance, in the film *Babel*, where Richard aggressively confronts some of the tourists out of *chessed,* loving-kindness for his wife, illustrates an action that would not naturally be aligned with loving-kindness, yet the prime motive stems from 'love' as it relates to 'shared existence'.

> 'Beyond the element of giving, the active character of love becomes evident in the fact that it always implies certain basic elements, common to all forms of love. There are *care, responsibility, respect and knowledge*.' (Fromm: 28)

This attitude of 'love' and 'kindness' is an attitude that serves both God and humanity. Although Richard, the film's protagonist, seems unaware of divine influence, his actions may still be aligned to Abraham's model, as the fundamental ingredients of loving-kindness are present. Abraham, conversely, always integrates loving-kindness with the divine to complete the paradigm as a partnership that flourishes in the miraculous context of the everyday.

The paradigm is a parable that describes a pattern that molds consciousness through a particular process of self-actualization; the pattern describes a process that evolves an individual. An individual with a personal agenda to satisfy individual selfish interests is transformed into an individual who is prepared to relinquish attachments most precious for the sake of serving God, himself, and humanity, thus acquiring God's blessing. Abraham is this archetype; he is the epitome of the 'giving' individual, the personification of *chessed* the underlying quality that ultimately translates into unity.

Through the catalyst of free will, he translates potential *chessed* into actual *chessed*, and thereby grows in *chessed*. He is the archetype for the type of self-actualization and evolving consciousness that shifts a language of dissipation to one of unity; similar to the notion of cohesion in quantum thought, where self-actualization occurs through the process of free choice and post-choice articulation that enables self- realization, the incremental becoming of the individual. Each choice thus redefines an individual; it is a process that perpetually recreates consciousness through experience. In both the cases, that of Abraham and the Quantum Self, an enhanced consciousness evolves. In the case of Abraham, *Chessed* combines with *Lech Lecha* to enable and ensure unity through self-actualization, and this attitude actuates the divine dialogue that is the framework for the miraculous.

The unknowable within *Lech Lecha* is revealed through the creative act of engaging free will in this way. The design illuminates the aspect of going ***for*** one's self, but obfuscates its inner component, that of going ***to*** one's self, the prime dimension of *Lech Lecha*. *Chessed,* loving-kindness, coupled with the presence of a divine intelligence, ensures an orientation toward the spiritual and higher consciousness.

Designated obstacles bar the way as one proceeds ***for*** one's self, creating barriers designed to facilitate translating potential into self-actualization. These 'critical events' are the divine language that challenges within the 'context'; they define the field in which free will is tested and are the events that emerge from the 'illusion' of our pursuits within the manifest, and through which a divine dialogue is discernable. The 'correct' choice, the option that attracts unity, is more than likely the option of departing the familiar and pursuing the uncomfortable and unknown. It is the option that requires suppressing self-interest for the sake of 'living' *chessed*, loving-kindness.

While Abraham was busy pursuing his own agenda, as he was in Ur-Kasdim, God motivates him to uproot himself, go *for his self*, to the 'land', the new home, and new context that I will show you. The 'place' or 'context' remains unknown to Abraham at the outset; it is God's domain. 'Land' may refer to a geographical locale or it may be interpreted as a metaphorical context. And, it is through this context that a divine dialogue occurs. The divine intelligence is always present in contrast to the quantum perspective where there is a constant adjustment and re-adjustment to context as a random phenomenon. Abraham creates the *quality* of the context through his choices; how he exercises free will *determines* consequences. The 'blessing', is the constant renewal of context as a divine intervention, and emerges as a precise response in relation to his choice. The renewed current context frames the new 'test', the challenge that is currently to be apprehended and to which a response is required; the conditions for previous engaging of free will have thus been re-set. And then, once again, God's response to the choice is again re-activated and elements of the current context are shifted, and so on, thus describing the divine dialogue. The perception of the miracle resides in appreciating the aptness all consequence as a divine response.

Miracles imply a divine intelligence that is omnipresent and omnipotent. And therefore, a paradigm that is to support the miraculous therefore demands a definitive statement that categorically states the existence of God as the creator of the manifest, including the

creation of man in His likeness. These 'assumptions' are necessary for the development of the argument.[3]

To satisfy Einstein's opening quote where a life can be lived as though "everything were a miracle" would imply the presence and assistance of the divine within the minutia of the 'ordinary', and this is exactly the pattern that is described by the divine dialogue between God and Abraham. Intimate details within consciousness are apprehended and addressed as context is continually and precisely updated. (See definition of miracles in the introduction to this chapter.)

Finally, how is this paradigm significant and relevant to the ordinary individual in a field of chaos? Even Einstein attests to the complexity of chaos; while attempting to deeply understand and resolve the seeming chaos of the world of particle physics he comments,

> 'The Almighty, Einstein assured us, would not countenance a universe run according to the rules of a common gaming house – "God does not play dice with the universe," he claimed.'
> (Zohar: 12)

The secular and the sacred it seems, existed side by side in his thinking.

Everyone it seems naturally goes for himself or herself anyway; this seems to be the human condition and is reflected in the gematria of the Hebraic words לך לך, *Lech Lecha,* as they indicate that to 'go' automatically implies a journey for one's self. So why develop a paradigm that addresses exactly this quality? How does the paradigm of *Lech Lecha* differ from the norm?

There are two central concepts within the model that are related to the evolution of consciousness towards unity and reconnection to *Safah*. Abraham's model of free will is based on *Chessed,* the quality that allows him always to choose to rise above his nature in the pursuit of his essence, and for him at least, *there is always a divine presence* within apparent chaos.

Lech Lecha is interpreted as "… go for/to you…" And it is the going ***to*** oneself that hints at the paradigm's significance. Self-actualization is the finding of one's essential self; it

achieves manifesting one's essence, and in terms of the paradigm, the acquisition of the 'blessing' promised by God to Abraham. To 'go ***to'***, is to translate potential into self-actualization via an attitude of *Chessed* in partnership with the divine. Emulation of this as a structured worldview is its significance, and is the root of its divergence from the concept of union via uniformity, the implied fault of Babel.

When translating the film *Babel* through Abraham's lens, the miraculous is extracted by analyzing consequences as they occur in relation to choices made by the protagonists. These are understood as the divine guidance that intervenes to mold consciousness via one's context, thus facilitating its evolution toward an ever-increasing level of *Chessed,* loving-kindness, and divine union, and in so doing emulating Abraham's mode of exercising free will.

In the metaphorical 'hands' of the divine, the initial going '…***fo****r* you…' the natural selfish pursuit of personal pleasure, ultimately becomes going '…***to*** you…' the selfless engaging of an attitude of love in pursuit of unity. This notion underpins the translation of the film. Character's contexts (circumstance) impel their choice, and their choices design their renewed contexts (consequences that alter initial circumstance) as free will interacts with divine response, and vice versa. The presence of *Chessed*, love and kindness, is sought pre and post choice so as to ascertain the nature of the choice and its consequences, and if evolution of consciousness might be discerned. *Chessed* love and kindness begets *Chessed*. Another way to interpret this is to say love, in its defined sense as an attitude to life, grows love. A choice of love breaks something down within the giver for the sake of someone else or something else; it's a sacrifice that increases love within the chooser and within the world; self-actualization that endows an individual with a greater capacity for love, a greater capacity to unite; a shift toward *Safah*. A parallel to the quantum self's perfecting relationship, and akin to "… and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Zohar: 134)

Instances of sacrifice occur within the film. Yasujiro displays an enduring patience as he sets aside his longing to connect with his daughter Chieko, waiting for a loving response that is to come from her. Ultimately his need is fulfilled as they form a powerful bond in the final scene of the film. One other remarkable example is the transparent change that occurs to Youssef as he shifts from serving himself, from going ***for*** his self, to making a sacrifice to act out of love, thus going ***to*** his self, as he selflessly attempts a rescue of his father and brother from further harm in the middle of a shootout with the police in the remote hills of Morocco.

Footnotes

1. Gerhard Scholem who, after his immigration from Germany to Israel, changed his name to Gershom Scholem, was a German-born Israeli philosopher and historian. He is widely regarded as the founder of the modern, academic study of Kabbalah, becoming the first Professor of Jewish Mysticism at Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His close friends included Walter Benjamin and Leo Strauss, and selected letters from his correspondence with those philosophers have been published.

2. Torah refers to a blueprint for all creation and is indexed in the five books of Moses, commonly known as the Old Testament or the Bible.

3. 'Here, in addition to the abovementioned four levels of meaning, a fifth is mentioned, namely ***gematria***, or interpretation through the numerical value of the Hebrew letters, which elsewhere is not regarded as an independent level of meaning.' (Scholem: 56)

Each letter is comprised of its form, its sound, and its numerical value. These values are not arbitrary and carry an inbuilt relationship and meaning. Two apparently unrelated words having the same numerical value are conceptually related. Interpretations can therefore be extracted through numerical comparisons as in the example use above; where the numerical value for the Hebrew word for 'love' (*ahavah*) is matched by the numerical value of the word for 'one' (*echad*). The two words are *actually* related and their relationship is suggested through their gematria. See appendix A for further details.

4. 'And God said, "Let **us** make Man in **Our** image, after **Our** likeness. **They** shall rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and over the animal, the whole earth, and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created **Man** in His image, in the image of God He created him; **male and female** He created **them**.' (Stone: 9) This description includes **male** and **female** as **one** entity; the use of the term **man** is a biblical convention of convenience. Seemingly God contains both masculine and feminine principles here addressed as 'our' rather than the singular normally associated with God. The creation of 'Man' is the manifestation of Man **and** Woman as the externalization of the male and female principles within God.

5. Tatz, A. *World of Action*. [Online] Available at: http://www.SimpleToRemenber.com

Chapter Five – Film Analysis – translating *Babel*

"There are only two ways to live a life, one, is that nothing is a miracle, and the other, is that everything is a miracle." Albert Einstein.

This chapter traces the events of the protagonists in the film *Babel*. The approach is to view the lives portrayed by the actors as though they were actual, focusing on the content rather than to critique the film. Each trace is analyzed in terms of the two different ways of apprehending 'chaos'. A case for the 'miraculous-ness' in the events is interpreted through Abraham's paradigm and that of the case of life's 'randomness' through the lens of *The Quantum Self*. The one reflecting God's will, while the other asserts a model of self-determination. The themes of kindness, humanity, good-sense and empathy are central to both ways of viewing and interacting with the world, and both attempt to explain the unanticipated tragic outcome and events.

The plot begins both in the USA and in Morocco, but is linked through the act of the Japanese businessman Yasujiro, as he hands a gift to Hassan as his hunting safari in Morocco comes to an end. Richard and Susan, in the USA suffer the loss of their infant son in a tragic instance of cot death. These events are destined to coincide. The *Babel* script is so written as to create a series of interactions that problematize their situations leading to a series of events that are characterized by confusion and chaos.

As the hunting expedition draws to a close one can imagine Yasujiro transforming into a wave particle duality. He spreads his self throughout his possible options as he makes the necessary choices as he prepares to leave Morocco. The rifle is of prime concern since it presents difficulties if it were to accompany him back to Tokyo. Gun control is strictly administered in Japan; owning a gun involves stringent rules and personal difficulties. It is understandable that he forms the 'particle' of a giver of gifts, and passes the gun to Hassan. Is it a choice of *chessed*? Does it reflect an attitude of love? Is it a responsible act? Are consequences considered? These questions may be answered arbitrarily since they cannot be known. What is known is that Hassan has been gifted a potentially dangerous object. The ball is now in his court, so to speak. It is his chance to become wave/particle until he chooses what he is to do with the gun. Has he dwelt on consequence? Has he been responsible? Are interpersonal relationships about to

improve? The possibilities seem limited in his case. He lives in a rural community thus limiting his options. Abdullah, his neighbor, owns a flock of goats and sheep and is plagued by visits from preying jackals. He therefore naturally seems to be a potential customer. He decides to sell the gun to Abdullah; this is his 'particle' form. As the gun changes hands, the notion of going for one's self applies. Each recipient proceeds in his own interest. The presence of the divine seems to be absent from each owner's consciousness as they exercise free will, but this does not detract from the possibility of the miraculous.

Abdullah presents the gun to his two teenage sons with instructions to kill jackals as they tend the flock. Is this a responsible choice? Does it reflect knowledge of the situation? Is it an act of chessed? Is it an act that serves the quantum ideal of a functioning cohesive relationships? These are the events that are unfolding in Morocco as Richard initiates his choice to travel with Susan, his wife, as members of a tour to Morocco. Their presence initially seems incidental but later becomes pivotal. Are the thoughts and choices around the handling of the rifle a reflection of divine molding of a required context? Or are they simply unfolding random occurrences that form the flux of wave and particle undulations?

Richard

After the death of their infant son, Richard abandoned the family leaving Susan to care for the Mike and Debbie their older children. Of all the possibilities he 'solidified' as an absconder. This irresponsible choice, it seems, plagued him.

Richard's journey begins with the tragic loss of his infant son. This is the first 'critical moment', moments that can be seen to be events that transpire without human intention or control and are central to the question that defines chaos as either miracle or chance.

Whatever his prior context was is unknown. In terms of Abraham's paradigm God is now speaking to him through this event and its effect; Richard himself is not a God fearing or religious man and would not be thinking in these terms. In terms of Abraham's paradigm the 'message' would be to "…go *for / to* yourself… - *Lech Lecha*". Richard's initial selfish and seemingly irresponsible abandonment of his family may be interpreted in yet another way, as his 'going for his self'; in that he is unable to respond

with care to the needs of Susan, Mike and Debbie their older children. He now finds himself in a new context, again a context designed by God.

This could also be interpreted in quantum terms as the outcome of being unable to face his grief and responsibility, and having chosen a 'particle' from the many possibilities of the 'wave', that was a choice that is a disservice to functional relationships.

One might imagine, extrapolate, since the film excludes this scene, that he was plagued by the outcome, isolated, alienated and alone. He was afraid, as he admits later in the script to Susan, and may have been racked with guilt, the pain of disloyalty, while simultaneously still experiencing love for his wife. It is conceivable, since he attempts to reverse his initial flight, that he perceived himself to be a coward, thoughtless and fearful; undesired qualities in terms of both paradigms, and it is precisely because of this perception that he re-evaluates. Is this a personal miracle? Would such thoughts be divinely instilled, leading to insight? Or are these simply retroactive reflections that occurred as he articulated the status of his self-actualization, randomly unfolding in the natural quantum flow?

Regardless, a new 'critical moment' is thus defined. In mystical terms it is a response in the ongoing divine dialogue. Again God is saying, "…go *for / to* you… - *Lech Lecha*". In quantum terms it is a call to review and repair damaged relationships; to 'wave' until a 'particle' is attained in which a revised self is actualized leading to cohesion. Again he is challenged to exercise free will.

He fluctuates and becomes 'wave'. He 'smears' himself over all the possibilities that confront him within this new context. Again, one might imagine what these possibilities may have been. He could have turned to drugs or alcohol for escape, he might have attempted suicide, he might have begun afresh and remarried, and so on; he solidified into the 'particle' that chose correction. His choice is to reunite and repair the error of his initial choice, and remove the undesirable context that it had created.

It is a choice that demands that he rise above his natural inclination, which was to flee, and he now makes a U-turn and again begins to self-actualize. This can be interpreted in terms of Abraham as to draw down an aspect of his essential being; he begins a process of translating potential into self-actualization, to manifest an aspect of his essential spiritual quality. It is the path ***to*** his self. In terms of quantum it would be seen as him engaging his conscience his inner voice or relying on 'good sense.'

In quantum terms the undesirable outcome of his flight is viewed as random, and he, in retrospect, articulates the person that he had become through that choice. Through this retrospective lens he is afforded an opportunity to repair the damaged relationships with his wife and children. Interpreted as an idealized quantum response where 'wave' can be interpreted as his indecision, and 'particle' as his conscious choice to attempt to reunite with his wife and family. He therefore initiates the process of return, in an attempt to self-actualize into an improved version of himself, a version that values the notion of relationship above all else.

The choice he makes to reunite and fix is equally explained via either paradigm, the difference being that in the one interprets the circumstance as a 'miraculous context' that is the divine contribution to the dialogue, while in the other he reacts to what could be seen as pure chance and a random circumstance.

He proceeds to convince his wife and they embark on a tour to Morocco. They are now on a tourist bus in the desert in Morocco. So far he has failed to reach Susan as she obstinately refuses to forgive his prior indiscretion.

> RICHARD Why can't you ever relax. You're always stressed.
>
> SUSAN You're the one stressing me out. You're why I can't relax.
>
> RICHARD You could if you tried.
>
> SUSAN Tried? Don't you think I tried?
>
> RICHARD You're never going to forgive me, are you?
>
> SUSAN Do you even know what I'm talking about?
>
> RICHARD Susan, please, we didn't come all this way just to argue. Susan gets angry and faces him.
>
> SUSAN Oh, we didn't? Then when are we supposed to "argue"? Or are you planning on running away again?
>
> Richard sighs, defeated. They stop speaking at the mountains.
>
> (Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

And then she is shot. This is the point where Yasujiro's gun finds its mark. It is also the instance that initiates the new context, the new critical moment of a divine dialogue, or a random unfolding of events.

Suddenly Susan is bleeding, wounded while seated in the bus. It is a shocking moment and his reaction is absolute, survival at any cost. As 'wave' he 'spreads' out in all directions searching for the possible options? Under pressure 'wave' turns immediately into 'particle' as he stops the bus "Please someone help" he calls. Anwar, the tour guide, comes forward in response.

The shooting creates an upheaval within the bus. It initiates a series of interactions that reflect elements of Babel while redefining Richard's persona as he displays previously obscured inner qualities.

> 'RICHARD Is anybody a doctor?
>
> Nobody answers. Richard starts to lose his cool.
>
> RICHARD Please: a doctor.
>
> The pensioners don't answer; they are too scared. Richard opens Susan's purse and sees a cell phone. He turns it on and tries to call, but there is no signal. He turns to Anwar.
>
> RICHARD Where's the nearest hospital?
>
> ANWAR It's far away, about four hours. There's a clinic that's a little closer, about an hour and a half to the south. By bus it'll take us about two hours and a half though.
>
> RICHARD Does that take us away from Marrakesh?
>
> ANWAR Yes, but it's the closest thing we've got. Richard runs down the aisle and gets out of the bus.
>
> No cars drive by. The road is almost deserted. In the distance, a run-down Renault approaches. Richard stands in the road to stop it.
>
> The car brakes and Richard runs toward the driver: an old

peasant traveling with his eight year-old grandson.

RICHARD I need your help. We were attacked.

OLD MAN (In Arabic) I don't understand... Richard grows desperate.

RICHARD Help... hospital...

OLD MAN (In Arabic) I don't understand you sir.

Richard sees that Anwar and the bus driver have gotten out of the bus and he starts shouting at them for help

RICHARD Tell him we need his help.

With the distraction, the old man drives off. Richard watches helplessly as they drive away and he grabs Anwar by the arm.'

(Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

Translation is needed as the miscommunication associated with *Lashon* unfolds, but due to the haste of the driver's reaction an interpretation of Richard's need is lost. Broken communication impedes the imperative need and the driver of the Renault leaves.

'RICHARD Let's take her to the clinic.

The bus makes a U-turn and drives away at full speed.

The bus rattles along. Richard huddles over Susan, trying to stop the blood flowing from her neck.

Barth, an old man starts shouting.

BARTH Marrakech isn't this way. They're going to shoot at us again.'

(Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

Barth's fear and prejudice interject as he shouts at Richard and the driver in an injunction that they are travelling in the wrong direction, highlighting the difference in the two needs, one that Susan get medical attention, the other that the bus of tourists are on their way out of danger. Cultural bias has been learned and confusion and imminent conflict ensue.

> 'RICHARD We've got to get her to a hospital.
>
> BARTH They're going to kill us all. Turn back... turn the bus around...
>
> Richard gets exasperated at the old man's screaming.
>
> RICHARD Shut up, god damn it! Barth shuts up and the bus drives on.
>
> The bus bounces its way down the straight highway.
>
> The passengers sit quietly. As the ride gets bumpier, Susan starts to cry out in pain.
>
> SUSAN It hurts, it hurts... Richard tries to calm her down.
>
> RICHARD Easy, sweetie, easy...
>
> SUSAN It hurts... it hurts so much... Richard turns her around and sees her shoulder has been shattered. She won't stop shouting. A pool of blood starts trickling down the aisle.
>
> RICHARD Isn't there anywhere else we can take her?'
>
> (Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

Richard fluctuates within the wave/particle function. It is a fluid situation that constantly demands consideration and redirection. Once again Anwar responds with loving-kindness, with *Chessed*. He senses and accepts the urgency without the need of translation, *Safah's* direct and intuitive understanding seems to be present.

‘ANWAR We can take her to my town. It's near here and there's a doctor. In the meantime we can call Erfourd for an ambulance.

Richard turns to look at Susan, who is writhing in pain.

RICHARD Ok.

The bus pulls up in front of a modest house.

Richard raises his head and sees the desolate environs.

RICHARD Are we here?

ANWAR Yes sir, this is my house. Richard tries to carry Susan, but she screams in pain.

RICHARD Easy, darling, easy... He slips his hands under her and lifts her up.

SUSAN Don't touch me there.

An old woman (87), Anwar's grandmother, who has centuries of desert in her expression, lets them in and points at a rug on the floor.

ANWAR'S GRANDMOTHER (In Arabic) Put her there...

(Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

Without reserve the old woman responds. She takes care, she understands with a seemingly intuitive knowledge and immediately assists; multiple possibilities seem absent from her choice, as ‘wave’ function instantly becomes ‘particle’ as she displays the compassion of *Chessed.* Communication is clear and little needs to be said despite the differences in age, gender, culture and language; is this the untrammelled communication of *Safah*?

RICHARD I need to call an ambulance and contact my embassy.

SUSAN Don't leave me here alone...

RICHARD Don't worry, I'll be right back.

RICHARD You're going to be ok.

> The grandmother nods. She sees the swarm of kids looking into the place and she shoos them away.
>
> ANWAR'S GRANDMOTHER (In Arabic) Get out of here... out...
>
> Tom (51), a fat English passenger, faces him.
>
> TOM Get her outta there and let's go.
>
> RICHARD And where should I take her?
>
> TOM In Egypt, in a town like this, they slit thirty German tourists' throats. They might do the same to us.'
>
> (Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

Fear takes hold - as the tourists encounter the dusty reality of village life in Morocco. They seem to be consumed by a suspicion and fear of the Arab context, perpetrated by western media. In their fear, they seem unable to rise above their selves and miss an opportunity to embrace new aspects of their selves – self-actualization is outside their ambit. Through the lens of quantum it seems that the wave function is suppressed as they freeze into the 'particle' of fear. Any possibility of relationship with another culture dies before it is born and separation and alienation ensue. The quantum tendency to be cohesive remains unanswered. The attitude of the tourists is in sharp contrast to Anwar and the old Moroccan woman as they join the battle for Susan's survival.

> Lilly (79), an old woman, approaches.'
>
> LILLY It's very hot, sir, and the driver turned off the air conditioning. I'm feeling sick.
>
> (Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

This is another example of the self-centeredness that maintains existing barriers.

> 'RICHARD You can't leave us here.

James (82), Lilly's husband, steps forward.

JAMES What's the use in staying?

RICHARD In case I need the bus.

JAMES They can go drop us off and then come back for you.

Douglas (75), a tall old man with good posture, interjects.

DOUGLAS I'll stay with you if you need me.

Elyse (73), his wife, scolds him.

ELYSE And why would you stay?

RICHARD Please wait. Let me try to deal with this.

TOM We're not going to risk our lives, so hurry. Douglas looks defiantly at Tom.

DOUGLAS You do what you have to do, we'll wait.'

(Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

In this blind dialogue of a fragmented *Lashon*, communications are without comprehension; mostly too, without *Chessed*, as each party is unable or unwilling to penetrate Richard's urgent need, as their focus instead, resides selfishly only on their own need, illustrating communicative impotence as meaning is obscured, despite the linguistic sameness of one language. Is this breakdown a reflection of the extent of the legacy of Babel?

Susan is lying on the floor, desolate. It seems as if the pain is diminishing. The grandmother leans over her and softly caresses her with her dirty, wrinkled hands. This startles Susan.

ANWAR'S GRANDMOTHER (In Arabic) how do you feel?

Susan is a little bit uncomfortable with her this close.

SUSAN Can I have some water?

With her hand, Susan mimes drinking a glass of water. The old

> woman seems to understand. She pours some water from a jar, leans over her and helps her drink in small sips.
>
> SUSAN Thanks. The grandmother bows her head as if to say "your welcome."
>
> SUSAN Where's my husband?
>
> The old woman just smiles. Susan makes a gesture of desperation. The grandmother leans over her, unfurls her index finger and points at her heart.
>
> ANWAR'S GRANDMOTHER (In Arabic) Trust in god.
>
> Susan keeps looking at her as she slowly gets up and goes to sit in a chair.'
>
> (Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

Little needs to be verbalized while much is being communicated. The issue of translation seems to be mute. Again, despite cultural and linguistic division an intuitive language of the heart supercedes and seems to speak the language of communion, the language of *Safah*, creating quantum cohesion through functional relationship.

As 'wave', Richard 'spreads' out once again over the possibilities of his emerging situation, and 'solidifies' as he chooses to call home and the American Embassy, the authority to which he adheres. He first calls Rachel, Susan's sister with the news of the incident

> RICHARD Yes... Rachel? It's Richard...
>
> RACHEL (O.S.) Are you still in Morocco?
>
> RICHARD Yes, we're still in Morocco...Rachel, there was an accident, your sister was shot...
>
> RACHEL (O.S.) (Surprised) What? Who shot her?
>
> RICHARD I don't know... We were shot at from some hills.
>
> RACHEL Is she ok?
>
> RICHARD She was hit in her neck and shoulder.
>
> Rachel, she's not doing well... I need you to tell the embassy as

soon as possible... wait... and call Mark...

RACHEL (O.S.) Where are you?

He turns to Anwar.

RICHARD Anwar, where are we?

ANWAR In Tazarine, three hours southwest of Erfoud.

RICHARD Were in Tazarine, T-a-z-a-r-I-n-e

Three hours southwest of Erfoud... in the desert... it's a town... there's no hospital... There's nothing here at all...

RACHEL (O.S.) Where are you calling me from?

RICHARD From a shop. Rachel, this is urgent... urgent... call the embassy... They have to help us... call James too...

RACHEL (O.S.) Why did they shoot her?

RICHARD I don't know... Rachel, you're sister's badly hurt... do you understand? Call for help... now...

He hangs up. As soon as he does, he turns to Anwar.

RICHARD Call an ambulance...

RICHARD And find a doctor...

Anwar is walking back when he is stopped by Mohammed, his brother, a fat man (32) with curly hair and a tanned face.

MOHAMMED (the entire dialogue in Arabic) Why did you bring them here?

(Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

The need for translation surfaces once more, ironically between brothers divided, not by language, but by adopted prejudice.

Anwar doesn't pay attention to him and keeps walking toward the room. His brother catches up to him.

MOHAMMED You should have consulted with us.

Anwar stops and looks at him fixedly.

ANWAR She's hurt, we had to take care of her.

MOHAMMED In town they're saying she was shot by terrorists. Do you know what they're going to do to us when they find out she's here?

ANWAR Don't be paranoid and go help find the doctor.

Anwar pays no more attention to him and carries the basin into the room.'

(Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

Anwar's perception remains intact. He seems to function from a position of *Chessed,* always focusing on the other with care, that cuts through imagined preconceived barriers, an intuitive understanding that speaks of holiness between people. *Safah*?

'RICHARD What did he say?

ANWAR He gives you his blessing.

RICHARD

Thank you. The sheik and the moukadem turn and exit the house.'

(Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

Richard encounters the sheik of the village and faces questions to alleviate suspicions held by the villagers – the meeting ends well as Anwar translates between Arabic and English. It is a simple interaction.

The doctor eventually arrives and attends to Susan's wound.

Richard just bows his head slightly. The doctor walks over to Susan, shoos the flies away and examines the wound. She looks at him, anxious.

DOCTOR (In Arabic) The bullet didn't hit her spine or split her jugular. But it did shatter her clavicle and she could bleed to

death. Anwar looks worried.

RICHARD What did he say?

ANWAR He says she will be fine.

RICHARD Stop lying to me god damn it, and tell me what the fuck he said! The doctor addresses Richard in terrible English.

DOCTOR Hospital... need hospital...

RICHARD Yes, we know that. What can you do in the meantime?

DOCTOR (In Arabic, to Anwar) Tell him I have to stitch up the wound to stop the bleeding.

Anwar draws close to Richard and whispers.

ANWAR He has to sew up her wounds.

Susan turns to look at them, suspicious.

SUSAN What did he say?

Richard gets nervous.

RICHARD You need some stitches.

SUSAN What do you mean stitches?

The doctor opens his kit and takes out a rudimentary needle and thread. He gets ready to sew. Richard questions him, also in whispers.

RICHARD You're not going to give her any anesthetic? The doctor and Anwar exchange a look.

ANWAR (To Richard) No, he doesn't use anesthetic.

RICHARD What kind of doctor is he?

Anwar answers naively, in a low voice.

ANWAR He's a veterinarian, but he is good.

Richard looks at him, surprised and angry.

RICHARD He can't take care of her.

SUSAN Richard, he might infect the wound...

Richard can't answer as he focuses on what the doctor says.

DOCTOR (In Arabic) Tell him that if I don't stitch up her wound she may bleed to death.

ANWAR If he doesn't sew up the wound, she may bleed to death.

DOCTOR (In Arabic, to Anwar) And tell him her clavicle is broken. We have to fasten a splint to it.

ANWAR He says she has a broken bone and he has to put a splint on it.

Richard remains pensive for a moment. He looks at Susan, then at the doctor and assents tentatively.

DOCTOR (In Arabic) We're going to have to hold her down.
He mimes holding her down with his hands. Richard leans over Susan, who weakly languishes on the rug.

RICHARD Honey, this is going to hurt a little.

She stares at him. Richard turns to Anwar and signals that he can begin. Anwar holds her hands. Susan, stupefied, to Richard.

SUSAN Richard, don't let him...

The doctor lifts Susan's neck and starts to stitch. She howls in pain and tries to move away.

Anwar and Richard hold Susan down. The doctor sticks the needle in again.

Susan shakes her head from side to side trying to pull away.

SUSAN Don't let him, don't let him.

RICHARD Calm down... calm down... Susan, they have to sew you up... relax... Richard holds her head to keep her still. She resists.

SUSAN No, no ... no…

RICHARD Honey, please try to relax…

The doctor rubs alcohol on the wound and starts to stitch. She

> moans in pain. Richard puts a rag in her mouth, on which she bites down.
>
> (Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

It is a harrowing experience for Susan and demands a strong resolve from Richard. Throughout the process Richard's 'wave-like' tendencies to evade responsibility, evidenced previously in their time of loss, are replaced now with choices that reflect a deeply caring attitude embracing the deepest attributes of love, mirroring aspects of Abraham's *Chessed*, a loving-kindness that promises possible renewal of their relationship.

Despite the expected tenderness connoted by 'loving-kindness', *Chessed*, there is sometimes an attendant aggressiveness that emerges from its source of love. Richard displays this aggressiveness as he angrily confronts members of the tourist group when the ambulance fails to materialize.

> 'They turn towards the exit leaving the cop behind, who doesn't seem to understand. Tom and James take advantage of the situation to go talk to Richard.
>
> TOM We can't stay here any longer. It's going to get dark soon. Lots of people aren't feeling well and its dangerous to stay here.
>
> Richard explodes and pushes Tom.
>
> RICHARD Stop fucking with me.
>
> TOM Don't you dare push me.
>
> RICHARD Oh no?
>
> He pushes him again, angrily.
>
> TOM What are you doing, you stupid fuck?
>
> RICHARD Leave asshole.
>
> Tom shoves him.
>
> Fuck you.
>
> TOM Fuck you.

> Richard becomes furious and loses it, hitting him over and over again. Some of the tourists get involved. James manages to grab him with Anwar.
>
> JAMES Hey, take it easy.
>
> RICHARD I'm fed up with that asshole.
>
> James pulls him away while other tourists pull Tom away.
>
> JAMES Try to calm down.
>
> RICHARD Calm down? My wife is dying up there.
>
> JAMES Come with us.
>
> RICHARD Where the fuck do you want me to take her?
>
> JAMES Try to understand, many of them can't go on. Tell me, honestly, is there any point in us staying?
>
> Richard threatens him.
>
> RICHARD You leave and I'll kill you...
>
> James is going to say something, but Richard turns around and walks away as he is about to say something. Anwar follows.'
>
> (Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

The ancient repercussions of the confused communication of Babel test Richard's resolve as he attempts to negotiate the seeming chaos of the petty uprising. Weinberg's comment regarding the innate quality of *Chessed* frames Richard's actions.

> '*Chessed* is not equivalent to "niceness" or "generosity." It is a profound commitment of Life itself, a commitment that may lead to confrontation; conflict and even war if such are required to assure Life's definitive triumph. *Chessed-kindness*: examine the word, kind means "of one type" the deepest kinship of all, a shared existence. (Weinberg: 51)

Richard commitment to ensure Susan's survival is a commitment to "Life itself". Embedded in Richard's struggle is an opportunity others to enact *Chessed*, yet the

tourists blindly cling to an option based in selfish fear. Finally, Richard's struggle is rewarded, and his desire for reunion becomes a reality.

> 'Night begins to fall. From the window we can hear the noises of the town: voices, goats bleating, camels moaning, music from a radio.
>
> Susan wakes from her slumber and turns to Richard, who is leaning on a wall, tired, sweaty, with his eyes closed.
>
> SUSAN Richard.
>
> RICHARD What do you need?
>
> SUSAN Richard... the kids need you.
>
> SUSAN If I die, take care of the kids. Especially Mike, he really needs you.
>
> RICHARD You're not going to die. You can't die. You just can't.
>
> SUSAN Don't ever leave them again.
>
> RICHARD No, I'm not going to leave them and don't you even think about leaving me, because I'll kill you like nobody's killed you before.
>
> She smiles. He caresses her.
>
> SUSAN I peed my pants.
>
> RICHARD What?
>
> SUSAN I couldn't hold it in and I peed.
>
> Richard touches between her legs and feels the moisture.
>
> RICHARD I'm going to tell Mike on you, so you never scold him again. They both laugh. She grimaces in pain when she does.
>
> SUSAN I need to pee again.
>
> RICHARD (To Anwar) Do you have a pot I can borrow?
> Anwar looks in a corner and hands it over.
>
> RICHARD (To Anwar) Can you leave us alone for a moment?

> The grandmother and Anwar exit.
>
> RICHARD Come, try it like this.
>
> He lifts up her dress, pulls down her underpants and sets the basin under her. She puts her arm around him to pull herself up, but can't move her right arm.
>
> SUSAN I can't. They laugh. He kisses her.
>
> We start to hear the stream.
>
> SUSAN Now I can. While she pees, they kiss painfully. She starts to cry.
>
> RICHARD Forgive me my love. When Pat died I didn't know what to do, the pain drove me crazy... I was scared, that's why I left...forgive me.'
>
> (Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

Supposition suggests that had Richard known of the possibilities optioned by Abraham's paradigm he may never have taken flight. If "Life were lived as though all was a miracle", that arrested impulse may have annulled the need for the entire drama their Moroccan experience.

> 'SUSAN I was scared too... when I saw Pat lying still in his crib... Her voice breaks up and she can barely go on.'
>
> (Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

Despite the chaotic climate of Babel, the miraculous may nevertheless be discerned. Every necessity seems to be in place as Richard and Susan traverse the gauntlet. Crucial individuals are 'in waiting' as the process unfolds. Anwar, his grandmother, and the doctor, all people who embrace an attitude of *Chessed*, loving-kindness, respond with care, respect, and knowledge as they regard Richard and Susan as being of the same 'kind' and embrace them as being part of the human family, where everyone is 'kin',

albeit of divergent gender, culture, and language. Their shared bond resonates with the notion of a holy, unambiguous one language, dissolving the need for translation.

> 'They carry Susan to the helicopter in a stretcher. They load her in carefully. Richard follows her through the wind generated by the helicopter. Anwar catches up to them to say goodbye.
>
> ANWAR Good luck, mister...
>
> RICHARD Thank you for everything. Richard gives Anwar a hug, which he responds to affectionately.
>
> Richard takes out his wallet and holds out three hundred-dollar bills, which Anwar rejects.
>
> ANWAR No sir, no ... Allah be with you.
>
> They look each other in the eye and then Richard gets into the chopper. It takes off.'
>
> (Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

Anwar's response again seems to reflect a universal language of understanding, defining his assistance as having been motivated by kinship and care.

The arrival of the helicopter marks the point of their departure. It had reached its destination in time to transport them to safety, thus finalizing the 'context' in the Moroccan village.

The drama that occurs in the Moroccan village demarcates a series of events that describes part of the 'outcome' of Richard's initial choice toward reconciliation. It is a situation in which he undergoes a series of 'tests', challenges that require his choice. He continuously opts for the sake of love, with care, respect and knowledge. He seems to be riding on a roller coaster as he fluctuates between 'wave' and 'particle' in response to the rapidly changing conditions. His choices nevertheless seem always to be 'correct'; in the sense that retrospectively they are seem to culminate in success once again begging the recurring questions of translation. Is there an embedded yet obfuscated reality

behind the chaos? Are events accidental happenstances or divinely directed miracles that facilitate self-actualization and universal unity?

Richard seems to self-actualize with each choice that he makes, becoming stronger in his resolve until ultimately realizing his objective, the reunion with his wife. Had he earned this chance at a renewed relationship? Had this been his 'reward' for living with an attitude of *Chessed*? Could these events be said to be the 'blessing' of *Lech Lecha;* for proceeding in the pattern of going ***for*** and ***to*** one's self?

Richard had been going ***for*** himself to reconstruct his relationship with Susan, while in fact he had been going ***to*** himself as he surmounted each challenge on the way; *Lech Lecha* in action. He had become a new man, displaying previously unrevealed qualities; aspects of his 'essence' had now become manifest. Post-experience he appeared as a heroic fighting version of a man that had previously shied away from familial responsibility. He had self-actualized within the process of repairing a relationship, evolving in consciousness toward a strengthened *Chessed,* an attitude of love or loving-kindness, and a more enduring and functional relationship, that achieved a renewed 'unity' or 'quantum cohesion'. From the quantum perspective, it could be noted that his choices were a response to chance circumstances that simply reflected good sense, individual judgment and fortitude. And that the driving force that directed his behavior reflected an awareness of the practical while simultaneously embracing concern and being filled with compassion. His actions to self-actualization are thus simultaneously interpreted in terms of both Abraham's and Zohar's paradigms.

However, the events in the Moroccan context may also be translated as random coincidence in a disordered world. Were Richard and Susan just randomly fortunate? Were their circumstances moments in a chaotic world of accident that unfolds haphazardly, manifesting a process that is devoid of any guiding principle, initiating and requiring any reaction to the disorder, to the chaos?

Had the shooting of Susan been an event of divine design? Had Yasujiro been 'influenced' to present Hassan with the gift of a rifle? And was Hassan likewise 'guided' to Abdullah to sell the gun? And was it 'known', by divine intelligence, that Abdullah would place the gun in the hands of children who would fire it thus wounding Susan? Had reality been hidden within a framework for the miraculous?

The shooting of Susan at first seems to be an unfortunate and frightening accident, but viewed in the light of the manifested clear path to survival, it may be construed as the

catalyst that removed the resistant barriers that she had installed between Richard and herself, and ensured that she remove her defensive stance when rendered helpless within her moment of need. Viewed through this lens, her having been wounded defines a miraculous moment that facilitates and ensures their reunion.

Viewed through the lens of the quantum paradigm, the wave-particle function of free choice is enacted in response, ultimately, to serendipitous conditions. As Richard pursues a course of self-directed determined action that orients toward the quantum ideal of cohesion, he eventually succeeds in acquiring a renewed relationship.

Finally, events may reside in disorder, yielding an outpouring of chaos where random reaction in the hope for survival may be the only way of interpreting manifestation.

Amelia

The trace of Amelia's narrative begins at the time Richard and Susan leave for Morocco. She has been retained as their children Mike and Debbie's caregiver; again begun by the family tragedy.

The 'critical moment' in her situation manifests as Susan is shot; this being the reason that the touring couple's return is delayed causing the problem of her not being able to attend her son's wedding ceremony over the border in Tijuana, Mexico. She is specifically instructed by Richard to take care of the children as a most urgent priority; he even promises to fund another ceremony for her son's wedding. This is her crisis, her test, and the critical moment of choice. She is in a bind between being there for her own son, attending his wedding as a mother, or being there for Richard her employer and his two children. There is the deep conflict of being there for her children, or for her employer's children. Her decisions and the events that follow put both her life, the life of the children, and her long-term employment in America at risk.

If *all of life were a' miracle'* then the first divine intervention in the narrative is again Richard and Susan's baby's death. 'Cot' death is itself an aberration, and raises the question of why an infant is born if its life were to be terminated so soon after. As a divine disruption, it heralds a course of occurrences that are life changing. If regarded

however, as though *nothing were a miracle*, this act of chance tragically and inexplicably disrupts the lives of many people for no apparent reason as the film unfolds.

The Gematria of 'love' indicates that it is synonymous with 'one-ness', and 'One' implies a universal unity that parallels "Spirit returning to Spirit". To be at one with an 'other' (another) means the removing of barriers that separate, and Abraham's paradigm, based on *Lech Lecha,* enables the breaking of these barriers. It is a path that demands a watchfulness of self in relation to others and places one in a framework of free will. Free will in this context present an opportunity to remove something of one's dividing nature, that selfishness that insists on doing *only* for 'me', and excluding 'you'. Free will is the opportunity of diminishing this tendency, of rising above one's nature, either one emerges (self-actualizes) from the choice as a more 'giving' type of individual who embodies a quality of 'love', or not. The quality of 'love' in the model is referred to as *Chessed* – loving-kindness, which defines manifest unity. It is a more convoluted parallel to the notion of cohesion in the quantum paradigm.

Lech Lecha is a way of living that is designed to foster unity through *chessed*. The choice to live in this way initiates two things: one, it creates a personal awareness of oneself as an interacting being, and two, it initiates a partnership with God. The underlying concept is that this consciousness is to incrementally evolve toward unity. All contexts within the Abraham paradigm are designed for this purpose. Manifest events form 'an illusion' that encapsulates and shrouds a challenge for free will. The material world construes an illusionary context that presents a test to the individual in which a choice through free will is to be made. This is the 'test' of *Lech Lecha*.

Within this paradigm, the child was destined to die of cot death; this is not in question. It is a decreed event whose motive may be unknown but is related to the inner life of the child, and also for the purpose of testing Richard and Susan who are immersed in life as they go *for* and *to* themselves. The event presents a challenge for them to activate free will for the 'prime purpose of attaining unity' in the world. The question is whether they will enact free will in a way that embraces this purpose. Richard's flight response fails to do this and he is 'encouraged' through the discomfort he experiences to redirect, which he does.

Susan's persistent resistance frustrates his intentions. Her choice blocks 'unity'. Her being shot breaks the deadlock and allows them to advance toward the ideal. In terms of

the divine purpose of "…process of the return of Spirit to Spirit…" (Wilber: 106), it is a successful outcome. The manifest events of 'cot death' and 'being shot' are very real 'illusions' that obfuscate a spiritual reality that exists for the sake of unity; these 'illusions', or circumstances, are within the paradigm considered to be divine interventions or miracles that facilitate the divine purpose, and present man with an opportunity to partner with the divine. The concept of free will exists only in relation to this notion. The choice is either to go with or against God. This paradigm is diametrically opposed to the quantum self where personal choice is seen to redirect the events and outcomes in a life, and the responsibility for events that follow are seen to be directly related to personal free will. Not in any sense framed by the notion of God's will.

Chessed describes an attitude that encompasses love; giving with care, respect, responsibility and knowledge while recognizing that the recipient is of the same kind as the giver; it defines unity and directs free will. All of Richard's choices throughout their Moroccan episode can be interpreted as stemming from *chessed*, and this explains the paradox that to go *for/to* you are ultimately to go for/to the other. The challenge of having to do for another while placing oneself second explains why one is compelled to rise above one's nature to self-actualize.

Richard and Susan's relationship was, through their Moroccan experience, overhauled and recharged with a profound bond of love, but their narrative is incomplete until they are reunited with their children, and this aspect unfolds through the hands of Amelia.

In terms of Abraham's *Lech Lecha*, Amelia parallels Abraham in that she too is an emigrant; their journey to self-actualize begins as they uproot and venture to an unknown land. The narrative of Babel and Abraham's related paradigm assume that divine purpose orients humanity towards universal unity through the process of self-actualization, and this becomes the criteria and cause for any form of divine intervention. By tracking Richard and Susan's experiences in Morocco this seems clear. Amelia's outcome is less obvious.

Amelia is sequestered with the children and struggles with the choice of whether to attend the Mexican ceremony or not. Unlike Richard, who was primarily motivated through the 'context of remorse' and with a giving orientation to rescue someone, Amelia seems driven by self-interest, and although she demonstratively loves Mike and Debbie, she nevertheless includes them in a plan where she remains the person of prime

interest. She embraces her familial reaction for participating in the ceremony that is pending. She, as 'wave' seems not to 'spread' beyond this possibility, and she forms as a 'particle' that is determined to go to Mexico, one way or another. She does however re-form as a 'wave' as she spreads out over all possible ways that she might accomplish this goal. This inner condition draws its own unexpected, dramatic and possibly, miraculous outcome.

Her path was originally set by her emigration, a choice that initiated her *Lech Lecha*. To remain steadfast is where the test lies. In the scheme of divine dialogue, it is this condition that is contextualized. It is as though the divine is saying: "Ok, now lets see what you will do?" It is always a difficult choice, and one that is very real to the recipient. If this were not so, it would fail to create the translation of potential into self-actualization. It is through the agonizing effort to rise above one's nature so that one may continue to go forward in their endeavor that actualizes an aspect of their potential being; and thereby adds a new spiritual quality to their consciousness. There may be many possible options pending as she 'wavers', but the option to *do for* her employer, Richard, is that choice that *Lech Lecha* calls for. It would be the choice of *chessed*. Amelia fails to take up this opportunity; she obsesses to do exactly what her natural instinct demands. In terms of the paradigm, she is not even choosing, she is simply reacting. She is not able to respond (to the needs of Richard and the children), she is thus irresponsible. Responsibility is one of the key ingredients of love; she thus fails in love. She fails to actualize *chessed*, loving-kindness; she fails to self-actualize her potential, to manifest her God-like essence; to rise above herself as she is, and become greater, to be a more giving human-being; to be for another while 'going for herself'. (As a *quantum self* she also fails to serve the ideal of relationship.) And, if seen through this lens, since Abraham's model includes divine judgment, it makes sense that she no longer continues in her life as an emigrant. One may anticipate that the pending context be 'miraculous' in that it reflects this interpretation of her choice; as occurs on her return trip from Mexico.

She undergoes an extremely traumatic drama through the desert that decides her fate. The children, who are innocent, are, by the admission of the police, miraculously rescued and returned home, while she is irrevocably blocked, and is compelled to return to Mexico.

> Amelia sits in a room painted white. An American, his hair slicked back, dressed in a shirt and tie, sits before her.

POLICE OFFICER (In Spanish) Is your full name Amelia Gloria Jordán Susilla?

AMELIA (In Spanish) Yes sir.

POLICE OFFICER Do you understand English?

AMELIA (In English) Yes sir.

POLICE OFFICER (In English) Ma'am, **it was a miracle** that we found those kids. I don't know how you could leave them alone in the desert.

AMELIA I had to look for help.

(Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

The direction of her *Lech Lecha,* in a sense, has been disrupted. Her inability to respond to Richard perhaps parallels his choice to flee his family. Responsibility as a characteristic of love is thematic, and its absence indicates the missing element of love that detracts from an attitude of *chessed*. This however, is not without the qualifying that she does respond to her son out of *chessed*. The lines of her unenviable bind are blurred as she straddles her two senses of responsibility.

Are her trials explained adequately by the quantum paradigm, that random possibilities define a random outcome? Has she served the relationships that surround her? Her actions reflect complete freedom, yet all her choices have lead her inexplicably into the dark corner she finds herself as she confronts the border official who compels her to return to Mexico. Has she simply been dealt a bad hand in a poker game? Or has she been guided miraculously into a context that is perhaps designed to serve her consciousness for future self-actualization? Is her repatriation a random defeat, losing her employment and her future in America, or a new platform for growth in Mexico, reunited with her own family?

In her return to Mexico she suffers failure; this is her new context. Like Richard, she is now in a 'land' that facilitates review. It is a time to articulate and possibly reconstruct 'relationship'. In terms of Abraham's paradigm she has failed to actualize *chessed*, and in terms of the quantum paradigm she has failed in her relationships. Her choice has failed to unify, to achieve cohesion. But her new context may set her on a revival path back to

her *Lech Lecha* of emigrating to the USA with renewed insight based in the fertile ground of her failure; as Richard reversed his initial flight. Is this outcome random? Is it miraculous?

Santiago

Santiago's irresponsibility seems to embody the antithesis of loving-kindness. He is however, instrumental in Amelia's fate. He seems without care as he evacuates the woman and two small children into the desert night to unburden himself. This is his choice. He ignores other's needs and it seems that he too is ultimately ignored as he drives into the desert; he is devoid of a divine partnership and the divine remains absent in his life allowing him to continue to serve his self-interest.

Through the lens of quantum he seems to disregard relationship as he fluctuate between wave and particle; lacking compassion or intelligence focused purely on self-survival as he dumps his aunt and children in the desert to escape. It seems fitting that he should remain alone, which is the case as he drives off into the night.

And, the irony is that this outcome might be translated as a precise, metered out judgment. If this were correct then his agency might be interpreted as catalyst, and he might be perceived ironically as a divine instrument; used in this way precisely because of his lack of intelligence. In the film he disappears into the night and this too is fitting for one who is so insignificant in that he self-actualizes in so negative a way, no doubt to continue in self-interest until in time he too comes to insight.

Chieko and Yasujiro

Yasujiro is a Japanese businessman and father to Chieko. The family, like Richard and Susan, has a tragic background. They are bereaved at the passing of Yasujiro's wife and Chieko's mother.

Kenji, a detective investigating the validity of the ownership of the gun used in the Susan shooting, has just returned from a visit to Yasujiro's home in their apartment block,

where he has encountered Chieko, and is now entering the lobby as he steps from the elevator.

'Kenji walks past the doorman.

KENJI Good night.

He keeps walking. On the other end of the lobby, at the parking lot entrance, Yasujiro walks in. The doorman calls Kenji as he is about to leave.

DOORMAN Officer... officer...

Kenji stops. Beside him is Yasujiro.

DOORMAN This is the man you were looking for.

Kenji approaches him while the doorman discretely moves away to leave them alone in the lobby.

KENJI Good evening, I'm lieutenant Mamiya.

YASUJIRO Good evening, how can I help you?

KENJI Sir, there was an incident and ...

Yasujiro looks at him attentively. Kenji, still moved by Chieko, looks distracted, confused.

KENJI I don't mean to bother you, but ... Do you own a .270 caliber Winchester 70 rifle with the registration number ...

Kenji looks through his pockets, takes out a small notebook and looks up the missing number.

KENJI UK-9023?

YASUJIRO I don't remember the license, but I did have a rifle like the one you described.

KENJI Is it true that you gave it to a Mr. Hassan Ibrahim, who lives in southern Morocco?

YASUJIRO Hassan Ibrahim?

KENJI He says he was your guide in a hunt.

YASUJIRO Hassan? Of course. He was a very good guide and I gave him the rifle. Hassan is a very kind man. Did anything happen?

KENJI There was an attempted murder with that rifle, and the Moroccan police want to confirm it's not off the black market.

YASUJIRO No, I gave it to him. (a beat) Is Hassan ok?

KENJI I don't know.

Yasujiro remains silent for a moment.

YASUJIRO Am I legally involved?

KENJI Not for the moment. You may have to go testify for your friend.

YASUJIRO Can I leave now?

KENJI Good night.

They both bow to say goodbye. Yasujiro walks toward the elevator. Kenji calls out to him.

KENJI Excuse me. Kenji approaches and Yasujiro awaits, expectant.

KENJI Your daughter told me about your wife on the balcony. I'm very sorry.

YASUJIRO What balcony?

KENJI About how your wife killed herself by jumping off the balcony.

YASUJIRO My wife never jumped off a balcony. She shot herself in the head. My daughter was the first to find her.

Kenji is left speechless.

YASUJIRO I've explained it to the police several times. Don't bother us with that anymore, please.

KENJI I'm very sorry sir, we won't bother you anymore. Good

night.

He turns around and leaves the building.'

(Excerpt from the transcript of *Babel*[1])

Guns seem to surround Yasujiro. He is a businessman who has a penchant for guns. Is this the significant object which challenges his life path; is it related to his *Lech Lecha, his journey to himself*? Gun control is extremely stringent in Japan and requires that owners undergo difficult and unpleasant procedures to qualify for a license. Is Yasujiro's in some way responsible for his wife's suicide? Does Chieko blame her father? Why does she lie about the way her mother died? Is Yasujiro's hunting expedition in some way linked to her death? These questions unfortunately remain unanswered. All that is revealed by the script is the fragmented relationship between father and daughter. The cause of this condition is supposition, and whether or not it may be a interpreted as an act of personal will on the mother's part, or a miraculous event within the Abraham paradigm to challenge both Yasujiro and Chieko in some way? It seems beyond the scope of translation. Yasujiro and Chieko' narrative seems to diverge from the remainder of the plot and is distantly linked only by Yasujiro's gift to Hassan.

Chieko's volatility epitomizes the wave particle function in search of cohesion. She is constantly on the move, driven by a dual purpose. She obsesses over her sexuality, the hormonal demand of the adolescent, but at a fundamental level cries out for consolation over the grief of her mother's suicide. This is her *Lech Lecha*. She is also deaf-mute, increasing the complexity of her character dramatically.

She communicates her sexuality graphically and directly. She removes her underwear and exposes herself in a restaurant; she thrusts the dentist's hand between her thighs; and removes her clothing entering the room naked when confronting the detective in her father, Yasujiro's apartment. She also communicates by writing hasty messages on a small notebook. Communication with her friends and father is through sign language. Is this the repercussion or distant echo of Babel?

All her attempts at sexual liaison fail. The boy in the club chooses her friend. The dentist expels her from his rooms. And the detective compassionately rejects her advance as he covers her nakedness with his jacket. In the film's final poignant scene, she and her father face each other on the high-rise balcony overlooking the futuristic towering

structures of Tokyo, the contemporary Babel. Their embrace wordlessly speaks of all her pain and his consoling love and kindness. She finds cohesion as they communicate through *Safah*, the wordless language of union.

Chieko seems to have been protected in that she remains unmolested despite herself until she connects with her father where their relationship seems to be healed. This is the ideal quantum outcome. This unity is also the ideal of Abraham's paradigm. Has she been divinely protected? Is her unfolding narrative chance?

Abdullah

Unlike Richard, Amelia, Yasujiro and Chieko who all seem to have a passion, an agenda, an ambition. Abdullah seems to be unquestioning, on autopilot. His life seems to be a life of quietly maintaining the tradition of the village. This seems to render him ignorant and unaware of responsibility with regard to his sons, and it is this lacking that allows him to hand a loaded gun into the hands of children, with such tragic results. He, of all the protagonists suffers the greatest loss as his eldest son Ahmed is killed in a shootout as the family flees the police.

As a quantum translation, Abdullah and his sons spread out as 'wave' only to choose the least beneficial 'particle' from all the possibilities. Ignorance and fear seem to pervade their every move, ultimately leading them into a corner where the only way out seems to be a shootout with the police. Their demise is ensured by the random unfolding of events that finally rendering them as senseless victims of chance circumstances.

An interpretation through the lens of Abraham's paradigm reveals the 'miracle' of harsh judgment that may be indicative of the seriousness and significance of *Chessed*, of retaining an attitude of loving-kindness, and not be regarded casually. Abdullah seems to be remiss in acquiring the qualities of care, responsibility and active attempts at acquiring knowledge, the defining qualities of love and the central qualities fore-fronted within the paradigm. His obvious love of his family is evident, yet he has not taken care to ensure their wellbeing, possibly due to a lack of awareness, a presiding ignorance. The devastating loss of his son might be interpreted as an extremely harsh retribution expected to revolutionize his life, the repercussions of which leave little doubt as to his embracing an attitude of great care in the future and ensuring that similar events do not re-occur. In a sense his context is in an amplified parallel to that of Richard and Susan

and the loss of their infant son Pat, where Richard later takes the remedial path of responsibility.

Youssef, the twelve-year-old boy, the shooter of Susan, seems to be the leader of the family as he opens fire on the police causing the tragedy. Ultimately he is smitten with the realization of his grave error as his brother is wounded. He attempts rectification by surrendering, sacrificing his own life if necessary, another instance of sacrifice, an instance of *Chessed*. He has self-actualized into the twelve-year-old man of great courage as he goes ***to*** his self; he has evolved from a boy on the run, going ***for*** his self, to making a choice out of love for the sake of someone else, he has learned *Chessed* through the crisis, and through tragedy has gained insight. The experience is life changing, altering consciousness. Although provoking ambiguous reactions, intense experiences of this caliber may be interpreted as being indicative of divine intervention in search of a higher level of existence, where the quality of loving-kindness is seen to have the highest value in a journey towards unity.

The sacrifice expounded for the success within the quantum paradigm is likewise encountered. Youssef's about-face may thus be interpreted as a response to the ultimate value of cohesion through functional and balanced relationship. It is conceivable that the devastating effects of the shooting of his brother evoke a realization of tragedy, a familial breakdown that evokes the urgency of a reversal at any cost, even at the cost of his own life.

"There are only two ways to live a life, one, is that nothing is a miracle, and the other, is that everything is a miracle." – Albert Einstein.

If ***all of life were a miracle***, an omnipotent, omniscient intelligence naturally informs individual thinking. Yasujiro's desire to give Hassan a parting gift of the rifle would ensure of a rifle his selling the gun to Abdullah, who in turn would use it blindly through to his sons to facilitate a personal lesson. The prediction of the ensuing actions of Ahmed and Youssef would be transparent, and Youssef's shooting of Susan would be ensured, thereby creating the conditions for the reuniting of Richard and his wife, while simultaneously shattering Abdullah's family. Amelia's 'test context' would also be initiated as a sub-plot, redirecting her life appropriately. All contexts may thus be interpreted as divine comments within an ongoing divine dialogue that evidences an

embedded purpose towards unity through individual perfection thus securing a return to *Safah,* the unity of the holy language pre-Babel.

If ***nothing of life were a miracle***, as expounded by quantum self, then all events would reflect a randomness that resides within a 'net' of facilitating connectedness for individual evolvement. The provision of chance circumstances challenges and informs consciousness as free will is engaged. 'Wave-particle' functioning negotiates a field of infinite possibility as it orients towards the ever renewing of relationships that aim ultimately to bind all manifestation and produce coherence.
If ***nothing of life were a miracle***, chaos may also be intrinsic existential disorder rendering further interpretation meaningless.

The developed paradigms that confront **Chaos** both propose the ideal of integration through self-actualization, and in this regard, their difference is one of semantics. Their essential divergence however, the question of the existence of divine intelligence, the defining source of the miraculous, remains in place. The central question: ***'Is all a miracle, or is nothing a miracle?'*** thus remains unanswered.

Footnotes

1. Arriaga, G., 2005. *Babel.* Transcript. [Online] Available at: <http://www.dailyscript.com/scripts/Babel.pdf>

Chapter Six – A Unified Field of Meaning

Babel – Abraham

> 'Having "fallen" into the manifest and material world, Spirit begins the process of returning to itself, and this **process of the return of Spirit to Spirit** is simply development or evolution itself. The original "descent" (or involution) is a forgetting, a fall, a self-alienation of Spirit; and the reverse movement of "ascent" (or evolution) is thus the self-remembering and self-actualization of Spirit. (Wilber: 106)

Abraham's paradigm is a parable that aligns with this notion of Spirit returning to Spirit depicting Abraham as the archetype that epitomizes the ideal individual for this task, one who wishes to actively engage as a partner with 'Spirit' in the process of return. Retrieving the lost language shared prior to Babel would be a manifestation of the unity as 'Spirit returns to Spirit'.

> 'And yet, the Idealists emphasized, all of Spirit is **fully present** at each and every stage of evolution as the *process* of evolution itself.' (Wilber: 106)

Is this 'presence' not the framework for miracles of the everyday? Abraham's paradigm aligns with the notion of return to Spirit and aspires to partner with the divine to this purpose. Free will translates as repeated options to partner, or not to partner with God in the process, while the process itself is ultimately independent of man. Free choice in the paradigm can always be reduced to a choice in terms of 'unity' or 'division of unity'; a re-interpretation of 'good' and 'evil'. These are the core concepts. Every instance of choice 'arises' from a facet of the world; a facet that throws out a new challenge that can always be reduced to a choice between orienting towards integrating with the divine source or vying away towards fragmentation. And all consequence reflects the choice that was made, and informs responsive interventions that are designed to enhance or to redirect the individual toward unity.

Babel – Quantum

The randomness and unpredictability of Zohar's quantum self seems at times as chaotic as the chaos that it interprets. It uses the world of subatomic reality as its framework, a world that often defies explanation. Yet discernable patterns such as the notions of 'wave- particle' duality and 'non-locality' are extrapolated and ultimately inform a worldview.

> 'Everything about reality is and remains a matter of probabilities. An electron *might* be a particle, it *might* be a wave, it *might* be in this orbit, it *might* be in that – indeed, anything might happen.' (Zohar: 11)

Free choice mimics the 'fuzziness' of the atom as particles and waves vie between virtual and actual manifestation. Zohar adopts this non-deterministic view of Bohr-Heisenberg. ''I want to support the view that the foundation of reality itself is an unfixed, indeterminate maze of probabilities.' (Zohar: 12)

> 'When an electron, in the guise of a probability wave, intends to move from one orbit to another, it at first behaves as though 'it were smeared out over a large region of space', displaying a kind of eerie omnipresence in many orbits. It puts out 'feelers' towards its own future stability by way of trying out – all at once – all the possible new orbits into which it might eventually settle, in much the same way that we might try out a new idea by throwing out imaginary scenarios depicting its many possible consequences.' (Zohar: 15)

The 'thing' that ultimately manifests remains unknown until it is actual; self-actualization can therefore only be comprehended in retrospect by virtue of the indeterminacy of the system.

> 'For if all potential 'things' stretch out infinitely in all directions, how does one speak of a distance between them, or conceive of any separateness? All things and all moments touch

> each other at every point; the oneness of the overall system is paramount.' (Zohar: 18)

This establishes the conception of cohesion.

> 'Yet at the quantum level of reality, the whole picture of continuous movement through space and time breaks down. Quantum physics is, as one Oxford Physicist puts it, a physics of "lumps" and "jumps".' (Zohar: 13)

> 'When an electron makes a transition from one energy state to another within the atom, we have seen that it does so in a completely random and spontaneous way. Suddenly, and with no prior warning and certainly without 'cause', a previously 'quiet' atom may experience chaos in its electron energy shells. It's largely a matter of chance.' (Zohar: 15)

It is a system that is 'one' yet simultaneously random events occur in defiance of explanation. These are the foundations of *The Quantum Self*. There is no **single** underlying purpose in the world. There are no miracles. Free choice is the 'smearing', the imaginative extending or extrapolation of the self in all-possible directions before settling on one of the possibilities; outwardly mimicking the unpredictable electron as it unexpectedly jumps to a new position. Influences remain indiscernible.

> A vision of reality which holds truck with instantaneous action at a distance, of non-locality as it is more properly called (the principle that something can be affected in the absence of a local cause), has obvious mystical overtones.' (Zohar: 18)

Is it possible that the miraculous is so deeply ingrained that it may operate at the level of subatomic activity too?

Convergent or Divergent?

Science observes phenomena. Or one could say, science observes creation. Or, one could say, science observes God's creation. But the choice of science is to divorce itself from a notion of God. Nothing is a miracle.

Jewish mysticism refers to God as *Ein-Sof* – …without end… the all encompassing 'One'. As beings of the manifest material world we conceive things in terms of space and time, thus, 'infinite' space, and 'eternal' time, *Ein-Sof*. As though everything is within the endless 'One'. And the 'One' envelops and permeates everything. And this was always so and it is so now, and it will always be so, the eternal. And this is the reality everywhere, the infinite. This is the framework in which 'the miraculous' is synonymous with 'the everyday'.

Quantum physics is transformed in the hands of Dinah Zohar. Science seems to have gained an element of mysticism. Almost. The name 'Zohar' even refers to the name of the mystical book of the Kabbalah. Coincidence? Yet the quantum self is strictly scientific. The Bose Einstein condensate places 'man' firmly within a universal, albeit material, structure. It says that all physical nature is of the same stuff and is directed by the same laws. All 'wave-particles' structures are on a path of evolution, existing within a process of 'becoming', as they chose freely from the abundance of random possibility with the ultimate agenda being a cohesive relationship.

Abraham's paradigm projects individual evolution via a path *towards* one's self that strives to translate potential 'essence' into 'manifest' self-actualization. Each 'test' or challenge in life is an opportunity to choose. Free will is the means through which self-actualization, and hence the ultimate purpose of unity occurs.

In essence, both paradigms are the same in that they orient and gravitate toward 'wholeness'. Whether this 'whole' is described as the natural order as in *The Quantum Self,* where everything tends to coherence through relationship, or, if it takes the form of Abraham's partnership with a divine Being in the common quest toward unity, in both, the interpretation of **chaos** emerges as a universal striving towards an ideal state of integration.

The paradigms have one other characteristic in common. Sacrifice.

> The kind of surrender required to make the most of quantum process is like Christ's saying, "… and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." On a quantum view, he who would

> find himself a place in eternity must fully wed himself to life's processes of relationship now.' (Zohar: 134)

In quantum the particle dissipates into a smeared state sacrificing its identity until it reconfigures itself in another orbit, a form of transformation or sacrifice from one state to another.

Abraham's 'tests' too, are fundamentally challenges to see if he is able to 'sacrifice' an aspect of himself to choose out of loving-kindness, *chessed,* and to successfully proceed in the journey towards the self, to fulfill *Lech Lecha*.

The distinctive difference is that the one is a worldview that functions as a partnership with the divine and interprets chaos in terms of the miraculous, while the other presents a worldview that depicts events that challenge individuals, interpreting chaos in terms of innate universal patterns of chance.

Both systems confront chaos, and together they may form a unified field of meaning where evolution orients either towards 'cohesion' or to 'unity', converging in the notion of universal integration, and that this condition is facilitated through a relinquishing an aspect of self-interest in favor of a higher order. Unity is achieved only through the effort involved in serving relationship in the one paradigm, and only through the effort to the connection with the divine in the other.

In the quantum paradigm increased human integration occurs as random choices are revisited and retrospectively articulated thus ensuring constant incremental shifts in the status quo towards a stronger bond within relationships.

Abraham's model epitomizes a partnering with the divine through the manifestation of ever-new contexts that are presented in response to choices taken. Implicit in the divinely contextualized designs are tests of free will that orient the individual towards an improved self-actualized state where impediments between people are incrementally reduced.

The details of each choice may be viewed through the lens of quantum while their unpredictable outcomes may best be interpreted through Abraham's paradigm, thus interweaving the two into a unified field that is simultaneously scientific and divine.

Finally, *The Quantum Self* provides a worldview in which free will and personal responsibility place humanity in the position of individual freedom without being subject to any mystical restrictions; it is a model that does not subscribe to a universal purpose, but rather, embraces multiple potentials and their outcomes, thus remaining open ended. The problem of translation itself, is however, not addressed directly within the system. As such, it does not embrace a concept that addresses the ramifications of Babel.

Abraham's paradigm functions primarily as a divine partnership with free will apparently limited to being in alignment with divine purpose, and judged in accordance; yet as such it may be interpreted as implicitly having a remedial trajectory that addresses Babel directly, potentially predicting the eradication of the need for translation.

Chapter Seven – My Practice

Between Abraham's paradigm of *Lech Lecha* and *The Quantum Self,* I am able to extract a language that articulates my practice. The metaphor of *Lech Lecha* provides the descriptive terms of my path. Zohar's retrospective articulation informs an interpretation of my experience as it is visually reflected in the work. Meaning is evoked through post-action interpretation and articulation.

The biographical and the philosophic manifest textually and visually. Probing and exploring occur both textually and on the canvas as the inarticulate attempts to find expression. Philosophical concepts and biographical events inform the choice of materials appropriate for their actualization. For example, fugitive washes, tactile undulated surfaces of wax, and hard edged acrylic forms. Text visually punctuates the works and imbues the surface with potential meaning, which builds layer upon layer capturing the complexities of experiential and theoretical research.

When making the choice to enter the world of art at an advanced age, I was in fact emulating Abraham's paradigm of *Lech Lecha*. It was my pathway to self-actualization, and therefore the terms of my transition became those of the paradigm; I was '*living life as a miracle'*.

Now that I find myself at culminating endpoint of my studies, my research surrounds the articulation of the initial choice. The choice, at the time, was a conscious choice, an act of free will, to go ***for*** myself, and to go ***to*** myself, and now I am attempting to substantiate and validate my thinking.

My investigation reflects, via visual elements of the work, traces of my personal history at Wits University, from my early scientific studies to my current work in the field of art. The use of 'text' in the work is a reflection of my current struggle to find form, but speaks, in overlapping layers of this history. Together, 'text' and 'history', 'memory', inform the work and describe my *Lech Lecha*.

Translation and interpretation are therefore central to my practice. Abraham's paradigm and its scientific challenge in the quantum paradigm are interpreted. Both are related to a translation of Babel narrative, a narrative that underpins the origins of translation

itself. These meanderings all have a place within my consciousness and integrate as visual interpretations. Personal experience is thus visually translated, and the visual is then verbally translated as post-production textual articulation. Translation and interpretation thus give meaning and permeate all levels of the body of work. The investigation is thus an endeavor that explores '*language*' in the struggle to find articulation.

My question of a divine order, or any order beyond the obvious chaos, resides in the general context but, for me, specifically hovers around intuition. Intuition is like a bubbling spring that originates in an unknown place with a mystery that inspires exploration; it is here that I delve to potentially unearth a purpose and to give meaning to the unfolding urgings. Are they miraculous, or should they be regarded as just nature randomly playing itself out?

The Process

My process is fundamentally intuitive. Intuition is pivotal; it is a conscious 'construct' that defines an ongoing conversation within the process and is always present in the work. It is perceived, among other influences, as a pathway for divine 'comment', or intervention. Giving way to intuition without recourse to logic creates a platform that either substantiates or dismisses my belief in the nature of the conversation; it thus informs an investigation that explores and challenges.

The process articulates a faithful adherence to this intuition, and like the quantum paradigm's retrospective articulation that defines self-actualization, only yields insight once the work is complete. It is through the re-visiting of initial intuition that originally informed the work, that the work is textually translated. Visual elements within the work allow an exploration into patterns that describe the evolving of self as they embody personal historical elements that merge with the current.

Finding a Language

> 'Emerson admired Plato, the "great eyed," for his expression "God geometrizes" and looked forward to "geometric astronomic moral". He also admired Saint Augustine's cardinal mystical concept of God as "a circle whose center was everywhere, and its circumference nowhere." This idea which Emerson identifies as a "higher thought or better emotion," prefigured the sentiments

> and cosmic images of abstract painters from Odilon Redon, Georgia O'Keeffe to Mark Rothko and Gordon Onslow-Ford among many others.' (Tuchman: 42)

Attempting the visualization of a mystical concept of God as "a circle whose center was everywhere, and its circumference nowhere" begins to describe the dilemma. If I were to extrapolate, I would extend the circle to a sphere, the third dimension, and then into the fourth dimension of time. How could this conception be visualized? It is a geometric form in flight, whose surface and volume do not really exist, and whose center is infinitely small, meaning that it too does not exist since it is without limit. It is a sphere that is forever growing inwardly and outwardly, without end, neither in space nor time. It cannot be described or represented in material; it is essentially immaterial, spiritual.

My understanding is that God is also unbounded by time, He is eternal. Man can also be regarded as spiritual since he is made in His *image, or 'likeness',* which seems more apt. How is it possible then to have a visual art form that speaks of this ineffability? It seems to be outside of the visual ambit. Tuchman identifies five forms that approximate the spiritual in abstract art.

> 'The five underlying impulses within the spiritual-abstract nexus – cosmic imagery, vibration, synesthesia, duality, sacred geometry – are in fact five structures that refer to underlying modes of thought.' (Tuchman: 32)

Is it then required that one of these be adopted and adapted? Are these the only impulses with corresponding structures? If one were to invent a structure that aligned with specific individual thoughts, would it automatically find expression as one or more of these structures? How is a visual language accessed?

> The spiritual is a problem concept in contemporary art.
> (Tuchman: 313)
> 'For Kandinsky the spiritual was identified with "the search for the abstract in art," and it existed in opposition to "the nightmare of materialism." Art was unequivocally regarded as "one of the mightiest elements" in "the spiritual life…"'
> (Tuchman: 313)

The 'nightmare' for me however, shifts from the "nightmare of materialism" to the nightmare of the over-abundant, over-whelming onslaught of impeccably produced 'high definition' imagery, all of which have, for me, a sense of emptiness, outward perfection but somehow without spiritual substance. There is so much of it, and it is continually assailing the senses from multiple sources that it seems to be rendered inane and un-absorbable due to its sheer volume. The assault of perfected individual images of the highest technical order tends to give my endeavors to paint a sense of being irrelevant and even negligible. This is my struggle. Art no longer seems to be "one of the mightiest elements" in "the spiritual life…" [2]

I am not interested in a generic symbolism that claims insight into spiritual realms; my interest is to emulate the archetype of Abraham's quest to realize the link to the higher or divine self, in the sense of bringing something of the spiritual, however minimal, into visualization, and in so doing, to transform potential into actual. Of the five "underlying impulses," the idea of duality seems, at this juncture, to be most appropriate, where there is a blending of the ineffable with elements of the material, but this is only part of it. Content needs also to be personalized.

If Abraham is the archetype, and emulation the attitude, then the process of creating becomes a partnership with the divine, where intuition is key to attaining self-actualization and reflects an inner trust and faith in the unfolding process where each intuitive inflection is absorbed and included in the work. The process in continually revised through a repetitive and reflexive response as the work manifests.

If choice is the quantum 'smearing' over all possibility, as 'wave' converts to 'particle', then the process is accessed through an imagined outcome of one of the possibilities. Again it is a process of a series of intuitive choices, the success of each being accessed through an ongoing articulation; in effect, it becomes a conversation with the work.

Six years ago my 'context', my life circumstance, urged a change that I resolved by emulating Abraham's model in a vague and unarticulated way. I pursued a path of what I understood as a path towards self-actualization. My current 'context' reflects and embodies a process of articulating, both verbally and visually, that engage my initial conceptual questioning vagueness. The choice to consciously pursue the process of articulation, was extended and challenged by my investigation into Danah Zohar's

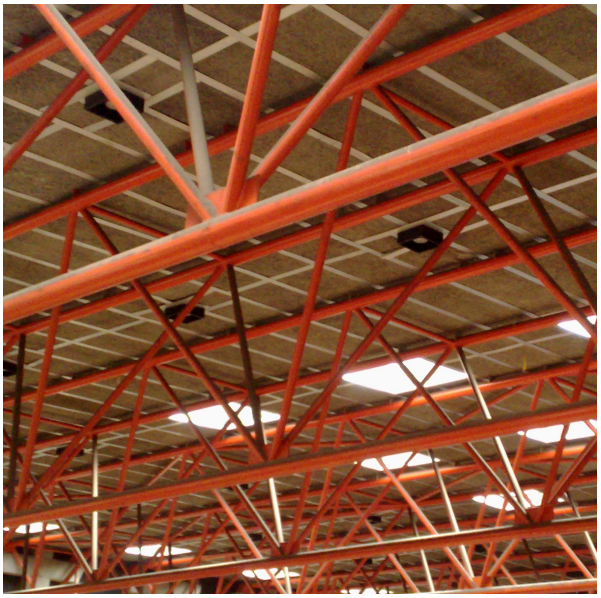
Quantum Self, and seems to create a contrapuntal 'wholeness' to the project. My sense is that potential is being translated into self-actualization.

> 'The enemy of today's spiritual abstract art is not simply the ongoing "harsh tyranny of the materialistic philosophy" and a society that is determined to reduce art to another ordinary communication but also the unconscious inclination of much art itself to take the line of least resistance to materialistic society by becoming facile, if slightly unconventional, communication. It is the desire to enter the mainstream of societal communication itself that must be resisted, for it usurps the inner necessity. The difficulty for abstract art today is to sustain the sense of spiritual *Stimmung* in the face of a society that assimilates abstract art as simply another kind of communication and so makes us insensitive and unresponsive to it.' (Tuchman: 314)

The Body of Work

The selected works form a compendium that speak of aspects of a process of creation in terms of language, the need for translation, the mystical, and the articulation of personal experience and aspiration.

Intersecting Structures: Earth Patterns (The Red Painting)
Some time in 2011, while waiting for a class to begin, I took this seemingly incidental photograph.



It is a partial image of the ceiling of Senate House. It was spontaneous. It caught my eye. In 2016 it has become the subject of a painting that epitomizes the incidental yet significant images of my visual history and personal journey.
I have a long history as a student at Wits, and this image for me evokes and symbolizes the limits that have been attainable. When taking the photograph, I had absolutely no plan for its use, there was no ulterior motive; it was simply a 'random' act; I was coincidentally strategically placed and impelled to notice and capture the image without any other agenda regarding it; in retrospect I'm compelled to ask whether this was an act of chance or could it be regarded as highly significant, a miracle?

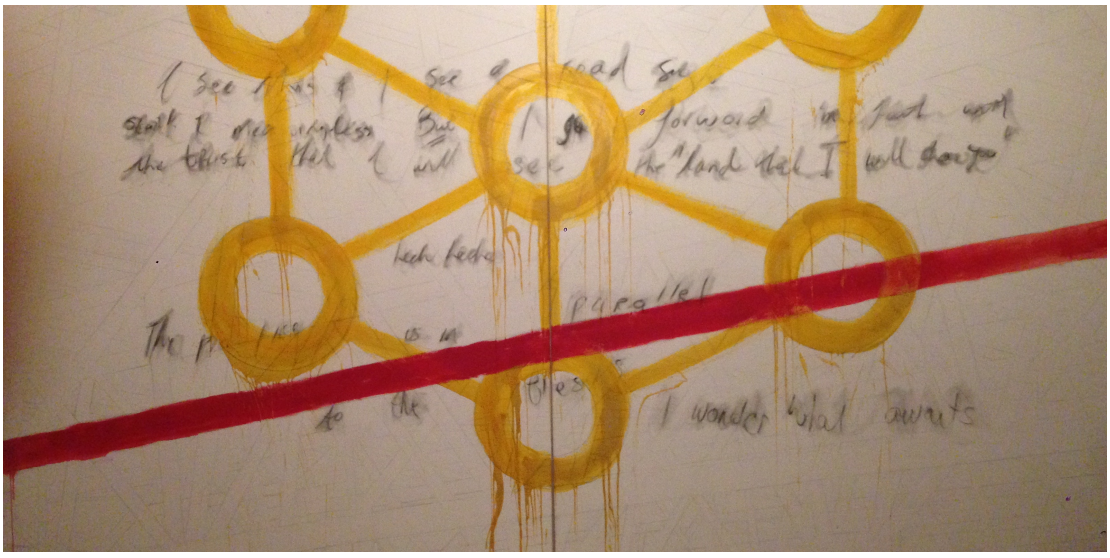
At the beginning of 2016 I began the painting based on this image. The choice to use the image was fraught with doubt since I had no plan and no clear purpose in mind; it challenged me and placed me in an uncomfortable space. I none-the-less chose to go ahead and take the risk.

As the process developed and the image emerged, the surface became the site for the unfolding of my personal history within a metaphorical framework that comprised the ceiling structure overlaid with the visually similar yet symbolically significant structure of the Kabbalistic mystical diagram, the *Tree of Life*; the two, for me aligned, representing the interface of the miraculous and the manifest. Fragments of text that reflected my ongoing thought process annotated the surface. It was a process that was essentially intuitive, beginning as a textual reflection of thought, and then becoming a conversation with the unfolding image on the four canvases, which make up this large

work; the underlying process itself, engaging a process of self-actualization. The final outcome, an open-ended reflection on my present and past, is a journey engaging memory itself.



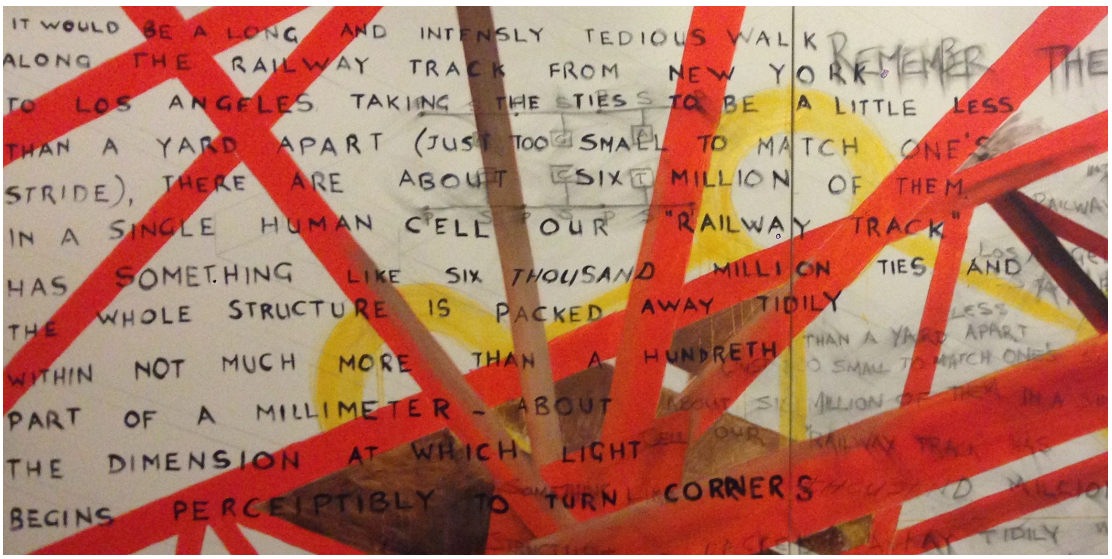
Sketching the structure onto the canvas.



Yellow structure painted in wax with the intention of melting out sections of the overlay of the paint that was to follow. The first red line of the roof structure with text reflecting the uncertainty of what would follow.



A memory reference to my third year study of psychology; in particular, a comment on a group structured meditation that we did and my personal experience that revealed the memory of the body; also a reference to Freud; highlight of my experience.



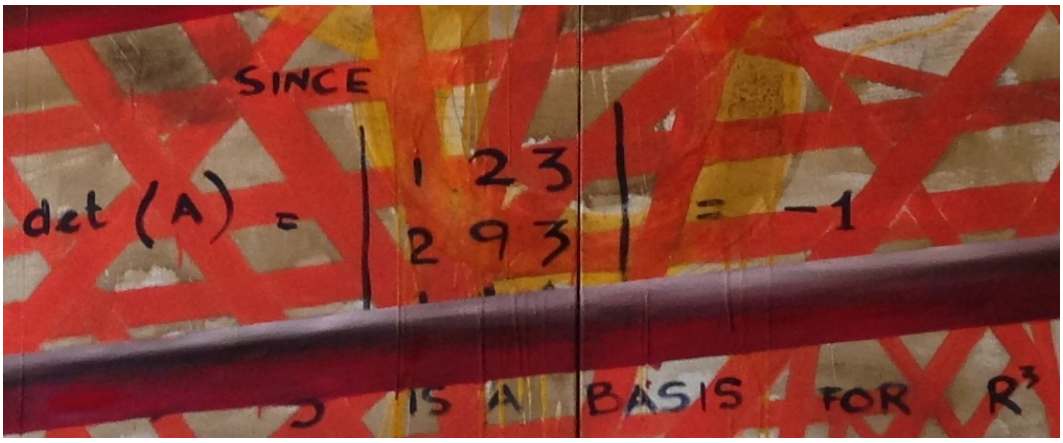
A significant reference in that it colored much of my later thinking. It derives from a course in Astronomy that led to the contemplation of other life existing in the universe. The argument was initiated with a description of the structure of DNA. The quote that forms the above text describes the incredulous complex structure of the human cell. I repeat it here for legibility:

> "It would be a long and intensely tedious walk along the
> railway track from New York to Los Angeles. Taking the ties to

> be a little less than a yard apart (just too small to match one's stride), there are about six million of them. In a single human cell our "railway track" has something like six *thousand* million ties, and the whole structure is packed away tidily within not much more than a hundredth part of a millimeter – about the dimension at which light begins perceptibly to turn corners." (Hoyle: 518)

This is the implicate order; an order that is both fixed and fluid and underlies the manifest world. These early memories reflect those experiences that stand out as the most meaningful, significant in terms of my personal evolution, of my self-actualization. The fact that memory is also referencing 'structure' as it aligns to the fundamental framework of the painting also seems significant. The intuitive process thus seems to be integrating diverse 'structures' in ways that align with my research. The human cell described above is the 'impossible' seminal structure of potential through which all-future manifestation occurs. Is this a miracle or is it biological accident or evolution? Is its construction a purposeful and infinitely intelligent act of creation? Or is it an biological mutation?

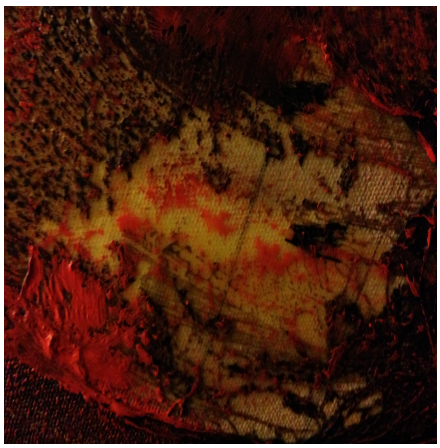
The completed work visually represents an experiential journey, a translation of potential in an ongoing process of self-actualization, and aspiration. It conceptually and emotively translates on canvas, my attempt at the emulation of Abraham's journey, his *Lech Lecha*. Through the meditative process of the re-writing of significant texts, mathematical equations and use of symbolic structures, a process of integrating and transforming my own perceptions are central to the genesis of the work.



Detail

The choice of earth tones symbolizes physical manifestation in general; the use of wax that is temporally heated at specific moments, symbolizes the potentially transformative influence of the ineffable within material constructs; its power to transform is always there yet it always remains invisible, transparent on the surface, and without direct access; so too, paint succumbs when embedded wax is heated rendering unpredictable formations that parallel unexpected consequences.

By painting the *Tree of Life* in wax as an undercoat, later to be heated, allows it to alter the ensuing paintwork forming new unpredictable output that visually mirror 'divine response' as it might occurs in the everyday. Concrete material structure, represented by the beams of the ceiling structure in the painting, is subtly manipulated, thus altering and molding its original form. Qualities of darkness and light embrace these constructs thus defining the surface. A tension is thus created between the complex orders in the architecture as it is played off against the symbolic order of the Sefirot.





Detail



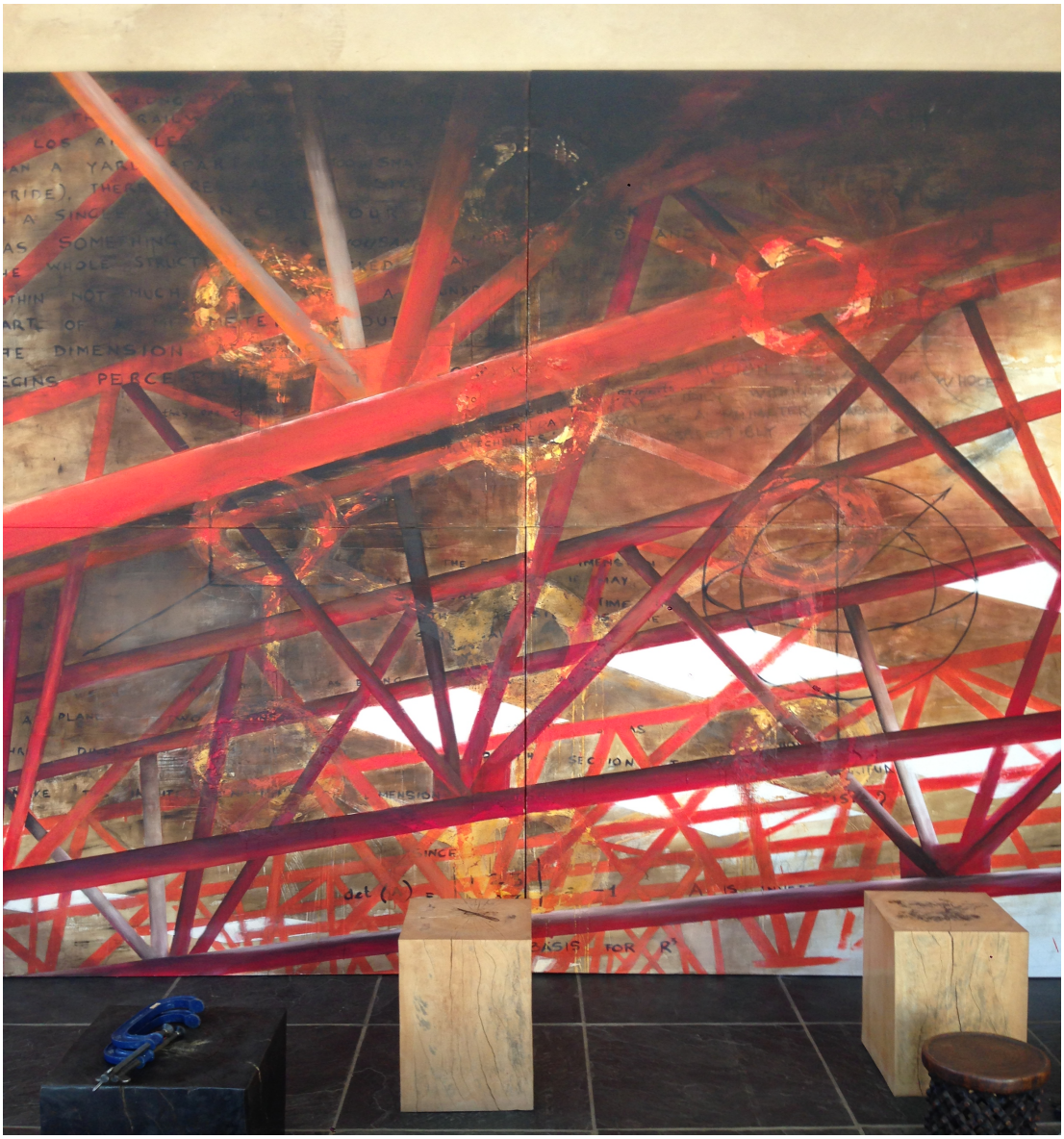


Detail

Incomplete or process ‘marks’ make reference to the concepts of ‘potential’



The work was developed as four panels. Due to the limited space of the studio I was only able to view the painting in its parts for much of the painting process. Above and below are two images of the work, the one above has been digitally constructed by joining panels, the image below is that of the first viewing as an assembled piece on a studio wall; a viewing that informed the overall process until its conclusion.



Intersecting Structures - Earth Patterns: Mixed media on canvas 3300mm x 3300mm

At the first viewing of the assembled work

Architecture, for me, is the powerful concrete manifestation of thought, while the *Tree of Life* may be understood as a mystical map of consciousness. The concourse beams of Senate House, although encountered intuitively, have a precision, for me, as a symbol. They connote the limit or height within an architectural framework of an educational facility. The *Tree of Life*, a diagram that comprises ten joined circles representing ten interconnected yet distinct 'energies' that animate and sustain all manifest material. The *Sefirot* may be viewed as 'tools' of a divine intelligence that are used as mechanisms though which creation continues and through which life journeys are interpreted.

The two structures are interconnected as a framework in which my personal history may be visually articulated, allowing for a series of visual 'statements' that probe memory and personal evolution. It is a visual articulation that retrospectively traces the translation of potential to self-actualization, and as such aligns both with the journey of *Lech Lecha* and the challenge of *The Quantum Self*.

Textual references trace significant personal events, and as they are placed within the structural framework of the 'ceiling' and 'tree', they map the process of self-actualization over time. It is a tapestry that interweaves the strong, physically real elements of a symbolic segment of architecture with discernable spiritual influences as architectural disruptions occur with the melting of the circular wax 'Sefirot' into the paint of the red beams. Mystical and academic structures thus conspire to form the individual. It is the metaphorical 'land' of Abraham's paradigm; the context in which free will flourishes. It is also the context for quantum free will, where unlimited 'spreading' of the wave function, optimizes possibility and the option to self-actualize.

Elements and events that are initially random and unconnected are synthesized and create a new order as they are articulated. An insight is realized where a hitherto randomness is transformed into the connectedness of an integral whole; it is the retrospective articulation that is advocated by the Quantum Self as the means for enabling self-actualization.

Self-reflexive articulation shifts consciousness, and I become renewed, or revised. The process is twofold. Experience is visually articulated on canvas, and the visual is then articulated textually. The first integrates the events of experience; the latter integrates elements within the content of the work. At first, life and image are translated into a consolidated image, or images, or body of work as an outcome of experience, and are then retrospectively textually articulated. It is this type of articulation that describes how I have, through free will, self-directed a course to self-actualization, a process of translation and interpretation.

In terms of Abraham's model, I have engaged in a partnership with the divine by regarding intuitive messages and context as divine contributions to my aspirations; the diagrammatic Sefirot represent this. This consciousness defines my conception of the miraculous. All events, both interior and 'in the world' are directed by an unseen

omnipresence that subtly functions through thought and social communication; it is a life lived as miracle.

The work also represents a life's journey more closely associated to the Quantum Self, where through free will and determination, nothing is lost as the overlay of life experience translates as a stacked image and informs individual identity via the process of mark making, text and significant image.





Creating 1 - The Green Painting

In Kabbalistic thought the Hebrew alphabet assumes fundamental significance. It is believed that all manifestation began as combinations of Hebrew letters, similar to the notion expressed by Scholem the Kabbalistic scholar, that "… the assumption that the *Torah* in its innermost essence is composed of divine letters, which themselves are divine configurations of divine light..."[1] which underpin the manifest world.

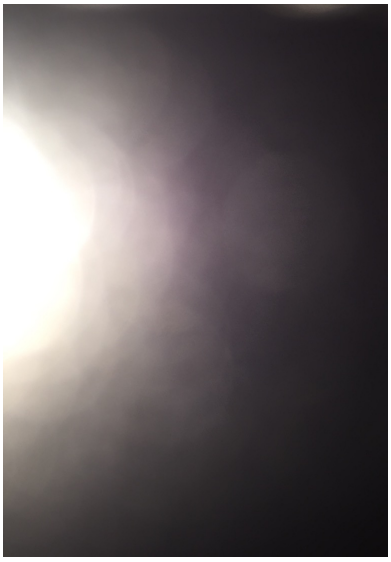
The Green Painting is a metaphor for the emergence and manifestation of nature. The work features two combined images. The first is a photograph of letters floating through space from light into darkness; it is one of the many evolving images taken during the process of painting this work as an ongoing image, a palimpsest of a series of overlays of text and image in a dialogue towards personal insight. The second image is the final stage of the painting.



Photograph taken at early stage of process



Creating 1: Mixed media on canvas 1200mm x 800mm



The photograph above is the image that inspired and initiated the painting; sent to my phone by a ten-year-old autistic girl; the only image or message of any kind that I have ever received from her. It is an image that lends itself to my mindset. It seems that the girl was simply 'messing around' on her mother's phone. A question arises as to whether

this simple but dramatic image of darkness and radiance can be read purely as a random act or framed as a manifestation of divine communication?

Creating 2 - Obfuscation

The image below is that of the final stage of a painting that began as a mapping project of the many disconnected ideas that I was struggling with to find some cohesion and expression. I used the blank surface to work through and articulate the vagueness implicit in my proposal, the notion of the inchoate, dealing with the acts of chance, the miraculous and translation. This work emerged as I engaged in my early attempts to interpret the notion of Babel and to clarify notions within associated paradigm of Abraham's journey.

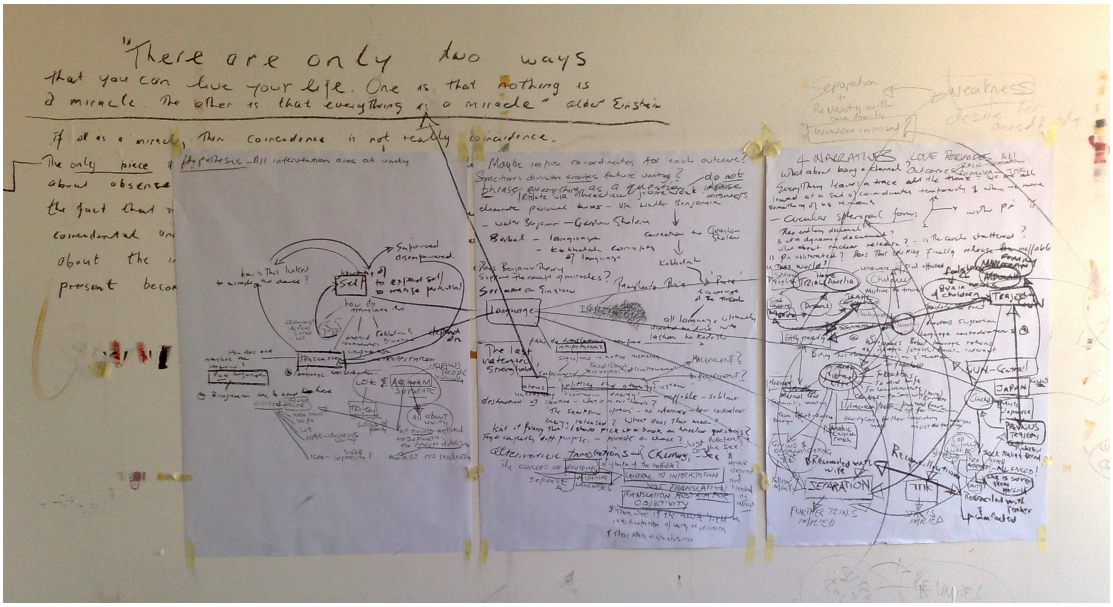
My thoughts became calligraphic layers of text and diagram, each opaquely obscuring the previous layer. Was I purposely hiding my thoughts or was this a continuous act of revision where insight followed by insight lead to an obscuring of the very process in time? In retrospect the term obfuscation may be misplaced in the titling of the work, but I have come to think of the work by that name ever since it was suggested to me. It is not possible to include the details of the many manifestations of myriads of images and incremental changes registered throughout the process. The text in question that is visually ruminated upon were the vexing words of Einstein that questions the very act of translation and the interpretation of life itself, the central text of my dissertation,

"There are only two ways to live a life, one, is that nothing is a miracle, and the other, is that everything is a miracle." – Albert Einstein.

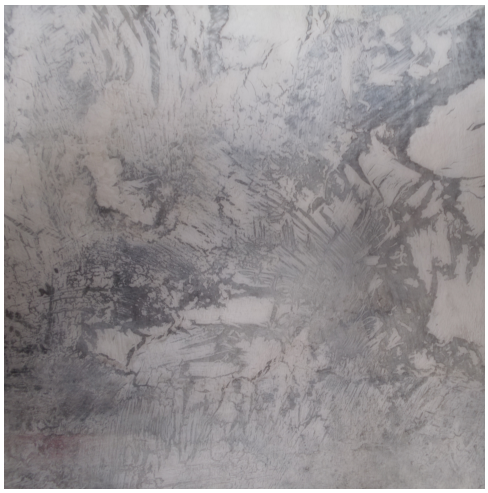


Creating 2 – Obfuscation: Mixed media on board 2440mm x 1220mm

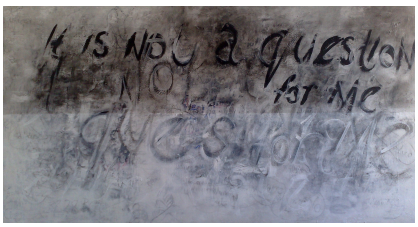
Above, an image of the final layer of the work *Creating Two- Obfuscation,* below, an image of the initial stages of this work on paper that were laid down on board and continued to be worked over, obscuring the initial visual thinking process by a series of painterly layers of ethereal whites and greys.



Close-up details taken of the work in progress reveal the translucency and complexity of the text and evocative images that emerged in the process of making and engaging with the text based nature of the work. Their sense of abstraction challenges the eye as it constantly searches for both image and meaning in the tension of marks produced by accident or by deliberation.








Creating - Photograph 1200mm x 800mm; board mixed media 2440mm x 1220mm; canvas mixed media 1200mm x 800mm; photograph 1220mm x 1220mm

The works discussed above are to be exhibited side by side in a discontiuous visual narrative which forefronts the distinct differences in the layered process of engaging text as a generative image toward both a visual and textual manifestation of the fugitive process of attaining insight.

Babel Then and Now

A textual, free associative process, initiated the work *Babel Then and Now*, paralleling that of *Creating Two – Obfuscation.* Text, overlaid by further text, initiated the visual

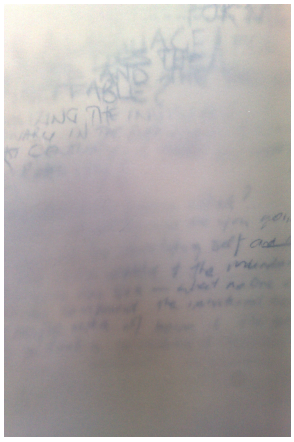
texture as the eight layered paper panels were developed. As in all my work, it was an explorative intuitive process whose agenda was to target an insightful resolution, both visually and conceptually. It's outcome, at the early stages, seeming to be open-ended and embracing the possibilities of chance, deliberation and the miraculous.



My investigation into the linguistic confusion of Babel is mirrored above, by texts of varying color, size and font that speak of discordant concepts and ambiguous messages; at this stage, clarity and insight are absent and remain as unrealized potential.

The process was temporally attenuated and discontinuous as it merged, paralleled and then separated from my ongoing research. As textual content began to taper and the conceptual limit reached, the concomitant illegibility, provoked the evolution of a purely visual texture. Tracing paper further obscured the text as I attempted to evoke an element of the ineffable. This effort later evolved into a series of painterly layers of white that submerged and quieted the remaining areas of the text.





The photograph to the left above shows the use of tracing paper, on the right, an image of a photograph, detailing a section.

Ironically, the closer I came to resolving conceptual ambiguities that were being articulated as text on the surface of the paper, the clearer became the implicit central statement of confusion in the overall visual articulation. Finally I reached an impasse where further introduction of text became meaningless.

The original panels were then metamorphosed into collages, the paper panels torn in a metaphorical destruction, one of confusion. The pieces then glued in a new disorder by the abundant application of adhesive, onto the four separate boards. A process, perhaps symbolically attempting to arrest and anchor the elusive runaway mystical intangibility of the reigning visual confusion; not unlike the need for *Safah*, the unambiguous and untrammeled language that needs no ordered syntax or translation.



Above, is the image of one of the four boards after painterly applications overlay the original collage, creating a sense of a mystical encapsulation of an underlying chaos. The blue letters were added at this stage of the process. They were introduced as a text that was a communicative device, a palimpsest, superseding the previous textual

unexpectedness of a predominantly intuitive approach, and replacing it with deliberate intent.

Addressing the need for translation I introduced a concise textual message in Hebrew script, painting in symbolical blue, the letters ם, ל, ש, in their cursive form. These letters may have various interpretations all alluding to the concept of unity and is intended to serve the purpose of both uniting the work on four boards. Simultaneously these visual components also suggest a level of resolution to the disjointedness of the un-translated underlying text. The use of this word attempts to visually introduce *Safah,* the holy unambiguous language of human integration, resolving the underlying visual chaos in the work that represents *Lashon's* need for translation, to address miscommunication and human fragmented-ness.

The white code-like dot and dash forms that punctuate the final layer of the surface of the painting are derived from the signs used as vowels in Hebrew script. The marks, when related to the three large consonants in blue transform the reading of the word and therefore reflect several meanings of the word, each an inflection of the aspect of unity.



Babel Then And Now: Six panels 900mm x 900mm: four boards mixed media; two photographs on stretched canvas.

The six-piece work is finally integrated with two dark photographic images that disrupt the four paintings, creating an anchor for the ethereal by introducing images of contemporary reality. They are moments captured from the film *Babel.* Although the photographs speak of a non-verbal unambiguous communication that suggest a hint of *Safah,* an element of holiness in a contemporary setting, they simultaneously aim to jar the viewer into the realization that 'Babel' is non-fiction, and that it may reside in the here and now.

The intuitive journey through the process has left me with a sense of awe as the initial textual scribbling has evolved into the form of the final work. I have attached an image below that was abstracted toward the end of the process in which word and letter of the

original text have been completely obscured. It is an unintended image of intuition, devoid of any deliberate intent, yet as the eye probes, a human form with a dark visor and obscured mouth seem to suggest a form of blindness and the inability to communicate: a message from Babel?



Techeles (The Lost Blue)



Techeles: Oil, resin and string on canvas 1270mm x 510mm

Traditionally, Judaic law obligates the wearing of tassels when a four-cornered garment is worn; the tassels act as a device that enables the wearer to be reminded of the divine, guarding the wearer from spiritual error; a form of protection. Each tassel is comprised of eight white strands, one of which was to be dyed a specific blue; symbolically, one part of eight, is the ratio of the spiritual to the material. This notion recalls Abraham's mode of self-actualization, where something of the spiritual is drawn down into the

world. The particular 'blue' that was to be used to produce the tassels is known as *Techeles*, a color that was extracted from a sea creature called a *Chilozon*. Since the creature and its locale are now unknown, the color has been lost.

The lost color suggests to me a symbol of a lost spirituality and the painting is an exploration of a range of 'possible blues', one of which might conceivably recover the lost *Techeles* and inadvertently access an aspect of the lost spirituality.

In the painting the repeated forms of the eagle's pinion appear to overlay each other as tonal blues shift over the surface, in a search for the correct divine connotation that might signify spiritual protection. The eagle morphs with suggested shapes of a sea creature, the mythical *Chilozon*. These forms are created with tassels that are embedded in resin onto the surface.

Questions surrounding the loss of a color and its source inform the work. How and why is it possible that a color be lost? And why would its exactness be so significant so as to render all other blues inadequate? Was there a spiritual resonance between the vibrating frequency of the missing blue and of consciousness, so as to ignite a specific inner experience? Could this color in some way have been linked to an aspect of lost *Safah,* the holy language?

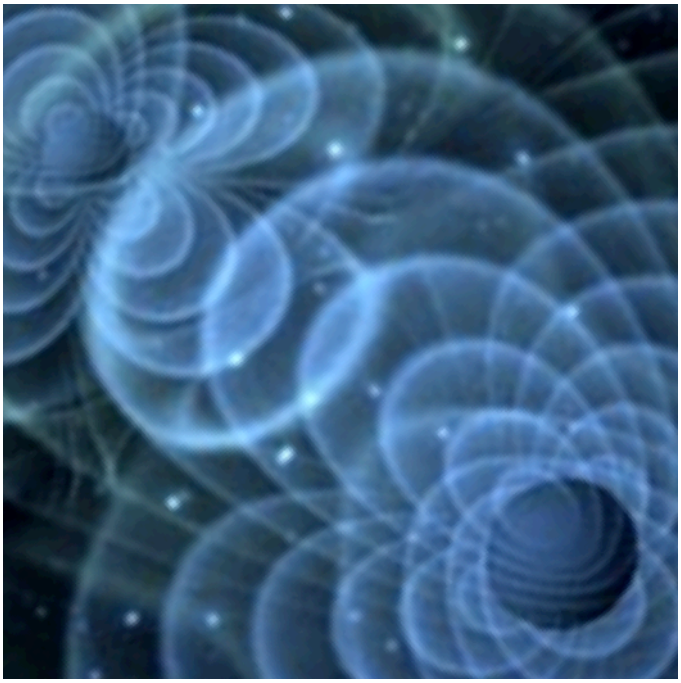
Events and thoughts surrounding and informing the process of making the work seem serendipitous, once again raising the question of chance or of the miraculous. In retrospect, I can trace the genesis of the 'lost' blue thread to a conversation that occurred three years ago in 2013; yet its reappearance and articulation only manifesting in *Techeles* in 2015. The notion of a lost blue and its association with a lost spirituality seemed to resonate with *Safah,* the 'lost' language of Babel, surprisingly, a coherent reading with the ideas that have emerged in my ongoing ruminations around divine inspiration or the serendipitous.

Techeles seems also to have been a precursor for the large format blue work titled, *Discernable Celestial Patterns,* as it initiated the exploration of a mystical symbolism in the color blue that is also the color of the celestial and deep recessive nature of space itself.

Discernable celestial patterns

When a large format 'blue' painting was suggested to me, I had no idea that it would be related to the theory of gravitation and black holes. The notion of a 'blue' painting as counterpoint to the 'red' painting had its merits as connotations of the divine, but that was all.

Not long after a blue painting was suggested, I encountered an article in a community newspaper that reported on the observations of gravitational waves that for the first time corroborated Einstein's promulgated theory of gravitation. The groundbreaking observations and substantiating report was accompanied by an image that had been captured by extraordinary sensitive technological advances by a team of astronomers.



> 'Long ago, deep in space, two massive black holes—the ultra strong gravitational fields left behind by gigantic stars that collapsed to infinitesimal points—slowly drew together. The stellar ghosts spiraled ever closer, until, about 1.3 billion years ago they whirled about each other at half the speed of light and finally merged. The collision sent a shudder through the universe: ripples in the fabric of space and time called gravitational waves. Five months ago, they washed past Earth.

> And, for the first time, physicists detected the waves, fulfilling a 4-decade quest and opening new eyes on the heavens.'[3]

> 'Albert Einstein predicted the existence of gravitational waves 100 years ago, but directly detecting them required mind-boggling technological prowess and a history of hunting.'[3]

Initially I found the article only vaguely enticing as it resonated with a distant memory. However, the enthusiasm expressed by my supervisor when seeing the image, immediately drew my attention, and I realized that I had found the content of the blue painting. The more I considered the subject of black holes and gravitation, the more I realized it's deep connection to the concept of self-actualization, both in the realm of human endeavor and in relation to my personal history.

Four decades ago, black holes were speculations and the theory of gravitation was in doubt. The central question was whether Einstein's model superseded that of the long-standing theory of Newton. As Danah Zohar's *Quantum Self* sets out to revolutionize scientific discourse at the subatomic level, so too does Einstein's research in the field of the macrocosm ultimately oust Newton's classical notion of gravity; a paradigm shift that is substantiated by the discovery of the gravitational waves.

The discovery that underpins the image, also epitomizes a moment in which human potential becomes manifest, initiating a shift in the collective consciousness towards a new discourse. The image of the colliding black holes and consequent gravitational waves, the subject of the painting, illustrates a nexus between humanity's projected potential and theorizing and its self-actualization.

On the personal level, I can trace my introduction to the phenomena of black holes and Einstein's revised conceptualization of gravity, to my study of astronomy four decades ago, aligning with the timeline of the initial scientific endeavor. The mystery surrounding the notion of black holes and the possibility of a scientific paradigm shift were personally significant and inspirational.

These influences that inform the work, temporarily and spatially form links that for me resonate both with the concepts of quantum cohesion and that of divine unity, where all things are perceived as being universally connected in some manner.

Central concepts of my investigation are therefore integrated within the image. Firstly, Einstein's observations are fore-fronted by the revelation of the gravitational waves in the photograph, consolidating his presence as the central focus of my thesis with its specific use of his statement that "There are only two ways to live a life, one, is that nothing is a miracle, and the other, is that everything is a miracle." And, secondly, to the macrocosmic and microcosmic paradigm shifts that are related to quantum theory and to Danah Zohar.

For me the capturing of the image itself epitomizes humanity's self-actualization. The reintroduction of this particular scientific pursuit into my life reflects the multitude of personal changes that have occurred in my own journey to self-actualization. The image thus embraces much of the content of my current mindset and consciousness and seems germane to my quest. The work thus acts as a framework in which my intellectual questioning and spiritual reality finds expression and this seems to resonate with Kuspit's observation that,

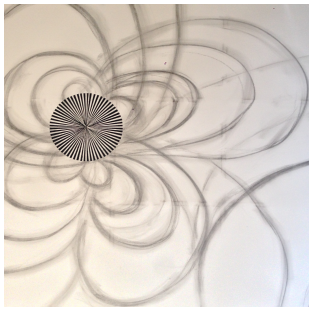
> 'Authentically spiritual abstract art does not so much "communicate" as "induce as attitude of communication and contemplation." It offers "an equivalent of what is regarded as part of religious life: a sincere and humble submission to a spiritual object, an experience which requires preparation and purity of spirit."'[2]

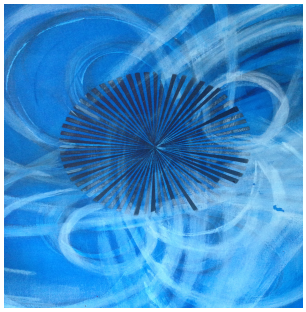
The painting although incomplete at the time of writing testifies to an ongoing questioning, within the creative pursuit, to balance the acute observations of the scientific paradigm with the deeply internalized perceptions of a personal quest to understand the immensity and connectedness of a divine order.

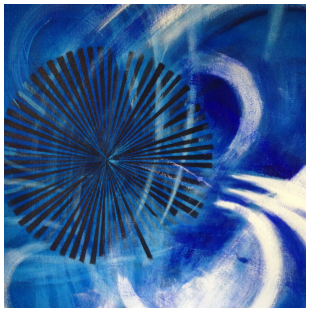
I have selected some of the images of the unfolding process to-date; they appear below. The work is made up of four segments that appear separately at various stages of development.

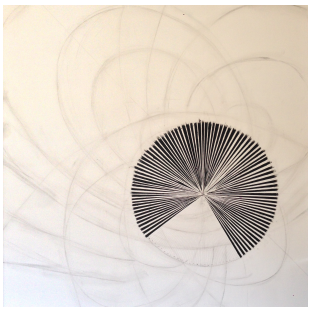
In addition to the work addressed here other paintings included in this body of work are two portraits, one titled *Obscure Self-Portrait* and a second, entitled *Away From Home*. Both reflect aspects of the central themes of self-actualization and 'unity' versus 'alienation'. With these the body of work comprises a total of 15 composite works.

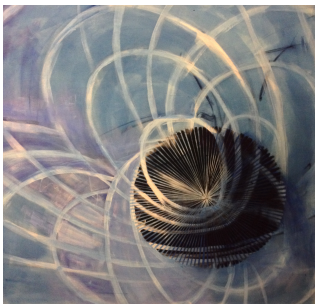


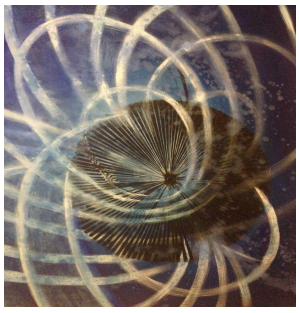












Footnotes

1. Scholem, G., 1965. *On Kabbalah and its Symbolism.* Translated by Ralph Manheim. New York: Schocken Books Inc. P. 71.

2. Tuchman, M., 1986. *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890 – 1985.* New York, London, Paris. Abbeville Press Publishers. P 313, P.314.

3. Science Insider [Online] Available at: <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2016/02/gravitational-waves-einstein-ripples-spacetime-spotted-first-time> [visited 09 February 2017]

Conclusion

Since direct mystical experience lies outside of my personal experience, my conclusion is supposition, and leaves one with a choice of possibilities.

If Hegel's assertion of the nature of Spirit is false, then my interpretation of Abraham's narrative as a remedial paradigm stands without support as a worldview. The credibility of the quantum paradigm however, remains unaffected in that it is firmly situated within present scientific paradigms.

If, however, Hegel is correct, and that life is a "**process of the return of Spirit to Spirit"[1],** then everything in the material manifest world would be subject to this 'rule'; there would be a universal system. And, **if** this **were so**, then both paradigms would fall within this overall system. It could then be said that "Spirit" is the all encompassing reality that dominates all human endeavor, and in so doing includes both the quantum scientific model, and the mystical paradigm, as subsets of a greater universe. And both, in the final analysis, would serve the ideal of an integrated wholeness. This seems logical since The Quantum paradigm seeks cohesion through constant renewal of relationship, while Abraham's loving-kindness pursues union with the divine.

Ultimately, the way chaos is confronted, is a choice, an individual freedom with its respective consequences.

Einstein's statement is irrevocably linked both to a divine intelligence, the source of the miraculous, and simultaneously, to the concepts of quantum physics where the reality of wave or particle seem to co-exist with equal presence in a form of stasis until perceived either as a wave **or** as a particle. Likewise, the adopted perception of either miracle or non-miracle emerges post-choice. When one is focused on the miraculous, the mundane is obliterated, and when one is immersed in the chaotic, the miraculous becomes fiction. But the extraordinary state of being is to be able to hold both these viewpoints in a suspended state of stasis, embracing the expansive potential of manifestation itself.

Footnotes

1. Wilber, K., 1998. *The Marriage of Sense and Soul.* Dublin. ColourBooks Ltd. P. 106.

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Appendix A[1]

Table 3. The Hebrew alphabet.

Final	Form	Represented by	Hebrew name	Sounded as	Signification of the names	Numerical value
	א	Silent	אָלֶף	*A'-lēph*	Ox	1
	ב	b, bh	בֵּית	*Bēth*	House	2
	ג	g, gh	גִּימֶל	*Gī-mâl*	Camel	3
	ד	d, dh	דָּלֶת	*Dâ'-lēth*	Door	4
	ה	h	הֵא	*Hē*	Window	5
	ו	v	וָו	*Vâv*	Hook	6
	ז	z	זַיִן	*Zā'yīn*	Weapon	7
	ח	ch	חֵית	*Chēth*	Fence	8
	ט	t	טֵית	*Tēth*	Snake	9
	י	y (i)	יוֹד	*Yōdh*	Hand	10
ך	כ	k, kh	כָּף	*Kāph*	The hand bent	20
	ל	l	לָמֶד	*Lâ'-mēdh*	Ox-goad	30
ם	מ	m	מֵם	*Mēm*	Water	40
ן	נ	n	נוּן	*Nūn*	Fish	50
	ס	s	סָמֶךְ	*Sâ'-mēkh*	Prop	60
	ע	Silent	עַיִן	*Ā-yīn*	Eye	70
ף	פ	p, ph	פֵּא	*Pē*	Month	80
ץ	צ	ts	צָדִי	*Tsâ-dhē'*	Fish-hook	90
	ק	k (q)	קוֹף	*Qōph*	Back of the head	100
	ר	r	רֵישׁ	*Rēsh*	Head	200
	ש	sh, s	שִׁין	*Shīn*	Tooth	300
	ת	t, th	תָּו	*Tâv*	Cross	400

ular aspect of creation. Man is seen as a microcosm, with each thing in his body paralleling something in the forces of creation. Thus, for example, the six days of creation have parallels in man's two arms, two legs, torso and sexual organ. This is the significance of the Torah's statement that God formed man "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27). Note that the word for "God" here is Elohim. This is because man's form parallels the structure of the delineating forces that define creation.

The Kabbalists note that the 32 paths of Wisdom have their parallel in the human nervous system.[6] Thirty-one of these paths then

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Footnotes

1. Kaplan, A. 1993. *Sefer* Yetzirah. *The Book of Creation*. New Beach, Maine. Samuel Weiser, Inc. P.8.