



A dark, chaotic illustration depicting a mass shooting scene. In the center, a woman with long blonde hair is being held from behind by a man in a white shirt who has a knife in his hand. To the left, a woman with long blonde hair is running away. In the foreground, a woman in a white dress is falling face-down. To the right, a woman in a yellow top and black pants is running. In the background, a man in a white shirt is holding a knife, and another man in a white shirt is running. The scene is filled with people in various states of panic and distress, with blood splatters on the floor and clothing. The overall tone is one of horror and violence.

ANGER AND KABBALAH: CONFRONTING DIVINE AND HUMAN RAGE THROUGH THE ZOHAR

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Faith Ringgold, *Die* (1967)



➤ Babylonian Talmud, *Eruvin* 65b

אדם ניכר... בכעסו

A Person may be Recognized ... through his Anger....

➤ Zohar I:184a

“There is anger

– and –

there is anger”

אית רוגזא ואית רוגזא

(it rugza ve it rugza)

➤ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 105b
– anger and idolatry

קרע בגדיו בחמתו והמשבר כליו בחמתו... יהא בעיניך כעובד עבודה זרה... אמר
רבי אבין מאי קרא "לא יהיה בך אל זר ולא תשתחוה לאל נכר"? איזהו אל זר שיש
בגופו של אדם? הוי אומר זה יצר הרע

**He who rends his garments in his anger,
he who breaks his vessels in his anger...:
regard him as one engaged
in alien worship [*avodah zarah*]! ...**

Rabbi Abin said: What verse [proves this]?

**“There shall be no alien god [*El Zar*] in thee;
neither shalt thou worship any foreign god [*El
Nekhar*]” [Psalms 81:10].**

**Who is the alien god [*El Zar*] that resides in a
man’s body?**

Say: this is the Evil Inclination.

Divine Anger in the Tanakh

➤ Bamidbar 11 – Divine anger as fire

- (א) וַיְהִי הָעָם כְּמִתְאַנְנִים רַע בְּאַזְנֵי יְדֹד וַיִּשְׁמַע יְדֹד וַיִּחַר אַפּוֹ
וַתִּבְעַר בָּם אֵשׁ יְדֹד וַתֹּאכַל בְּקֶצֶה הַמַּחֲנֶה:
- (ב) וַיִּצְעַק הָעָם אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל מֹשֶׁה אֶל יְדֹד וַתִּשְׁקַע הָאֵשׁ:
- (ג) וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא תִּבְעֵרָה כִּי בְעֵרָה בָּם אֵשׁ יְדֹד

:

- 1. And when the people complained, evil in the ears of YHVH; and YHVH heard; and his anger was kindled [*literally: “his nose scorched”*]; and the fire of YHVH burnt among them, and consumed those who were in the outskirts of the camp.**
- 2. And the people cried to Moses; and Moses prayed to YHVH, and the fire subsided.**
- 3. And he called the name of that place Tav’erah, because the fire of YHVH burned against them.**

➤ I Divrei Ha-Yamim 21:15

Divine Anger as Plague

God stunned by His own destructiveness

(יג) וַיֹּאמֶר דְּוִיד אֶל גֹּד צַר לִי מְאֹד אֶפְלָה נָא בְּיַד יְדֹוֹד כִּי רַבִּים

רַחֲמָיו מְאֹד וּבְיַד אָדָם אֶל אֶפְלָל:

(יד) וַיִּתֵּן יְדֹוֹד דְּבַר בְּיַשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּפֹּל מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל שִׁבְעִים אֲלָף אִישׁ:

(טו) וַיִּשְׁלַח הָאֱלֹהִים מַלְאָךְ לִירוּשָׁלַם לְהַשְׁחִיתָהּ וּכְהַשְׁחִית רָאָה

יְדֹוֹד וַיִּנָּחַם עַל הָרָעָה וַיֹּאמֶר לְמַלְאָךְ הַמַּשְׁחִית רַב עֲתָה הֶרְרָף יְדָךְ...

13And David said to Gad, “I am in great straits. Let me fall, pray, into YHVH’s hand, for very great is His mercy, and into the hand of man let me not fall.”

14And YHVH sent a plague against Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell.

15And Elohim sent a messenger to Jerusalem to destroy it, and as he destroyed, YHVH saw and regretted the evil and said to the messenger who was sowing destruction, “Enough! Now stay your hand.” ...

➤ Bamibar 17 (RSV) - Divine Anger as Plague and the Theurgy of Incense

(ו) וַיִּלְנוּ כָּל עֵדֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּחֲרַת עַל מֹשֶׁה וְעַל אֶהֱרֹן לֵאמֹר אַתֶּם הִמַּתֶּם אֶת עַם יִדְוֹד: ...

(ט) וַיְדַבֵּר יְדוֹד אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: (י) הֲרָמוּ מִתּוֹךְ הָעֵדָה הַזֹּאת וְאָכְלָה אֶתְכֶם כָּרְגַע וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל

פְּנֵיהֶם:

(יא) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל אֶהֱרֹן קַח אֶת הַמַּחֲתָה וְתֵן עָלֶיהָ אֵשׁ מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְשִׂים קִטְרֹת וְהוֹלֵךְ

מִהָרָה אֶל הָעֵדָה וְכִפֵּר עֲלֵיהֶם כִּי יֵצֵא הַקֶּצֶף מִלִּפְנֵי יְדוֹד הַחַל הַנֶּגֶף:

(יב) וַיִּקַּח אֶהֱרֹן כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּרֶץ אֶל תּוֹךְ הַקְּהָל וְהֵנִה הַחַל הַנֶּגֶף בָּעַם וַיִּתֵּן אֶת הַקִּטְרֹת

וַיִּכְפֹּר עַל הָעַם:

(יג) וַיַּעֲמֵד בֵּין הַמִּתִּים וּבֵין הַחַיִּים וַתַּעֲצֵר הַמַּגֵּפָה:

(יד) וַיְהִיו הַמִּתִּים בַּמַּגֵּפָה אַרְבַּעַה עָשָׂר אֶלֶף וּשְׁבַע מֵאוֹת מִלִּבַּד הַמִּתִּים עַל דְּבַר קָרַח:

⁶ But on the morrow all the congregation of the people of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, “You have killed the people of YHVH.” ...

⁹ and YHVH said to Moses, ¹⁰ “Get away from the midst of this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.” And they fell on their faces.

¹¹ And Moses said to Aaron, “Take your censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and lay incense on it, and carry it quickly to the congregation, and make atonement for them; for wrath has gone forth from YHVH, the plague has begun.”

12 So Aaron took it as Moses said, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and behold, the plague had already begun among the people; and he put on the incense, and made atonement for the people.

13 And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stopped.

14 Now those who died by the plague were fourteen thousand seven hundred, besides those who died in the affair of Korah.

➤ Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 7a – God's internal struggle with anger

מאי מצלי? ...: "יהי רצון מלפני שיכבשו רחמי את כעסי ויגולו רחמי על מדותי ואתנהג עם בני במדת רחמים ואכנס להם לפנים משורת הדין". ... אמר רבי ישמעאל בן אלישע: פעם אחת נכנסתי להקטיר קטורת לפני ולפנים וראיתי אכתריאל יה ידוד צבאות שהוא יושב על כסא רם ונשא ואמר לי "ישמעאל בני ברכני". אמרתי לו "יהי רצון מלפניך שיכבשו רחמיך את כעסך ויגולו רחמיך על מדותיך ותתנהג עם בניך במדת הרחמים ותכנס להם לפנים משורת הדין". ונענע לי בראשו .

What does the blessed Holy One pray? ...

**“May it be My will that My compassion may conquer My
anger,**

and that My compassion may roll over My attributes,

so that I may conduct myself with My children

with the attribute of compassion

and that I will go for their sake beyond the letter of the law.”

Rabbi Yishma'el the son of Elisha said:

“I once entered into the innermost sanctum [of the Temple] to offer incense and saw *Akatri'el Yah, YHVH Tzeva'ot* [approx: the Crowned God, the God of Hosts], seated upon a high and exalted throne.

He said to me: “Yishma'el, My son, bless Me!”

I replied:

“May it be Thy will that Thy compassion may conquer Thy anger and that Thy compassion may roll over Thy attributes, so that Thou mayest conduct Thyself with Thy children with the attribute of compassion and mayest go for their sake beyond the letter of the law.”

And He nodded to me with His head.

- Sefer Ha-Bahir (late 12th century) (trans. Aryeh Kaplan, slightly modified)
– God's evil attribute

ואין אש אלא חרון אף דכתיב (ויקרא י' ב') "ותצא אש מלפני ה' ותאכל אותם וימותו"... חמישי מאי? חמישי אשו הגדולה של הקב"ה שנאמר (דברים י"ח ט"ז) "ואת האש הגדולה הזאת לא אראה עוד ולא אמות", והיא שמאלו של הקב"ה... מלמד שיש להקב"ה מדה ששמה רעה והיא לצפוננו של הקב"ה דכתיב (ירמיה' א' יד) "מצפון תפתח הרעה על כל יושבי הארץ"...

**Fire is nothing other than fierce anger [*ḥaron af: literally,*
“the scorching of the nose”], as it is written (Leviticus 10:2),
"And fire went out from before God, and it consumed them
and they died."**

**What is the fifth [Attribute, i.e., Sefirah]? The fifth is the
great fire of the blessed Holy One. Regarding this it is
written (Deuteronomy 18:16), “Let me see the great fire no
more, lest I die.” This is the Left Hand of the blessed Holy
One....**

This teaches that the blessed Holy One has an Attribute whose name is Evil.

It is on the north side of the blessed Holy One, as it is written (Jeremiah 1:14), “From the north will Evil come forth, upon all the inhabitants of the earth.”

ומאי ניהו מדה אחת? היא צורת יד ולה שליחים הרבה ושמים של
כולם רע רע, אך יש בהם קטן וגדול, והם מחייבים את העולם,

What is this One Attribute?

It is the Form of a Hand.

**It has many messengers, and the name of them all is Evil,
Evil. Some of them are great, and some are small, but they
all render the world guilty.**

**כי תהו לצד צפון, ואין תהו אלא רע המתהא את העולם עד
שיחטיאם, וכל יצר הרע שיש באדם משם הוא בא, ולמה ניתן
בשמאל? מפני שאין לו רשות בכל העולם אלא בצפון, ולא
הורגל אלא בצפון, ולא רצה להיות אלא בצפון, לפי כשיהיה
בדרום עד שילמד מהלך הדרום והאיך יכול להטעות יתעכב
אותן ימים שילמוד ולא יחטיא. לפיכך הוא לעולם בצפון
בשמאל**

For *Tohu* [Chaos] is on the North Side. *Tohu* is nothing other than Evil. It confounds (*metaha*) the world and causes people to sin.

Every Evil Inclination (*Yetser HaRa*) that exists in the human being comes from there.

And why is it placed to the Left? This is because it does not have any authority any place in the world except in the North. It is not accustomed to be anywhere except in the North. It does not want to be any place but in the North. If it remained in the South until it learned the ways of the South, how could it lead others astray? It would have to stay there for [several] days until it learned, and then it could not cause people to sin. It therefore is always in the North, to the Left.

➤ Zohar I:184a

“There is anger

– and –

there is anger”

אית רוגזא ואית רוגזא

(it rugza ve it rugza)