

**MEN ARE FROM RIGHT,
WOMEN ARE FROM LEFT
DID THE ZOHAR GET IT WRONG?**



In modern *Kabblah*, the right side of the *Tree of Life* is associated with the *male*, and the left side of the *Tree of Life* is associated with the *female*, and this correspondence is supported by the *Zohar*.

*“Yea, my hand hath laid the foundations of the earth,
and my right hand hath spread out the heavens” (Is.
XLVIII, 13), i.e. by the power of the Right above; for the
heavens are male and the male comes from the side of
the right, and the female from the side of the left.”
(Zohar I:30a)*

On the one hand, this correspondence works very well on the physical level. For example, the right side of our body is dominant in most people, and the male is physically dominant compared to the female. Also, the right side of the *Tree of Life* is associated with giving and the left side with receiving, and this is reflected in the physicality of sex where the man gives his sexual fluids to the woman. Additionally, the left side of the *Tree of Life* is associated with structure, and the female womb gives structure to the fetus during pregnancy. So, again, these correspondences work well on the physical level.

However, on other levels these correspondences create difficulties. For instance, the right side of the *Tree of Life* is associated with *kindness* and *mercy*, and these are characteristics that are usually associated more with women than with men. Similarly, the left side of the *Tree of Life* is associated with *strength* and *force*, and these characteristics are also associated more often with the male than with the female. Additionally, the right brain function of *intuition* is spoken of more often today in connection with women, and the *analytic functions* of the left brain are more commonly associated with men than with women. So, what is the solution? Is the *Zohar* wrong?

In my opinion, the *Zohar* is correct if we are talking about the physical plane, but when we ascend to the mental or spiritual planes, I think these correspondences switch, and we could even argue that this switch is present in the physical body where all the nerves from the right side of the body connect to the left brain and all the nerves from the left side of the body connect to the right brain.

So, here are a few items from the *Zohar* and elsewhere that suggest that the right side should be associated with the *female*.

1. In one place, the *Zohar* associates the *Shechinah*, the feminine presence of *God*, with *Chesed* (*mercy*) which is one the right side of the tree.

“There comes the right hand which is outstretched to receive those that repent; this is the Tetragrammaton, and it is also the Shekinah, which is called “right hand”, from the side of Hesed (kindness).”
(Zohar I:23a)

2. The letter *bet* connects the path from *Chesed* (mercy) to *Chochmah* (wisdom) on the right side of the *Tree of Life*, and the *Zohar* identifies the letter *bet* as *female*.

“Beth is female, Aleph male.”
(Zohar I:30a)

3. The letter *bet* also stands for *bayit* (*house*), and in the *Zohar* a house is always associated with the *female*.

“This “Great Voice” which cannot be heard is a “house” to the supernal Wisdom (the female is always called “house”), and the articulation we have mentioned is a “house” to the Voice of Jacob, which is the Torah, and therefore the Torah commences with the letter beth, which is, as it were, a “house” to it.”

(Zohar I:50b)

4. The highest *Sefirah* on the right side of the *Tree of Life* is *Wisdom*, and *Wisdom* is generally associated with the *female*.

“Wisdom cries aloud in the street; she utters her voice in the squares.”

(Proverbs 1:20)

“Wisdom has build her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars”

(Proverbs 9:1)

5. The right side of the *Tree of Life* is also associated with *water*, and *water*, in turn, is associated with the legends surrounding *Miriam's Well*. *Water* is also a symbol in rabbinic literature with *Torah*, and notice that *Torah* is a feminine word in *Hebrew*.

6. Similarly, notice that the most sacred name fo *God* in *Hebrew*, *yud-hey-vav-hey*, ends in the letter *hey* which generally denotes a feminine word. Likewise, in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, on the level of creation we have the *mother letters* preceding the *father letters*. Consequently, on some levels it is more appropriate to have the *female* on the right side of the *Tree of Life* so that they come before the *male*.

7. And finally, just note that in modern society that the characteristics of the right brain such as *intuition* and *holistic* thinking are paired more closely with the *female* and those of the left brain such as mathematics and *analytical thought* are associated more often with the *male*.

The bottom line, as I see it, is that once we move beyond the physical level, the correspondences suggest that it is better to associate the right side with the *female* and the left side with the *male*, and so I do! This also means that at higher levels I associate the right side with the color red, the blood of the woman, and the left side with the color white, representing the seed of the man. At the physical level, the traditional correspondence of right with *male* and left with *female* is meaningful, but at higher levels it isn't.

Furthermore, there is a patriarchal notion among some that the right side should be *male* because in *Genesis 2:21* it appears that *man* is created first followed by the creation of *woman*. However, I follow what appear to me to be more sensible voices in mystical Judaism that the female comes before the male. After all, everything is born of woman.