

Unique Shadow

An Excerpt from *Your Unique Self* by Dr. Marc Gafni

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Shadow Integration and Unique Self

“INTEGRATE YOUR SHADOW” has become the battle cry of spiritual growth. Shadow integration is now seen as essential to personal development, success, and fulfillment. The centrality of shadow integration in these areas is most certainly a welcome evolution of enormous significance.

The only problem is that people, teachers included, often throw around highly charged words like “darkness” and “shadow” without actually explaining them or having a genuine understanding of what the words actually mean.

The reason the shadow conversation works at all, even without clear understanding, is that people have some natural idea of what “shadow” means. The word “shadow” automatically associates certain images, feelings, and ideas. When Shakespeare talks about “This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine,” you understand he is talking about shadow, even if you can’t fully articulate it.

Shadow is usually understood to refer to the darker sides of human consciousness. Pettiness, jealousy, betrayal, rage, violence, malice—these are all considered to be shadow material. Sexual misdeeds are also often associated with the use of the term “shadow.”

In this line of spiritual and psychological teaching, “shadow” is explained to mean those qualities that live in you but that you are unable to hold in your first-person consciousness. Your refusal to own these qualities pushes them into shadow, where they exert enormous unconscious influence over your life choices. Some of the shadow teachers add that there is powerful energy in shadow that is—they say—liberated when you make your shadow conscious. Whether or not energy is liberated, and control over your life direction reclaimed by making shadow conscious, is at best not clear. From all my years of teaching, studying, and doing shadow work, I simply do not think it is true. Nonetheless, the explanations for shadow work offered by these teachers are helpful as far as they go. But they do not go nearly far enough. For the *raison d’être* of shadow work is said to be *shadow integration*.

Why would you want to integrate your darkest impulses? Perhaps those impulses need to be transmuted and evolved. At the very least, it would appear that they need to be disciplined and controlled. Is shadow integration merely a sophisticated license for ethical libertines, as some spiritual moralists have wanted to claim? And if it is not, if shadow integration points to some profound and important intuition about our wholeness and enlightenment, as others have loudly claimed, but not explained, then what is it?

A once-popular spiritual book called *The Book of Qualities* says, “The spiritual practice of

shadow encourages us to make peace with those parts of ourselves we find despicable, unworthy, and embarrassing, our anger, jealousy, pride, selfishness, violence, and other evil deeds.” The purpose of shadow work is said to be “a way of achieving wholeness by unifying the dark and the light,” taking responsibility, and “embracing your full humanity.”¹

What exactly does it mean to unify light and darkness? Did the writer miss Aristotle’s law of the excluded middle, which says that opposites do not unify? How do we unify that which is good and that which the writer calls “despicable”? And what does it mean to “embrace” your impulse toward murder, rape, and mayhem as part of your “full humanity”?

Perhaps a little bit of holy war is in order. Is it not possible that making peace with your shadow is just a saccharine way to let you off the hook of the full, powerful, and sacred obligation to evolve out of your darkness and into your light?

This confused understanding of shadow is the rule rather than the exception. For example, a similar approach to shadow is shot through poet Robert Bly’s well-known and oft-cited *A Little Book on the Human Shadow*.

Though I am a fan of his poetry, his explanation of shadow does not offer us anything near an in-depth understanding of what shadow integration might mean. For Bly, shadow is composed of what you had to suppress as a child to please the grown-ups around you:

When we were one or two years old we had what we might visualize as a 360-degree personality. Energy radiated out from all parts of our body and all parts of our psyche. A child running is a living globe of energy. We had a ball of energy, all right; but one day we noticed that our parents didn’t like certain parts of that ball. They said things like: “Can’t you be still?” Or “It isn’t nice to try and kill your brother.” Behind us we have an invisible bad, and the part of us our parents don’t like, we, to keep our parents’ love, put in the bag. By the time we go to school our bag is quite large. Then our teachers have their say: “Good children don’t get angry over such little things.” So we take our anger and put it in the bag. By the time my brother and I were twelve in Madison, Minnesota, we were known as “the nice Bly boys.” Our bags were already a mile long.

With great respect to Bly, this paradigmatic passage is confusing. What is so bad about going through the ethical socialization required to become a “nice Bly boy”? Is it so heinous to leave behind your attempts to suffocate your brother with a pillow? Isn’t growing beyond the murderous rage that spawned the first fratricide a good and noble goal of human evolution? Shouldn’t authentic teachers help us discern between legitimate and inappropriate anger? Finally, Bly’s implicit idea is regressive in the extreme: the one- or two- year-old with an energy-

radiating 360-degree personality.²

Naturally, the understanding of shadow integration that I have outlined until this point is not without wisdom. It is true but partial. This teaching assumes that shadow means jealousy, rage, pettiness, violence, and all the other negative ethical expressions. Shadow integration simply means to own the fact that you are jealous, angry, filled with rage, insanely promiscuous, addicted to all forms of comfort, and much more. *Bring your disowned shadow into first person.* Shadow integration comes to mean something like, “Get out of denial and admit that you are an asshole.” And free up the energy you have used to cover up being an asshole.

Now, this is not a bad idea. Indeed, it is absolutely critical for any form of spiritual or psychological growth. Someone who *owns* their dark side is generally more tolerable than someone who does not. When you are in denial, you are more dangerous, because it is impossible to engage in authentic conversation around any genuine issue. A good rule of life might be: self-acknowledged assholes are easier and more fun to hang out with than assholes in denial.

This understanding of “owning your shadow,” however, might be called more accurately something like shadow confession. So where does the integration piece come in? How do you integrate your night virtues, and why would you want to?

Some psychological teachers explain shadow integration as making a place within your own psyche for your rage, envy, greed, dishonesty, and pettiness, so that you do not project them onto everyone else.

This good and important teaching is generally attributed to Carl Jung. Shadow is understood by Jung to be your “dark side,” that part of your- self that you hide away—afraid to expose it to the light of day. Shadow is anything that you cannot hold as “I” in your self-definition—your less-than-noble qualities, including fear, rage, uncontrolled sexing, envy, greed, egoic pettiness, violence, frustration, depression, and more. It is in this context that Jung wrote “the most terrifying thing is to accept oneself completely.”

Taking back shadow projection is a huge evolutionary leap forward and needs to be taught, practiced, and applauded. It allows for a more honest picture of reality, which always opens the heart up for deeper and more stable loving. But taking back projection still does not explain the core teaching of shadow integration.

Greater Is the Light That Comes from the Darkness

Jung himself offered a more profound direction in understanding shadow. His core teaching, drawn from many sources, is that we cannot be whole human beings without recognizing and incorporating our shadow energy. Jung has an expression that he uses constantly to express this idea: “In the Shadow is the Gold.” By this, he means to say that most of what is valuable in the human personality—the gold—can be mined only from the shadow. But what does that mean, and why should it be so? It is to this all-important question that we now turn our attention. We

will seek to fundamentally evolve what shadow means and how shadow work is done! At this point, I am going to unpack directly from the original tantric sources a radical new teaching on shadow integration.

So let us begin. In the book of Genesis, one of the oldest texts of Unique Self teachings, the creation myth is expressed in the words, “God said, Let there be Light. And there was light.”

Light, with its unique frequency for every person, is—as we have already noted—one of the primary mystical symbols for Unique Self.

In the third-century mystical esoteric texts on Genesis, it is taught that this original light that initiated the creative process was too much for the world to bear, so “God hid the original light. The light will be revealed to the righteous in the world of becoming.” In a similar way, contemporary neuroscience suggests that we deploy only a fraction of our mind’s potential for consciousness.

Some centuries later, the Zohar picks up the thread of the earlier teaching. “Where was the original light of creation hidden?” ask the masters. To which the masters respond, “The original light was hidden in the darkness!” “Where does the original light still appear in the world?” ask the masters once more. “In the person of the enlightened ones,” responds the text. And who are the enlightened ones? The enlightened ones, the righteous ones, according to the masters of Tantric Kabbalah, are the ones who have incarnated their Unique Self. The implication of the text is this: to realize your Unique Self, you must follow the path of the light hidden in the darkness.

Lost in the Darkness

One night, the Sufi trickster figure, Mullah Nasruddin, comes across a man intensely searching the ground under a torch that served as a streetlight. “Did you lose something?” inquires the master.

“Yes, my keys,” responds the man frantically. So the master bends down to help the man search.

After much time, Nasruddin finally asks, “Well, where exactly did you lose them?”

“In there,” said the man, pointing to a trail leading into a dark forest.

“Then why are you looking for them over here?” the master asks. The man responds, slightly exasperated, as if it is obvious, “I can’t look there—it’s too dark!”

The key to your Unique Self enlightenment was lost in the dark. That is where you must search.

There are times when one must fight the darkness, both in the world and in our selves. You must discipline your own and the world's darkness so it does not harm yourself or others.

Mahatma Gandhi wrote two letters in

1938 advising the English and the Jews in Israel not to fight Hitler:

I would like you to lay down the arms you have as being use- less to save you or humanity. You will invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini to take what they want of the countries you call your possessions. Let them take possession of your beautiful island, with your many beautiful buildings. You will give them all these but neither your souls nor your minds.³

This spiritual letter was correctly met with outrage. Spirit in this case incarnated more accurately in the brave fighters of England and Israel who knew that the force of evil needed to be met with the greater force of the good. Sometimes light and darkness stand in opposition. At these times it is essential for the mythic motif to be played out with the forces of the light vanquishing the forces of darkness.

But the dance of light and darkness is ultimately more subtle than the important but limited dualisms of good and evil, right and wrong.

The masters of Tantric Kabbalah pointed to three levels of conscious- ness. The first level is called submission—in Hebrew, *hakna'ah*. At this level, one either submits to the law that divides between the right and the wrong, or alternatively submits to one's default nature, which fails to make any such distinctions.

The second is called individuation, distinction, or discernment, from the Hebrew, *havdalah*. At this level of consciousness, one does not merely submit to the law but deploys one's own mind and heart in creating the ethical dharma. This is done by drawing proper and appropriate distinctions between light and darkness, good and evil, and constructive and destructive.

The third level of consciousness is called sweetness, in Hebrew, *hamtaka*. This is the level of nondual realization, where mystical tantric masters from all the great traditions lived. In the words of the masters, "The contraction of shadow is only sweetened in its root." *At this deeper level of conscious- ness, the relationship between your own light and darkness, as well as those of the world, is much more of an elegant dance than a vicious battle.* Picture a Möbius strip. To make a Möbius strip, you simply take a piece of paper and, before connecting the two ends, you twist one of them to its opposite side. If you pick up the strip and start drawing a line, you will end up with a line on both sides, without ever removing the pencil from the paper. The two sides are geometrically actually one. The image sug- gests something of the tantric understanding of good and evil. At the level of nondual awareness, good and evil are not opposites, but rather dance in

an enclosed Uni-verse of curved time and space. And if you follow shadow to its root, you will always find the hidden light.

Greater Is Wisdom Than Folly

For the Tantric Kabbalists, this nondual understanding forms the core of one of the great sources of World Spirituality, known as the Wisdom of Solomon.

The Unique Self master King Solomon says, “Greater is Wisdom *than* folly; greater is light *than* darkness.”

Simply read, this is a text about duality. Wisdom opposes and overcomes folly, even as light opposes and overcomes darkness.

The ancient Unique Self teachers, however, reread this text in a radically different way. The original Hebrew word *min* can be read not only as “than” but as “from.” The reread text declares: “Greater is the wisdom that comes *from* folly; greater is the light that comes *from* darkness.” The poet William Blake, intuiting the tantric principles, writes, “If the fool would but follow his folly he would become wise.” The same may be said of light and darkness. *If you but follow your darkness, you will come to your light.*

You can now begin to feel into a core principle of Unique Self enlightenment. The source of highest light is the darkness itself. The *tzadik*, one who has incarnated their Unique Self, does this by accessing and transforming the light hidden in their darkness, and *as* their darkness.

The Shattering of the Vessels

It is this principle that informs the primary reality myth of these old masters—the myth known as *shevirat hacaylim*—the shattering of the vessels. In the Kabbalistic creation myth, this light streamed into vessels. Over time, the light became too intense to hold, and the vessels shattered. (For the Kabbalists, the big bang is virtually identical with this big crash.)

Some of the light folded back into its source. However, many sparks of light remained trapped in the shards of the shattered vessels—scattered across the kosmos. These dark shards, with their hidden sparks of light, are the source of the highest potential light for our world. The core of your life work is, in the language of Kabbalah, to raise up the sparks and return them to their source—that is, to free the sparks from their darkened prisons and let them shine again.

In this graphic image, the world is understood to be a place of broken vessels. Broken hearts, broken promises, and broken lives are all expressions of the primal shattered vessels. *In revealing the light hidden in your brokenness, you are involved in an essential and primordial fixing.* This, as we saw earlier, is what the Kabbalists called *tikkun*. Kabbalistic scholar Avraham Leader has correctly translated the Hebrew Aramaic deployment of the word *tikkun* in the Zohar as

“evolve.”⁴ *Tikkun* is the obligation and privilege of every Unique Self. *Tikkun* is the evolution of consciousness, which is no less than the evolution of God. Every person’s *tikkun* is Unique. Every person’s *tikkun* is needed.

Befriend Your Darkness

Holding this image in your mind, we can now illuminate two almost shocking, koan-like assertions of Hasidic master Dov Ber Mezritch.

The first: “Higher is the divine source of *ra* [evil] than the source of *tov* [good].” The second: “All-That-Is, in its original source on a higher plane, finds expression in this world on a lower plane.”

Now, I translated *tov* and *ra* in the first koan as “good” and “evil.” “Evil,” however, doesn’t quite capture *ra*, because “evil” associates in our imagination with an either/or dualistic way of thinking. We were educated on binary pairs—up and down, sure and unsure, order and chaos, right and wrong, good and evil. Many times we need to act based on these appropriately dualistic understandings. We need to put on our cape and fight for good against evil. And yet there are momentous leaps of meaning that leave these ideas behind.

Quantum physics, for example, shatters the old binary vessels: chaos and order are mixed up; motion and stillness, certainty and uncertainty are in a perpetual dance. Similarly, teaches Lurianic Kabbalah, *ra* is enmeshed in *tov*.

Indeed, the binary illusion is further collapsed in an astounding play of words. In the original Hebrew, the root word *ra* has a second meaning: “friend.” Tantric Master King Solomon explains this to mean, “You must make friends with your *ra* in order to reveal your light.”

The Tantric Kabbalists hid this teaching in their radical rereading of what might be the most famous verse in the Bible, “Love your friend as yourself.” The Hebrew word for “friend” is *ra*. Remember that the word *ra* means not only “friend” but also “evil” or “shadow.” In this reading, the text is saying, “Love your shadow, befriend your shadow, for it is the key to reclaiming yourself.” This secret mystical teaching is the hidden kernel in many seemingly innocent and charming stories of great spiritual masters:

The great Unique Self master, the Baal Shem Tov, Master of Good Name, arrives at a town in which he is supposed to deliver a homily the next morning. He is informed that there is a very sick baby, on the verge of death. Would he organize a prayer service for the baby? The normal custom would have been for the master to invite the ten most pious men in the city to pray with him for the baby’s healing. The Baal Shem

Tov, upon hearing the request, meditates for a few minutes. He then issues an order to gather the ten most flagrant thieves in the city. He wants to pray with them for the welfare of the baby. The people are aghast, but he insists.

By morning, color is miraculously returning to the baby's cheeks, and his raspy breaths are becoming more gentle and even. The people know they have witnessed a great healing. "But why ten thieves?" they ask him.

Responds the Baal Shem Tov, "Because in my meditation I saw that the gates of heaven were locked, closed to our prayers. But a thief—a true thief—knows how to pick the locks even of the gates of heaven."

There is a secret in the darkness that allows for an evolutionary movement toward realization that is simply not available in the more conventional light. Sometimes it is only through accessing the Thief that lives inside you that you can open the gates of heaven. It is in this sense that the Baal Shem Tov proclaimed that he was the Rebbe of Thieves. And it was in this sense that Persian mystic poet Hafiz staked his place with the "rogues and thieves" rather than among the pious. Here we sense the first glimmering of a teaching in which the integration of shadow might lead toward wholeness.

The Teachings of the Blood

There is not just a thief that lives inside of you. There is a Unique Thief. The utter Uniqueness of your shadow, as the path to your Unique Self and as the source of your vitality, is the essential mystery of tantra. It has sometimes been referred to as the "teachings of the blood." "Blood" in this context means "body." The teaching of Unique Shadow and Unique Self are held in your very body.

Hermann Hesse, in the prologue to *Demian*, said it like this: "I have ceased to question stars and books; I have begun to listen to the teachings my blood whispers to me."

I am going to refer to shadow with a new word, a body word—"pathology." I introduce this word because of its immediate physical association. When something goes wrong in the normal functioning of the organism, it causes pathology. Mystics constantly draw analogies between psycho-spiritual sickness and physical illness—that is to say, pathology. In one mystical text it is said, "Through my body I vision God."⁵ The teachings of the blood.

Shadow, or what we will now refer to as our (spiritual) pathologies, follows a similar pattern to physical pathology. Our physical organism is absolutely unique—each human being has a fully distinctive physical signature.

Shadow, as we will see, is well understood as a violation or distortion of Unique Self. This same

dynamic shows up at the cellular level. In cancer, for example, “the diseased tissue emits its own unique energy signature which differs from the energy signature of the surrounding healthy cells.”⁶ The immune system of the body, the blood itself, the cells and cell markers, are all part of the absolutely unique signature of the human body. Our immune system immediately recognizes and destroys any foreign substances—microbes, tumors, and bacteria—that violate the signature uniqueness of our body. If one vial of the wrong blood is injected into a person’s system, that person usually dies. The foreign blood has violated their specific and unique immune pattern. Pathology means the violation of your body’s unique system.

The uniqueness of every human being is actually a core truth of biology. The violation of the body’s unique signature causes shadow—that is to say, sickness in the body.* As Dr. Mark Kirschbaum has written, “One could argue that, in a sense, cancer is in part a breakdown of the individual’s unique structure at the molecular level.”⁷

*Many of the important questions facing modern molecular medicine and science are in some way related to this issue. The body is constantly recognizing and repulsing “invaders”—for example, the millions of hostile microorganisms we encounter with every breath. How? Through a complicated friend-or-foe recognition system based on unique identifying proteins found in most cells of your particular body. If the foreign cell does not have that marker—the unique ID card for entry—then the immune system is launched into attack mode, and the violator of the body’s signature uniqueness is repelled.

An important recent understanding is that tumors are frequently related to a breakdown of this “defender” system. That is to say, tumors distort or otherwise violate the complex unique cellular signature of the body.

Tumors use many different mechanisms to blur the markers from their surface, thus allowing them to elude being destroyed by the immune system. Furthermore, one of the ways the immune system keeps itself from attacking normal tissue (failure in this regard is called autoimmune disorder) is by triggering self-reactive immune cells to self-destruct. This process, which is being intensely studied, is known as apoptosis. It has recently been reported that a number of serious cancers, such as melanoma and breast cancer, actually exploit this trigger in a destructive way, causing the good immune cells to commit suicide!

In the metaphor of the body, we might say that cancer is to healthy cells what the ego is to Unique Self. Because of the signature singularity of the body, its pathological responses are also unique. No two tumors are the same. *The unique signature of the healthy body is the physical signifier of Unique Self. The distortion of the unique signature is the body’s pathological responses and the physical signifier of Unique Shadow.*

The old hermetic teachers rooted in Plato and the Hebrew mysteries always taught, “As above, so below.” They meant to remind us that the internal structures of spirit and matter parallel each other. In regard to shadow, this means spiritual pathology parallels physical pathology. *Spiritual pathology is an expression of the violation of the unique patterns of the spirit.* When the psyche’s signature is forged—if I am living a story not my own— then pathological

symptoms are not long in appearing.

Furthermore, just as no two tumors are alike, specific shadow symptoms like anger, fear, phobia, jealousy, and obsession reflect the specific nature of the Unique Self that has been violated. Not which symptoms show up, but how the symptoms show up, and in what particular intensity, texture, and frequency, tells us about what is not being expressed.

This idea of not just shadow but personalized shadow lies at the heart of the thinking of Unique Self mystic Mordechai Lainer of Izbica. Listen directly to his teaching on Unique Shadow, woven from his writings and from the pen of his student, Tzadok the Priest:

Everyone knows the place of his particular vulnerability to his darkness—to the attacks of his primal drives. . . . Every person has a unique *chisaron* [pathology or shadow] which inhered in them from the day of their birth. . . . Every person has a unique soul *tikkun* [fixing] to do in this world . . . and this fixing is connected to his unique *chisaron* shadow with which he was born.

And it is this place that is the vessel of his potential blessing. It is with this place that the person must establish *kesher* . . . an intimate relationship.

The first key word in the passage is *chisaron*, which I have translated in the parentheses as “pathology” or “shadow.” The literal translation of *chisaron*, however, is some combination of the English words “wound,” “lack,” “absence,” and “emptiness.” We all are empty and wounded in different ways. We are all pathological in wholly individual and unique ways.

This is true, according to Unique Self dharma, for the simplest of reasons. Shadow pathology at its ultimate source is rooted in *your* unlived life, which fosters the feeling that you do not really exist in any meaningful way. We all have different unlived stories. For Lainer, pathology is a foundational Unique Self quality. More specifically, pathology is the unique response of the spirit to a Unique Self distortion.

Chisaron as a signature characteristic actually reveals the unique work—the calling, or contribution—that the soul is called to do in this world. Stated in our terms, unique pathology is a vital path to Unique Self. Moreover, it is critical to note that this Unique Shadow pathology is, according to Lainer, not a function of childhood. On the contrary, he states clearly that every person is born with a unique *chisaron*.

Lainer’s *chisaron* is your unique inferior function. It is your unique core wound. It is the place of your unique pathology. Your Unique Shadow has the same DNA print as your Unique Self. The great paradox of spirit is that your inferior function itself is also your greatest gateway to the numinous. So, for example, if your inferior function is a particular dynamic in the way that you

love, it will also be the place of your greatest gift and Unique Self calling.

Walking in the Dark—From Demon to Daemon

Biblical-myth reader St. John of the Cross in the sixteenth century said, “If one wants to be sure of the road he is on, he must close his eyes and walk in the dark.” This is the darkened path of following your shadow to the light. Lainer adds to John’s thought that you walk not just in the darkness, but in your unique darkness.

Along this path, your demons become your daemons, those personal angels whom the ancient Greeks believed call you to your destiny. This idea appears in a subtly disguised but beautiful form in biblical myth. God appears in so many guises and forms that biblical myth has many names for the one God. One of them is *shad-ai*. *Shad-ai* is a combination of the word *shad*—meaning “demon”—and the letter *yud*, which in mysticism represents the divine point. The *yud* is your divine spark, a letter shaped like a flame, a point of light. It takes but a single candle to probe the darkness. *At the place of meeting between the darkness and the point of light, the deepest transformations occur.* The divine name *shad-ai* is that meeting between *shad*, the demon, the darkness, and *yud*, the daemon, the point of light. It is the evolutionary God-impulse in you that invites your demons to be your daemons.

Ralph Waldo Emerson writes that there is a crack in everything God has made. Meister Eckhart understood, six hundred years earlier, that the major crack is built *into* you not as punishment or even as a test, but rather as a directional signal, a hint in your search for your Unique Self. Eckhart liked to say, “To get at the core of God at his greatest, one must first get into the core of himself at his least.” Remember the story of the king who has a particularly rare and beautiful set of fine silver serving dishes:

The intricacy of the design was unmatched anywhere, and the king took great pride in serving his closest friends on these plates. One day, the king notices that somehow one of the pieces has gotten scratched up. No one knows how it happened. But even worse, no artist can promise to fix it without marring the design—that is, until one unknown artist appears and says he can do the job.

Despite his hesitancy, the king has no one else to turn to, so he entrusts the man with the contract. Strangely enough, the artist requests that the entire set—even though they were not scratched—be sent to his studio. And so it was.

A full month later, the artist returns. The king is shocked . . . the plates are beautiful! The artist had integrated the scratch into the plate—actually making the flaw the guiding principle of the new design. All the other plates were repainted accordingly—making an even more magnificent set than before.

Your unique scar needs to be your guiding principle in revealing to yourself your unique beauty.

The image of the scratched vessel returns us to the Kabbalistic metaphor of the shattered vessels. The primordial vessels of reality shatter, and sparks of light are hidden in the shards of the broken vessels. The work of a life-time is to raise the sparks that are uniquely matched to your signature, and return them to their source.

Initially, I suggested that the vessels shatter because they cannot hold the light. At this point, I can explain more deeply. The vessels shatter precisely in order to *hold* your unique light. For the paradox of the vessels in Kabbalah is that the reconstituted vessel is far more powerful than the vessel before it shattered. In the Unique Self-realization of the Kabbalists, the reconstituting of the vessels is from the light itself—particularly from the light that was hidden in the darkness. *Your full light can only be held after you have shattered and deployed the uniqueness of your own particular shattering—the scar—to fashion the vessel of your full beauty.*

The master of Slonim, writing from a small, nondescript house in the depths of Jerusalem, said: “The unique service of the generation is to serve through our point of resistance. Every human being has a unique resistance which reveals to us the unique reason for our being in the world . . . and that is the key to service.”

Unique Self and Unique Shadow

At this point, we can evolve from the tantric teachings and take a quantum leap in our understanding of shadow. The full implications of these tantric teachings are gorgeously essential to what we have called the New Enlightenment of Unique Self. I will now state this clearly in several core teachings.

Your shadow is not impersonal. It is not generic; the core of your shadow is absolutely personal. Your Shadow is more accurately termed your Unique Shadow. *Your shadow is unique because it is your unlived life—your disowned Unique Self. The way to identify and reclaim this disowned part of you is by following your Unique Shadow back to your Unique Light.* This is what it means to follow your folly and become wise: follow your Unique Shadow back to your Unique Self.

When you take the unique light of your story, and place it into dark-ness, does it lose its unique quality? Of course not. The unique quality is distorted, it is hidden, it is unlived, but it remains present. If you take the DNA print of your Unique Perspective, and place it into dark-ness, does it lose its particular quality? Of course not. Your shadow is unique, because your shadow is your unlived life. For that very reason, your Unique Shadow is the yellow-brick road back to your Unique Self.

In many of the great systems of realization, a core teaching is that for the light to evolve to

new levels of realization and manifestation, it must first enter the darkness. When the Absolute is about to manifest, it goes into hiding from itself. It is this same dynamic that causes the seed to emerge from the darkness of the ground. In Unique Self mystical teaching, light thickens into the darkness of vessels in order to eventually evolve into even higher levels of realization. In that very same sense, your Unique Self light appears as your Unique Shadow in order to demand your higher evolution and manifestation.

The Unique Self is the Eros, the life impulse that drives us forward. Shadow is Eros turned around against itself. By integrating your shadow, you are liberating the trapped life energy of your Unique Self. Your life energy is not generic. It is your life energy. The portal to your energy is none other than your Unique Self. Your most persistent shadow-structure is also your most abundant wellspring of energy and life. The reclaiming of life energy happens through shadow integration. Thus, the tantric masters of the left-handed path saw shadow integration as a process of revelation by which the previously hidden Unique Self—the secret mystery—manifests as inspiration and Eros.

Integrated shadow, however, is not merely life force in some general sort of way, but is drawn by each person through the channel of their Unique Self. The integration of your Unique Shadow allows you to show up in the world as the particularly potent articulation of infinity that is your Unique Self.

When a woman in a certain African tribe knows she is pregnant, she goes out into the wilderness with a few friends. Together they pray and meditate until they hear the unique song belonging to the child.

The women know that every soul has its own vibrational signature, expressing its own unique texture and quality. When the women attune to the song, they sing it aloud. Then they return to the tribe and teach it to everyone else.

When the child is ready to be born, the community gathers. They sing the song as the child is delivered into the world. When the child reaches the age of education, the village gathers again and chants the child's song. When the child passes through the initiations to adulthood, the people come together and sing. At the time of marriage, the people sing. Finally, when the soul is about to depart from this world, the family and friends gather around the person's bed, just as they did at birth, and sing the person to the next life.

In this African tribe, there is one other occasion upon which the person hears their unique song. It is when the child commits a crime or a hurtful social act, when the child acts from shadow. When this happens, the person is called to the center of the village. The people in the community form a circle around them and sing their unique song. In that way, they are called back to the light.⁸

The tribe recognizes that the healing of shadow behavior is not arbitrary punishment; it is the recovery of memory—to be sung back to your Unique Self. Your shadow is but the distortion of your Unique Self. *When you re- member and recognize your unique song, you lose the desire to hurt anyone else.*

The ten principles of Unique Self shadow work

AT THIS POINT, WE ARE READY to unpack the raw outline of this evolutionary mystical teaching of Unique Self / Unique Shadow in the ten principles of shadow and, in the next chapter, the eight tenets of love.

1. Shadow is your Unique Self distortion.

Shadow is not your night virtues—your lust, fear, anger, jealousy, or envy. This is why the teaching of shadow integration that understands the night virtues as the core of shadow makes so little sense. Why would you want to integrate your rage and pettiness into your person? These night virtues are ethical violations, which, if unrectified, have profound implications for your life and karma. This is the teaching of all the great traditions in the perennial philosophy. The night virtues are obviously shadow qualities, but the night virtues are not the core of shadow. Shadow *qualities* are not the essence of your shadow but merely an *expression* of your shadow. Your shadow is the distortion of your Unique Self—the part of your story that is unlived or distorted, and is therefore in darkness. The Hebrew word for story, *sippur*, you may remember, has the same root as one of the great mystical words for light, *sapir*. Your light is your story. Your story is your Unique frequency of light. The part of your story that is not lived—that is not in the light—is in darkness. It is that very unlived story that is the core of your shadow. Naturally then, the disowning of your Unique Story creates your Unique Shadow.

2. Your story includes both your True Self and Unique Self.

Your True Self is your freedom, and your Unique Self is your fullness.

Your freedom is beyond all forms: it is your realization of your utter identity with the divine, with All-That-Is. This is your absolute emptiness. You are emptied of all superficial and limiting identities. In this precise sense, you are absolutely free. You realize that you are not a skin-encapsulated ego. You are not a-part, separate, and alone, but an indivisible part of the one, seamless coat of the Uni-verse. This is the realization of your classic enlightenment. This is the enlightenment of True Self.

Your fullness is the uniqueness of your play within form: it is the fullness of your Unique Story, the distinct expression of your divinity, of All-That-Is. Your story is all the Unique Gifts, pleasures, needs, and obligations that flow from your singular signature in the seamless coat of the Uni-verse. Your story is the evolutionary service that you offer the world, the service that can be done by you and you alone. All of this is the fullness and fulfillment of your Unique Self.

3. Any part of your story that you do not live, lives in darkness.

In your meeting with parents, teachers, culture, and peers, you were wounded. This is true of every human being. It is part of the evolutionary journey. As a result of your hurt, you put part of your story in shadow. You forgot who you were. To come home, you must recover and embrace the memory of your fullest self. It is in this embrace that you overcome the distorting mechanism of what I call your hug formula. Every person has their own hug formula. Your hug formula determines the part of yourself that you are willing to dis-own in order to receive the approval, the hug, that makes you feel like you belong in the world. This part of you becomes unconscious. It lives in shadow. This is your repressed shadow.

There are also parts of you that are unconscious, not because you unknowingly pushed them into shadow, but because they have never seen the light of day. They are unconscious because they have never been conscious. You have not evolved to the full realization of your identity, so it remains in shadow. For example, you may still identify with your isolated separate-self ego. You have not realized your True Self, distinctly expressed as your Unique Self. Any part of your enlightened True or Unique Self that is not realized lives in shadow. This is your developmental or emergent shadow. It is the part of you that has not yet developed or emerged—that is still in shadow.

4. When unique light is trapped in shadow, it does not remain static.

The untold and unlived night stories that are hidden, even from you, always devolve. They fester and fume. They demand to be lived and heard.

Consciousness, energy, and light, like fresh water, are meant to flow. Their nature is dynamic and constantly evolving. For this is the nature of the divine. When light is trapped in shadow, it does not remain static. It becomes stagnant. There is either evolution or devolution. This is the same principle that causes the festering of unexpressed hurt or an untransformed wound.

That which remains unseen either grows or shrinks, but it always changes. That which is unconsciously placed in shadow always devolves. Once it can be seen and talked of, it can breathe again, and the evolution of your light can resume its normal trajectory. Hidden in shadow does not mean held privately. There are sacred secrets that are appropriately never public, but always held hidden in the love-light of consciousness.

Some sacred secrets must be held privately in order to grow, like seeds under the ground. (One must not confuse sacred secrets with sordid secrets.) But to hide your light from yourself out of fear or shame will cause the light to become dense, distorted, and destructive. Shadow refers to those untold night stories trapped in your unconscious that fester and fume, demanding their day.

5. When unlived life stagnates and devolves, it re-emerges as shadow qualities.

Shadow qualities include addictions of every form—rage, betrayal, envy, jealousy, and more. *You do not want to integrate shadow qualities. You want to re-integrate shadow.*

Your unlived life is stuffed in the darkness. It stagnates and devolves, and re-emerges as shadow qualities. *Until the story of your life is lived, you will go on desperately yearning for it.* When your desperate yearning is not nourished by the Eros of your story, it devolves to desperate craving, which is filled by the pseudo-Eros of addiction. They are shadow qualities. Once you have realized and integrated your shadow, which is your unlived life, the shadow qualities lose their *raison d'être* and begin to drop away.

Say you are frustrated and angry. You have been wanting to build a toolshed in the backyard all weekend.¹ This is the life that you need to live on this weekend. It is Sunday evening. You have not built the shed. In your interior, this unlived life makes you feel terrible. You feel incompetent, not powerful, and unable to take care of yourself. You feel like you did not keep your word to yourself. All the other times that you let yourself or someone else down come to the fore of your consciousness. All of these times are part of your unlived life. You did not live the life of the reliable and trusted friend who you truly are. None of this, however, is fully conscious. These feelings are not in the light, because they do not mesh with your self-identity as a person living a life that is good, competent, powerful, and capable. This is shadow material.

Your wife has been away all weekend on a business trip. She returns after she has successfully completed her weekend mission. She walks in the house, gives you a hug, and asks, “Honey, how was your weekend? Did you get that shed built?” Her tone is innocent, but you do not hear it that way. You explode with rage at her. You get angry with her for daring to be so frustrated and upset with you.

Shadow in this example is a Unique Shadow, which emerged from the unlived life that you needed and wanted to live that weekend.

What happened? There are several distinct steps.

You are frustrated and angry with yourself for not having fulfilled your commitment. The life that was yours to live at that time was “to build the shed.” But you do not consciously “own” your frustration and anger for failing to live your life. You especially want to distance yourself from your feeling of being inadequate, not enough, or bad.

Your partner’s innocent question unleashes a swamp of hidden bad feelings in regard to your unlived life and brings them to the surface. You naturally do not want to direct these feelings against yourself, but they need to be directed somewhere. So you turn your anger against your partner. This is the first level of what is going on.

On an even deeper level, you are engaged in projection. You project all of your own frustration and anger with yourself onto your partner. For that very reason, you experience her

as being angry and frustrated with you. You then proceed to get angry with her for daring to be so frustrated and upset with you.

Your unlived life—the project you wanted to finish—has been dis-owned and placed into shadow. There it devolved into rage, anxiety, and frustration. All of these shadow qualities were then projected onto your beloved partner.

Shadow in this example is not generic but rather a Unique Shadow, which emerges from the unlived life that you needed and wanted to live that weekend. If you would enter the inside of your anger, it would lead you back to your own desire to build the shed. Building the shed in a timely and effective manner was the expression of your Unique Self on that particular weekend. Actually building the shed would be the way to follow your Unique Shadow back to your Unique light.

Let me give you two more examples of the Unique Self–Unique Shadow complex.

Unlived Passion

About a decade ago I spent several years working with a woman named Amelia. Amelia was the dean and a teacher of comparative religion at a prestigious private school for girls in Europe. She was a cultured, ethical, compassionate woman of considerable depth and insight, with a balanced and delightful disposition. The explicit goal of our work was to facilitate Amelia's Unique Self enlightenment. Amelia had this quite unexpected habit of getting into very embroiled verbal fights with her colleagues over seemingly nonsensical issues. She would take a position on an apparently innocuous matter, and then fight for it with a passion and vehemence that was way out of proportion to the nature of the issue at hand. This made little sense to Amelia or to myself. It was troubling not only because it caused her no small amount of grief, but also because it was so completely out of character.

Our breakthrough moment in regard to this issue came from the realization, which was then growing in me, that Unique Shadow is always the road back to Unique Self. During our work together, one of our major focal points was Amelia as a teacher. In order to confirm an intuition that had been brewing in me, I asked her to “teach me” several classes, with me as the student. She did. The classes were lovely, nuanced, and insightful.

But something was wrong. The quality of her teaching was profoundly feminine, in that it held space for everyone, received everyone's feedback, and sought to validate the opinions of all the students. But it was not compelling. It lacked the passion needed to penetrate the heart. The quality of masculine insemination that plants a great idea forever in the heart and mind of a young person was strikingly absent. Now, this was not because Amelia lacked passionate beliefs or deeply held certainties. She did not lack these things. But as it emerged, she was enculturated in the progressive ethos of teaching that viewed masculine passion and insemination as a violation of the autonomy of the student. It confused ecstasy with frenzy, and transmission of a

truth with intellectual domination. In this ethos, the role of the teacher was virtually always that of facilitator and virtually never that of passionate inseminator. As a result, Amelia was never able to convey the depth of her teaching and deeply held knowing to her students. Her Unique Self as a teacher remained both unlived and distorted.

What naturally happened then was that Amelia's distorted Unique Self appeared as Amelia's Unique Shadow. Her petty fights filled with passion and fervor over irrelevant issues were but the unlived vocation of the passionate, compelling teacher showing up in shadow form. Once this became clear to us, Amelia began to shift her teaching style significantly, and within six months, the nasty fights that had dogged her career and relationships disappeared almost entirely. She evolved from being the lovely, nice teacher to the compelling, provocative teacher. Much to her surprise and delight, her popularity soared. Amelia had followed her Unique Shadow back to her Unique Self.

Taking Anger into Account

A second story involves a student from southern Israel who came to me because he had a terrible problem with anger. He was angry with his kids, his wife, and himself most of the time. I tried every kind of anger-management technique I knew and more for a period of many months. Nothing worked.

By profession, he was an accountant. He was also a man who had, from the time he was very young, a deep passion for social justice. After several weeks of talking, I shocked him by telling him I thought he should leave accounting and run for mayor of his small town. His wife was particularly aghast at the prospect. He made a good, stable living as an accountant, and was often home and available (if angry) for her and the kids. Why give this up for the financial and social vagaries of political life?

I shared with both of them my intuition, which had come to me in a flash in the midst of a late-night prayer. I sensed that his anger was not based on old childhood issues or any kind of character disorder. Rather, it was the sublimated anger of protest, of a leader and revolutionary trapped in an office adding up numbers for other people.

Now, being an accountant is a wonderful, honorable, and vitally needed profession—but not if you are a revolutionary! A few years and many ups and downs later, he in fact became the mayor of his town. To his and his family's surprise, what had been his petty and unpredictable bouts of rage simply stopped. He became a different person. He stepped into his Unique Self, so his shadow—his distorted or unlived Unique Self—naturally disappeared. In this case, the anger itself was re-channeled and vitally transformed. It remained passionate, but lost its bitter and sometimes mean sense, and took on a cleaner and even compassionate quality.

The path of transformation of identity teaches that only through using your Unique Shadow as a guide to Unique Self can you ever find your way back to your story.

3-2-1-0 of Shadow

There is a well-known shadow process in Integral Theory called the 3-2-1 of shadow. It was borrowed from various traditions of shadow work and evolved within the Integral framework.

Here's how it works. Let's say that you are massively annoyed by a coworker who seems to behave in a consistently deceitful fashion. This is the 3 of shadow appearing as the third person. Then you move shadow to 2, which is shadow in second person. At this juncture you simply create a second-person dialogue with shadow. Finally, you move to level 1, where you own the previously disowned shadow in first person. You do so by finding the quality of deceitfulness as it lives in your first person. Once, however, you understand the Unique Self and Unique Shadow nexus, you realize that for genuine shadow integration to take place a 0 must be added, and it becomes a 3-2-1-0 process. In this process you realize that there is not only shadow but Unique Shadow. This is 1, and then you follow 1 to 0, which is Unique Shadow back to Unique light.

6. You feel the full depth of the goodness and aliveness of your life only when you are fully living *your* full story.

When you are not living your full story, you do not feel that you fully exist. You do not feel adequate, dignified, or valuable. Anything less than your unique and special story makes you feel unworthy. The feeling of emptiness that always accompanies the feeling of unworthiness is the source of every form of addiction and acting out. Stories, of course, have many layers, plots, and subplots. You may feel the fullness of your story in one dimension of your life, and you may feel drab and adrift in other parts of your life. This is how you know where your story, your Book of Life, needs editing or rewriting.

If you're not living your story, you create a pseudo-story. If you're not in your Eros, you are seduced by pseudo-Eros and false stories. You fill up your emptiness with snakes and scorpions—all the shadow qualities, all the night virtues, all the addictions. Once your un-lived life is in darkness, it undergoes degradation. You feel numb and empty. You unconsciously reach out for something to cover the emptiness. You cast about for depth and fulfillment, which can only be truly found by reclaiming your un-lived life.

Often anger supplies you with a hit of pseudo-fullness. But since your internal self-image is that of a contented and successful person, you cannot own your anger. Unwarranted anger is a shadow quality. Your disowned anger remains in your space, but since your anger is not in you, you project it onto others, who you then think are angry at you. You then become sad because you feel that people are angry at you. Over time this turns into a low-grade depression. And the cycle continues its downward degenerative spiral of unlove and alienation.

When you are miscast, you cast about. You act out when you are the leading actor in the

wrong script. You can only receive an Oscar for playing a starring role in your own life. Being in the wrong story creates massive interior pain, which in turn gives birth to your shadow qualities.

7. Shadow is a lie about your Unique Self. Shadow is a lie about your essential identity.

When you lie about your life, you create shadow qualities. It takes enormous energy to support a lie. This is especially true when it is not a “detail lie” about this or that, but a lie about the very fabric of your identity. You deny ownership of essential voices in yourself. You hide those parts of you that challenge the image of the man or woman you want and claim to be. You do not have an accurate picture of yourself. Because this is so, you cannot accurately judge how to interact with others.

Since you have edited out or plagiarized part of your story, you do not feel whole or authentic. On the contrary, you feel desiccated and fraudulent. You feel fragmented. You feel like an impostor waiting to be found out.

In order to reclaim your story, you must accept authorship and ownership of all of your narrative. *Authorship is the source of authority. Only the author of your life story has control over the destiny and destination of your narrative.* You must go back to your Book of Life, and see when you started either editing or plagiarizing your life script. Your shadow consists of the parts of your story that have been left on the cutting-room floor. They are screaming to get your attention, so that you will re-include them in the story of your life.

Let me give a startling illustration of this principle. Every human being is a precisely unique balance of masculine and feminine. The precise calibration of these two qualities is unique in every human being. No two hermaphrodites are the same. To the precise extent that these qualities are imbalanced or not expressed, the essential truth of your Unique Self is violated. You are living a lie. The part of your unique identity that is not lived is in shadow. Any part of your masculine or feminine that is unlived, imbalanced, or distanced will create shadow. The lie of your shadow will ultimately express itself in your acting out in shadow qualities.

8. Shadow integration does not mean to integrate shadow qualities. Shadow integration does mean to reclaim your unlived life that is in darkness.

The popular teaching on shadow that I cited at the beginning of the previous chapter suggests that by integrating your shadow, you will gain the advantage of the shadow energy. But as I have already pointed out, it is more than unclear what this means. How do you integrate the energy of murder? Murderous energy explodes, and then dissipates. This is energy without depth or stability.

The energy of murder, at its core, stems from your own disconnection with the fullness of your

Unique Self. Shadow integration means to reclaim your unlived life and thereby reclaim your life force. The energy you reclaim with shadow integration is the full force, power, and vitality of your Unique Self, directed not toward destruction but toward creativity, compassion, and Eros.

9. Joy is your life energy. Joy is a by-product of Unique Self living.

Joy, as we have seen, is realized as the natural by-product of the passionate pursuit of something other than happiness.

What is that other thing that you pursue passionately that is not joy, that is a by-product of its pursuit? Of course, you must pursue virtue, goodness, integrity, depth, values—all necessary, but insufficient to give you joy. It's not just virtue, goodness, integrity, and depth that you need to pursue; you must pursue *your* virtue, goodness, integrity, and depth—that is to say, your story.

Joy is a by-product of living *your* story.

The Chinese taught us that joy is chi, joy is energy. In Hebrew mysticism, joy is called *chiyut*, which means “vital energy,” or “life force.” So both the Chinese tradition and the Hebrew mystical tradition use virtually the same root word to allude to joy.

Once you understand all of this clearly, the imperative to integrate shadow makes sense once again. When you reclaim your unlived life and weave it back into the fabric of your sacred autobiography, you bring joy—energy—back into your life. Your Unique Self is the portal to your joy. You move from being depleted to being energized. Where you once were listless, you are now full of vigor. Valium gives way to vitality.

When all the principles we have enumerated until this point are brought together, you realize that there are five progressive steps of life destruction that are the direct result of the Unique Self distortion, which creates Unique Shadow. Each one of these steps drains your life energy in its own particular way. Their successive and cumulative impact on your life is nothing less than devastating. The healing comes directly from the evolution of your identity to your original and unique wholeness. Wholeness is the integration of your unlived life, your True Self and Unique Self, which are acting out as shadow.

1. Your story is your light. Your unlived life-light is shadow.

If you take part of your story, part of the Unique Self that you are here to live, which creates your joy, and you put it in shadow, what have you done? You have taken a huge part of your *chiyut* energy and put it in darkness. You have lost the core of your life energy, which remains trapped in your unlived life. This is the essence of the matter. The natural joy-energy of your life, which is a by-product of living your Unique Self, is not available when your core story is in shadow. Your

energy and joy are a by-product of the lived fullness of your unique life. You are fully alive and aflame only in *your* story and *your* life.

2. Without this core energy, you feel empty. You are left depleted, exhausted, and horribly depressed. Depression further drains your energy.
3. That unlived life that you placed into darkness then devolves and becomes shadow qualities. It devolves into unbridled rage, damaging lust, malice, jealousy, embezzlement, and violence. This further drains your life force.
4. You lose your core alignment with the ecstatic evolutionary impulse of the kosmos that moves toward higher and higher levels of complexity, consciousness, and love. This further drains you of your joy, and hence of your energy and your life force.
5. When your story is in shadow, you must expend enormous energy to maintain the lie about it. To maintain a constant and unnatural lie demands an enormous reserve of energy. This is a further source of your energy loss.

10. The technology for shadow integration is love. Shadow integration effects a transformation of identity. Love is the evolutionary force that transmutes shadow to light.

The inner magic and mechanism of love makes it the ultimate technology of Unique Shadow transformation. The nature of that magic and mechanism is an essential understanding necessary for your Unique Self enlightenment.

In order to integrate your shadow, your unlived life acting out and demanding attention, a transformation of your identity must occur. The key Aramaic phrase used by the Unique Self masters to describe the nature of this transformative path is *be'chavivut talya milta*, "It depends on love." Why and how love is the primary technology of shadow transformation is the topic of the next chapter. But first, a story that will close this chapter and introduce the next one.

Heart of Darkness

When the holy Israel Baal Shem Tov was five years old, his father became very sick. All the cures did not work, and he approached the hour of his death. He asked for his son Israel to be brought to him.

To Israel he spoke these parting words of instruction and love: "My son, remember that the dark side will always be with you. But know also that your essence is whole and pure. The dark side cannot violate your wholeness. You are part of God. Fear no man. Do not fear the dark side, for God is always with you, in you, and beyond you." With those words Eliezer, father of Israel,

died.

Israel's mother had died soon after his birth, so he became an orphan. The people of the village raised him. Although he loved and lived the sacred texts of Kabbalah, he spent little time in the classroom. In fact, no one ever saw him poring over a text. Instead, they saw him wandering the fields and forests of the Carpathian Mountains. Israel spent most of his time outdoors, often lost in wonder, rapture, and radical amazement. He followed the ants, slept in the moss, and learned the language of birds. He listened. He heard the whispers of the winds, felt the flow of water, and swooned at the rapturous beauty of the forest. He communed in love with every creature. The ants and beetles were his friends, the small and larger animals his dearest companions.

When Israel was ten, he was retained as an apprentice to the headmaster and only teacher in the small school in Horodenka. He gathered the children from their homes and took them to school in the morning, and returned them to their parents in the afternoon. The children loved him, as did the parents, for their children would always return home radiant.

It was only the children and Israel, however, who knew the true source of their radiance. Israel took them to school in a very unexpected way. Instead of walking down the dirt roads and making the necessary turns, Israel took them across the fields and through the thick forests surrounding Horodenka. They sang with the squirrels and called out to the birds.

They sang songs of heart and joy to God, songs that Israel had composed and taught them. The chants as well as Israel's pure intention opened their hearts and carried them to depths of ecstasy that cannot be described to one who has not experienced such joy.

Indeed, their songs were so filled with innocent love that they broke through boundaries that separate the realms of heaven from our earthly world. The songs attracted the attention of the angels, who began to sing with the children. Soon all the celestial palaces were filled with the pure songs of Israel and the children. Elijah, whose job it is to herald the coming of the messiah, was awakened by the song. Rumors swept through the heavens that the messianic era might soon be at hand.

Satan, lord of the dark side, was incensed by this unexpected turn of events. Satan demanded of God, as he had done in the days of Job, "Let me challenge this boy Israel!" God, for reasons we cannot know, agreed.

So Satan, who must always operate through agents, descended to Earth to search for some representative of the dark side who could do his work. Satan called all the insects, searching for one who would poison Israel. But all the insects were Israel's friends, and so none consented. Satan searched among all the animals large and small for one who would be willing to attack and dismember the boy in front of the children he led. He was sure that such a sight would put an end to their singing. But all the animals refused, for they too were Israel's beloved companions. Satan was unable to find a single living being who would consent to harming the boy.

Finally, Satan was able to locate an agent. He was a very old man who worked as a charcoal burner. In truth, he was not really an old man, although this is how he appeared. He was of that very rare kind who was born without a soul. His body functioned normally, but he was disconnected from all emotion and from any sense of right and wrong. He could not bear the company of human beings. When his mother bore him, she abandoned him in the woods, for he frightened her. She somehow knew that he was more animal than human, and would be better raised by the creatures of the forest. He was nursed by a she-bear. He survived by eating insects. But he had a human intelligence of sorts, and so in the fullness of time he learned to make fire and charcoal. People who needed charcoal would leave him food and drink, and he would make them charcoal. He never spoke to a human being, and when he was occasionally sighted, it sent tremors through the one who beheld him.

Even before this set of events with Israel and the children, Satan had set his eyes on the charcoal burner. He sent a demonic power to enter his body. On nights where the full moon was high in the sky, the charcoal burner would grow fur, and then, possessed by a demonic power living through him, he would stand on all fours spitting fire and screeching at the moon. People spoke of a strange monster prowling the woods, but they were always too filled with fear to truly investigate the truth.

After being refused by all living creatures, Satan turned to find the charcoal burner, knowing that his will was too weak to resist Satan's demand. Satan came upon the charcoal burner as he slept. He reached into his body and removed his heart. Satan then ripped out a piece of his own heart, the heart of darkness, and placed this blackest of all hearts within the empty chest cavity of the charcoal burner.

The very next morning, Israel was leading the children, as he always did, through the forest. They were singing with their hearts open and pure, and their faces radiant. The angels sang with them, as they had grown accustomed to doing.

As the children entered a meadow in a section between two expanses of forest, they heard a ghastly sound behind them. A huge, dark, and shadowy creature stepped out from the forest that they had just left. It was ugly beyond words, snarling and spitting flames and phlegm. Its eyes were an insane shade of red, and its nose billowed dark and menacing spits of fire and smoke. Standing on its hind feet, it must have been twenty feet tall, and its strange and ugly arms reeked of violence and rage, but most horrific of all was the sound it made. A sound so ugly and vile that all the children fainted dead away, or ran for dear life.

Israel was the only one to stand his ground face-to-face with the monster. He did not budge. Eventually the monster returned to the woods, and quiet was restored. Israel gathered and revived his fallen children, but could not quite comfort them. They all ran home and cried to their parents of their fright and fear.

The parents were very angry at Israel for taking their children through the forest, but of

course they did not quite believe the children's tale of fright. They were sure that the children had exaggerated greatly, and Israel did not contradict them.

Israel, however, knew that it was important to enter the forest once again. He spoke to each of the parents and each of the children. Somehow, the parents consented to let the children continue going to school with Israel. He gave the parents his absolute promise that they would be safe. The children's love of Israel and the way he was with them helped them overcome their fear.

The next morning, they entered the forest once more. This time, however, Israel gave them precise instructions: "When the monstrous beast appears again, and it surely will, do not be afraid. Just drop to the ground and cover your eyes, and I will do what needs to be done."

Sure enough, at the same place as the day before, the monstrous beast stepped violently toward them. He spit fire and hate, and was consumed by a rage so malicious and violent that the earth all around him shuddered. The children all dropped to the ground. The man-beast was standing on all fours, radiating a viciousness that cannot be described in words.

Israel walked forward toward the beast. He placed himself directly between the beast and the children. As Israel got closer, the beast seemed to rise larger and larger, until he was enveloped in a dark black cloud. Fear raced through Israel, but he centered himself in his father's dying words: "Do not fear the darkness, for God is always with you, in you, and beyond you."

With those words as a mantra repeating itself in his heart, Israel walked forward. He kept walking. The beast did not move. Closer and closer. The dark cloud wrapped Israel in its blackness, and he found himself on the inside of the beast. In the thickness of the shadow, he was able to make out the outline of its smooth black heart—the heart of darkness—blackly pulsing inside it. Israel reached out, took the heart in his hands, and stepped backward. He found himself outside the creature's body and outside the cloud holding the beating black heart.

Israel knew that this was the moment for which so many had waited throughout the ages. He held the heart of darkness in his hands. He had but to crush it, and with that to destroy the heart of evil forever. Redemption was at hand. The heart writhed and pulsated in his hands. It was slippery and repulsive.

But Israel noticed a trickle of blood rolling down one side of the heart. And he realized that mixed in the blood was a tear. The tear pierced his soul to the depths. Israel realized that the heart of darkness was in torment. Then a second tiny trickle of blood rolled down the side of the heart. Tears. He realized even more deeply that the heart of darkness was wracked with pain. He knew that deeper than the darkness was the pain. It was writhing in agony. It suffered the pain of alienation from Source. It too contained the spark of the divine and longed to return home. He allowed his compassion to be opened wider and wider as he held the beating heart of darkness in his hands.

As his heart expanded and expanded, he came to the point beyond choice. He released the heart and set it on the ground. The earth immediately swallowed it up.

The next day, the villagers found the body of the charcoal burner. They say there was a peaceful look on his tormented face. The children continued to sing, but not quite as they had before. For the heart of darkness had left fear behind. Israel realized that to shift the world toward redemption, he could not destroy the heart of darkness, but must rather learn to hold it in his hands. The heart of darkness must not be destroyed but transformed by the love of Shekhinah, the divine feminine, and that became the core of his great teaching. He knew that every human being has their own individualized heart of darkness. Israel gave this teaching:

Hold your heart of darkness as I did, in the palm of your hand. Let your divine feminine be aroused. Let your love rise up. Let your heart expand. You will then see the spark of divinity that is seeking to express itself through your heart of darkness. Take that spark and integrate it into your Big Heart, and the heart of darkness will melt into the light.