ACHDUT (Unity, Reconciliation, Harmony)

The Interconnectedness of the Physical and Spiritual Realms

> *I pray...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*
>
> (John 17:21)

One of the most striking aspects of Jesus' teachings and actions is His ability to reveal the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual realms. For Jesus, the material world was not separate from the divine but a reflection of it, infused with God's presence and purpose. His miracles, parables, and teachings continually bridged the gap between the earthly and the heavenly, showing that the two are deeply intertwined.

Creation as a Reflection of the Divine

The Hebrew Scriptures affirm that the physical world was created by the non-physical God and was declared ***"very good"*** (Genesis 1:31). This

foundational truth underscores the sacredness of creation and its role as a reflection of God's glory and goodness.

Jewish mysticism views creation as a manifestation of the Divine. The mystics taught that God's presence permeates the universe, and every aspect of the physical world is a reflection of the spiritual. For instance, the temple is considered a reflection of the heavenly throne.

Jesus affirmed this view in His miracles —where the natural meets the spiritual— and in His teachings, often using elements of the natural world —seeds, trees, water, and light— to illustrate spiritual truths.

The Kingdom of God: Unity Made Manifest

The miracles of Jesus are not magic tricks, nor are they mere proofs of His divinity. Each miracle is a revelation, a sign that the world is permeated by the divine. When Jesus heals, multiplies food, or raises the dead, He is not breaking natural law—He is restoring creation to its original wholeness. He is unveiling the unity that sin and suffering have obscured.

Jewish mystics see miracles as windows in the wall between worlds—moments when the hidden light of God shines through. These events teach us that the physical and spiritual are not enemies, but partners. The world is full of concealed wonders, and sometimes the veil is lifted so we may glimpse the harmony behind the chaos.

One of Jesus' most central proclamations was the Kingdom of God—a reality where heaven and earth, spirit and body, God and humanity, are reconciled—become one: *"Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10). This is an invocation of unity.

Becoming One

> *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*
>
> (John 13:35)

The Hebrew word for unity—*ACHDUT*—comes from the root word *ECHAD*, meaning "one." But biblical oneness does not mean uniformity.

It's not about everyone being the same, thinking the same, or looking the same. *ACHDUT* means unity and harmony, not sameness.

In Hebrew thought, unity is like a symphony: many instruments, each with its own tone and purpose, playing together in beautiful coordination. *ACHDUT* embraces difference while seeking peace, mutual respect, and shared purpose. It is the kind of unity found in a healthy body—many members, each distinct, yet working together as one (1 Corinthians 12:12–27).

So when Scripture calls us to be one, it's not calling us to erase our uniqueness. It's inviting us to bring our differences into a relationship of love, humility, and purpose—where together we reflect something greater than we ever could alone.

The Sacramental Nature of the Physical World

In the Gospels, healing is a central sign of God's kingdom. Jesus does not merely forgive sins or mend bodies—He restores *SHALOM* (peace, oneness, wholeness). When He says, *"Your faith has made you whole,"* there is more to it than a mere physical cure. Becoming whole means restoration: body, mind, soul, relationships.

Just as Jesus' healings restore wholeness in body and spirit, so too does He invite us to experience this restoration through sacred acts that unite the physical and the spiritual.

At the Last Supper, Jesus broke bread and gave wine, saying, *"This is my body...this is my blood."* In these acts, ordinary elements become mystical windows to the Divine. The sacred and the mundane meet; matter becomes a vessel for spirit. This is sacrament—a visible sign of invisible grace.

The mystics call this "raising the sparks"—discovering the holy hidden in the ordinary, sanctifying every aspect of daily life. Every meal, every conversation, every act of kindness, every memory, can become sacramental, taking part in the unity of God and creation.

When Jesus told His disciples, *"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you"* (John 6:53), He was inviting them into a profound mystical union. This radical teaching was not merely about physical consumption, but about participating in His

very life—being so united with Him that His presence, love, and spirit become one with ours.

The act of eating and drinking, in biblical imagery and in Judaism, is the most intimate sign of union. The dining table is where intimacy takes place—a space where barriers come down, hearts open, and relationships are deepened through shared presence and conversation.

But Christ takes this symbol one step further. As food and drink become part of our bodies, so Christ desires to become part of our being. Jesus is not only present with us at the table; He dwells within our hearts, bringing His love and presence into the very core of our being.

This invitation to oneness is celebrated in Christian tradition as Communion or the Eucharist. As a Jew, and to the best of my understanding, Catholic theology expresses this mystery through the doctrine of transubstantiation: at the altar, bread and wine become, in essence, the very body and blood of Christ. Through this sacrament, Catholics believe they participate in a tangible and mystical act of union—not just remembering Jesus, but experiencing a real, living communion. It's understood as an actual unity between the soul and Christ Himself, and, by extension, with God.

I deeply appreciate the beauty and mystery of this mystical element in Catholic tradition. Yet, from a Jewish perspective, I think something essential can be missed—the meal itself. A meal is food and wine, laughter and joy, a gathering around the table. And at this table, we are called to invite the poor, the outcast, and the sinner—just as Jesus did. True communion is not only mystical; it is also profoundly human and inclusive, a celebration of God's presence in the everyday and in the company of those most in need of grace.

Unity as the Nature of the Kingdom

Jesus prayed, *"That they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You"* (John 17:21). This is not mere unity of doctrine, but of life, love, and purpose—a unity rooted in the God who Himself is *ECHAD* (Deuteronomy 6:4). The early church made this its mission: *"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all* ***one*** *in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians 3:28). While distinctions such as male and female still exist, they no longer serve as defining aspects of one's identity before God.

This vision of unity is not sameness. *ACHDUT* does not erase difference; it harmonizes it. Like a magnificent banquet, each flavor is unique, yet all are harmoniously blended into a unified, exquisite feast. In Christ, our differences no longer divide us. Our differences are not barriers but beautiful facets of the divine mosaic. We are now called to become one, undivided by our differences.

This cannot be overstressed. Unity in the Kingdom of God does not mean the erasure of identity, but the transcendence of division. It is not sameness, but solidarity—a shared life rooted in love, mutual honor, and common purpose. The walls that once separated us—ethnic, social, gender, religious—are brought down not by force but by the reconciling presence of the Messiah, who gathers all into one family.

This is not just theological theory; it is the lived reality we are invited to embody. In Christ, we learn not to tolerate one another's differences, but to treasure them as gifts. We move from isolation to communion, from rivalry to fellowship. That is the true meaning of *ACHDUT*.

Reconciliation Through Love

Love is the power that unites. Jesus insisted, *"If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift...go, first be reconciled"* (Matthew 5:23–24). Reconciliation is the precondition for true worship. If we do not seek peace with one another, our worship of God is incomplete.

The Jewish ideal of *TIKKUN OLAM* — the repair of the world — is achieved through acts of reconciliation. Every act of forgiveness, every bridge rebuilt, every wrong righted, is a step toward the unity that is God's will for creation.

More often than not, Jesus' parables are stories of restoration. The father who runs to meet his lost son, the shepherd who risks everything for the stray sheep, are images of God's relentless commitment to love and unity.

Thus, Jesus was constantly breaking barriers: ethnic, religious, gender, and social. He ate with tax collectors and sinners, healed Samaritans, praised the faith of Gentiles, honored women, and even touched lepers. In doing so, He revealed the radical inclusivity of God's love and the futility of divisions based on human prejudice.

Paul would later write, *"Christ Himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier...For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit"* (Ephesians 2:14–18).

True unity means seeing the image of God in every face, no matter how different they are. The community that Jesus created was revolutionary: a family of tax collectors, zealots, Jewish fishermen, prostitutes, Pharisees, lepers, and Gentiles, all made one in Him.

Cosmic Reconciliation

The cross is the ultimate act of reconciliation—not just between individuals or groups, but between heaven and earth, God and creation. *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself"* (2 Corinthians 5:19). Paul's vision is cosmic:

> *Through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.*
>
> (Colossians 1:20)

The Jewish mystical tradition similarly speaks of *TIKKUN HA'GALDOL* —the "Great Repair" — when all sparks of holiness are gathered, and creation is restored to unity. The journey of faith is to join in this work—healing, forgiving, uniting, loving.

True *ACHDUT* means standing with the oppressed, serving the marginalized, and refusing to let injustice divide God's children. The church is meant to be a place that mirrors God's heart of inclusivity:

> *For my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.*
>
> (Isaiah 56:7)

The Challenge of Unity

Achieving unity is not easy. Division, pride, tribalism, and fear have deep roots. Throughout history, religion itself has often become a source of

division rather than unity. There are over 40,000 sects in Christianity alone, often deeply detesting and despising one another. Jesus' harshest words were reserved for those who used faith to build walls instead of bridges (e.g., Matthew 23:13).

Pride—spiritual arrogance—is the great enemy of unity. The humble recognize that only God is infinite; all human understanding is partial. Unity requires listening, learning, and the willingness to admit our limitations. To recognize this is to acknowledge that we never have the full picture, that every person has something to teach us.

Unity as a Prophetic Vision

The prophets foresaw a day when swords would be beaten into plowshares, when none would harm or destroy, when all the earth would be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 2:4; 11:9). This is the dream of unity—not uniformity, but harmony; not mere absence of conflict, but fullness of life together.

Jesus made this vision central to His mission. He called His disciples to be peacemakers, to love one another and even their enemies, to seek first the kingdom of God and its justice, to pray and labor for the unity that alone can heal the world. Likewise, Paul looks forward to the end of history, when *"God will be all in all"* (1 Corinthians 15:28). This is the destiny of creation: every barrier overcome, every tear wiped away, every person gathered into the eternal unity of divine love.

Conclusion — ACHDUT Through Love

Until that day, our calling is clear: we are to be agents of unity, reconciliation, and harmony—ambassadors of the One who *"came to seek and save the lost"* (Luke 19:10). To bring *ACHDUT*—true unity—into our world means seeking out those in need and blessing them, protecting the weak, becoming peacemakers by forgiving those who hurt us, and even loving our enemies. To live in unity is to make God's love visible on earth, just as it is in heaven.

Lord of all unity, You have made all things and all people in Your image. Give us eyes to see your face in every person. Grant us the courage to seek reconciliation, the humility to listen, and the love to build bridges where

others build walls. May our lives bear witness to the harmony of Your kingdom until all creation is restored in You.

Amen.