

***Lessons in Tanya: Shaar Hayichud
Vehaemunah***

Introduction

Chinuch Katan

(Introduction to Shaar HaYichud VehoEmunah)

The heading written by the Alter Rebbe reads as follows:

ליקוטי אמרים, חלק שני הנקרא בשם חינוך קטן מלוקט מפי ספרים ומפי סופרים קדושי עליון נ"ע מיוסד על
פרשה ראשונה של קריאת שמע

Likutei Amarim (“A Compilation of Teachings”) **Part Two** [whose introduction hereunder is] entitled [1](#) **Chinuch Katan** (“The Education of the Child”)

Compiled from sacred books and from teachers of heavenly saintliness, whose souls are in Eden;

This mention of his sources echoes the words of the Alter Rebbe in the title page to Part One of *Tanya*. The Previous Rebbe, the Rebbe Rayatz, of blessed memory, notes in one of his talks that “books” here traditionally refers to the works of the *Maharal* and the *Shelah*, and “teachers”, to the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch.

based on the first paragraph [2](#) of the Recitation of the *Shema*: [3](#)

This first paragraph contains both the verse beginning [4](#) *Shema Yisrael* and the sentence beginning [5](#) *Baruch shem*. As explained in the *Zohar*, [6](#) these quotations refer respectively to *yichuda ila'ah* (the higher level of perception of G-d's Unity) and *yichuda tata'ah* (the lower level of perception of G-d's Unity). It is around this theme that Part Two of *Tanya* revolves.

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חנוך לנער על פי דרכו, גם כי יזקין לא יסור ממנה

[7](#) “Educate the child according to his way: even as he grows old he will not depart from it.”

הנה מדכתיב: על פי דרכו, משמע שאינה דרך האמת לאמיתו

Since the verse writes “according to *his* way,” this implies that it is not the path of perfect truth, but merely a path to be followed by the child;

ואם כן מאי מעליותא שגם כי יזקין לא יסור ממנה

hence of what merit is it that “even as he grows old he will not depart from it”?

Indeed, it would seem that the very opposite should be the case: when the child matures he should forsake his childish path in favor of the path of truth. What possible merit could there be in not departing from it?

אך הנה מודעת זאת כי שרשי עבודת ה' ויסודותיה הן דחילו ורחימו

Now it is well known that the awe (lit., “fear”) and the love of G-d are the roots and foundations⁸ of divine service.

The performance of Torah and *mitzvot* in thought, speech and deed is rooted in and founded upon one’s love and fear of G-d. The awe of G-d enables the Jew to properly observe the prohibitive commandments, while the love of Him makes it possible for the Jew to perform the positive commandments with inner feeling,⁹ as the Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain.

היראה שרש ויסוד לסור מרע

Awe is the root and fundament of [what constrains one to]¹⁰ “refrain from evil,” ensuring that one will not transgress the prohibitive commandments,¹¹

והאהבה לועשה טוב, וקיום כל מצוות עשה דאורייתא ודרבנן

and the love of G-d [is the root and fundament] of [what motivates one to]¹² “do good,” and to observe all the positive commandments of the Torah and the Sages,

כמו שיתבאר במקומן

as will be explained in their proper place.

“As will be explained in their proper place” refers to chs. 4 and 41 in the *first* part of *Tanya*. This reference, as the Rebbe points out, corroborates the tradition handed down by chassidim that the Alter Rebbe originally intended to reverse the current order, with this second part of *Tanya* appearing first, as Part I, and the fifty-three chapters of the first part becoming Part II.

ומצות החינוך היא גם כן במצוות עשה, כמו שכתוב באורח חיים, סימן שמ"ג

(¹³The commandment of educating [a child] includes also [training in the performance of] positive precepts, as is stated in *Orach Chayim*, Section 343.)

Since a child is to be educated to observe both prohibitive *and* positive commandments, it follows that his love of G-d, as the root and fundament of *all* positive commands,¹⁴ must be such that it serves as the springboard for all the positive commandments that are performed *as a result of education*. We must therefore say that there exists an inferior and

transient degree of love that serves as the root and foundation for those *mitzvot* that are performed as a result of education, a degree of love distinct from the superior level that motivates an adult. Nevertheless, as shall soon be explained, this lower level of love, too — a love which is “according to the child’s way” — possesses certain permanent qualities that make it desirable that “even as he grows old he will not (and indeed should not) depart from it.”

והנה באהבה כתיב, בסוף פרשת עקב: אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם לעשותה, לאהבה את ה' וגו'

Concerning the love [of G-d] it is written at the end of the portion *Eikev*, [15](#) “...which I command you to do — to love G-d...”

וצריך להבין איך שיידך לשון עשיה גבי אהבה שבלב

It is necessary to understand how an expression of “doing” can be applied to love, which is [an emotion] in the heart.

The Alter Rebbe now proceeds to resolve this seeming anomaly. (First, however, he describes the superior degree of love that cannot be created: one can merely provide the conditions for its revelation.) As to the above anomaly, he now explains that there exists a manner of love that is indeed created — by meditating upon those concepts that arouse it. An active verb such as “doing” suits this manner of love, since it is experienced as a result of one’s own doing.

אך הענין הוא, דיש שני מיני אהבת ה'

The explanation, however, is that there are two kinds of love of G-d:

האחת היא כלות הנפש בטבעה אל בוראה

One is the natural, yearning love of the soul to its Creator.

Since this love is intrinsic to the soul, which is “truly a part of G-d above,” this love need not — and indeed cannot — be created at all. It merely needs to be revealed. But how can such a passionate yearning become revealed in one’s corporeal, fleshly heart?

כאשר תתגבר נפש השכלית על החומר, ותשפילהו ותכניעהו תחתיה

When the rational soul prevails over the grossness [of the body] and subdues and subjugates it,

Here the Divinely-appointed task of the G-dly soul comes to the fore: to rectify the animal soul and refine the body by means of the rational soul’s comprehension of G-dliness. For the G-dly soul’s own intellect and comprehension are too lofty to affect the body. The rational soul, however, embodies man’s natural quality of intellect and as such is close to the physical body. The rational soul comprehends G-dliness in such a

manner that it is able to cause Form to master Matter — to overmaster the body and harness its corporeality. When it actually does so:

אזי תתלהב ותתלהט בשלהבת העולה מאליה

then [the soul] will flare and blaze with a flame that ascends of its own accord,

It will be aflame not with a love created through contemplation, but with a natural love whose revelation was barred by the grossness of the body. Now, with the mastery and refinement of the body, the soul's innate love for G-d can at last be revealed.

ותגל ותשמח בה' עושה, ותתענג על ה' תענוג נפלא

and [the soul] will rejoice and exult both inwardly and outwardly in G-d its Maker, and will delight in Him with wondrous bliss.

In this instance the delight is part of the love and the divine service itself, rather than a reward for the divine service, as is sometimes the case.

והזוכים למעלת אהבה רבה זו, הם הנקראים צדיקים

It is those who merit the [joyous] state of this great love who are called *tzaddikim*,

כדכתיב: שמחו צדיקים בה'

as it is written,¹⁶ “Rejoice in G-d, you *tzaddikim*.”

To serve G-d with delight of this order is the privilege of *tzaddikim* alone. For though the above-described love emanates from the G-dly soul which is possessed by every single Jew, for which reason one would expect everyone to be able to feel it, it is nevertheless not experienced by all. The reason for this — as the Alter Rebbe goes on to explain — is that one's physical grossness impedes its revelation. And clearing this hurdle demands prodigious effort.

אך לא כל אדם זוכה לזה

Yet not everyone is privileged to attain this state of love which characterizes *tzaddikim*,

כי לזה צריך זיכוך החומר במאד מאד, וגם תורה ומעשים טובים הרבה

for it requires an intense refinement of one's physical grossness, and in addition a great deal of Torah study and good deeds,

לזכות לנשמה עליונה

in order to merit a lofty [soul-level of] *Neshamah*,

This is the soul-level whose divine service is intellectual; as the verse states,¹⁷ “The Divine *Neshamah* shall provide discernment.” Only this manner of divine service can subjugate and refine man’s gross corporeality so that he is able to delight in G-d with wondrous bliss.

שלמעלה ממדרגת רוח ונפש

which is superior to the level of *Ruach* (the soul-level at which one’s divine service focusses on one’s emotional attributes) and *Nefesh* (the soul-level at which one fulfills the *mitzvot* out of an acceptance of the Heavenly Yoke),

כמו שכתוב בראשית חכמה, שער האהבה

as explained in *Reishit Chochmah, Shaar HaAhavah*.

There the author explains how the above level of love is specifically related to the soul-level of *Neshamah*.

In sum, it is clear that this love cannot be “created” by *man*. He can only enable it to be revealed within him by refining himself — but to such an extraordinary degree that it is not attainable by all.

והשנית היא אהבה שכל אדם יוכל להגיע אליה, כשיתבונן היטב בעומקא דלבא

The second [level] is a love which every man can attain when he meditates earnestly, so that its echo resounds in the depths of his heart,

בדברים המעוררים את האהבה לה' בלב כל ישראל

on matters that arouse the love of G-d in the heart of every Jew,

הן דרך כלל: כי הוא חיינו ממש, וכאשר האדם אוהב את נפשו וחיו, כן יאהב את ה', כאשר יתבונן וישים אל לבו כי ה' הוא נפשו האמיתית וחיו ממש

whether [he meditates] in a general way — how He is our very life,¹⁸ and just as one loves his soul and his life, so will he love G-d when he meditates and reflects in his heart that G-d is his true soul and actual life,

כמו שכתוב בזהר על פסוק: נפשי אויתך וגו'

as the *Zohar*¹⁹ comments on the verse,²⁰ “[You are] my soul: I desire you,”

The *Zohar* explains that since G-d is the Jew’s soul and thus his true life, the Jew loves and desires Him.²¹

והן דרך פרט, כשיבין וישכיל בגדולתו של מלך מלכי המלכים, הקב"ה, דרך פרטית

or whether [he meditates] in a particular way,²² when he will understand and comprehend in detail the greatness of the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He,

For example, he may reflect on the manner in which G-d fills all worlds and encompasses all worlds, and on how all creatures are as naught before Him.

כאשר יוכל שאת בשכלו, ומה שלמעלה משכלו

to the extent that his intellect can grasp, and even beyond.

These two phrases refer respectively to concepts that are within the reach of “positive knowledge,” and to truths that lie beyond it and are perceptible only through “negative knowledge”; i.e., though one may not understand such a thing itself, he may understand how it is not subject to the restrictions of a lesser order.

In terms of comprehending G-dliness this means to say, that one will at least understand that those levels of G-dliness that are beyond the range of his intellect are not subject to the limitations inherent within created and emanated worlds and beings. This “negative knowledge” — in the Alter Rebbe’s words, “even beyond” — is also considered to be a quasi state of comprehension.

ואחר כך יתבונן באהבת ה' הגדולה ונפלאה אלינו

Then, following his meditation “in a particular way,” he will contemplate G-d’s great and wondrous love to us, a love that led Him*—

לירד למצרים, ערות האר', להוציא נשמותינו מכור הברזל, שהוא הסטרא אחרא, רחמנא לצלן

to descend even to Egypt, the²³ “obscenity of the earth,” to bring our souls out of the²⁴ “iron crucible” into which the Jewish people had then descended, which is the *sitra achra* (may the All-Merciful spare us),

לקרבנו אליו ולדבקנו בשמו ממש, והוא ושמו אחד

to bring us close to Him and to bind us to His very Name — and He and His Name are One, so that by being bound to His Name we were bound to G-d Himself;

דהיינו: שרוממנו מתכלית השפלות והטומאה לתכלית הקדושה, וגדולתו יתברך שאין לה ק' ותכלית

that is to say, He elevated us from the nadir of degradation and defilement to the acme of holiness and to His infinite and boundless greatness.²⁵

When one has meditated in detail upon G-d’s greatness and His tremendous love for the Jewish people:

אזי כמים הפנים לפנים

Then,[26](#) “As in water, face reflects face, [so does the heart of man to man,]”

Just as one person’s love for another awakens a loving response in the other’s heart, so, too, our contemplation of the ways in which G-d has manifested His love towards us will inspire within us a love for Him,

תתעורר האהבה בלב כל משכיל ומתבונן בענין זה בעומקא דלבא

and love will be aroused in the heart of everyone who contemplates and meditates upon this matter in the depths of his heart,

לאהוב את ה' אהבה עזה, ולדבקה בו בלב ונפש, כמו שיתבאר במקומה באריכות

to love G-d with an intense love and to cleave unto Him, heart and soul, as will be explained at length in its place.[27](#)

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והנה ענין אהבה זו רצה משה רבנו עליו השלום ליטע בלב כל ישראל, בפרשה: ועתה ישראל וגו'

It is this love — this latter manner of love, which may be generated by contemplation — that Moses, our teacher, peace unto him, wished to implant in the heart of every Jew, in the passage,[28](#) “And now, Israel...”

בפסוק: הן לה' אלקיך השמים וגו'

in the verse that speaks of G-d’s greatness, “Behold, the heavens belong to G-d, your L-rd...” and likewise in the following verses that speak of G-d’s love for His people:

רק באבותיך חשק וגו', ומלתם וגו', בשבעים נפש וגו'

“Only in your fathers did He delight... You shall circumcise.... With seventy souls [did your forefathers descend to Egypt, and now He has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven].”

All the above inevitably leads to the first verse in the following chapter, namely:

ואהבת וגו'

[29](#)“You shall love [the L-rd your G-d...].”

ולכן סיים דבריו על אהבה זו: אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם לעשותה

Hence [Moshe Rabbeinu] concluded his words in the later verse quoted above concerning this love,[30](#) “... which I command you to do,”

Here, then, is the answer to the above query as to how it is possible to “do” or to create the spiritual emotion of love:

שהיא אהבה עשויה בלב, על ידי הבינה והדעת בדברים המעוררים את האהבה

for this is a love that is produced in the heart through the understanding and self-involving knowledge of matters that inspire love.

But if the verse is in fact referring to the kind of love that is created through contemplation, should it not first command one to contemplate? Indeed so, the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say:

ועל זה צוה כבר תחלה: והיו הדברים האלה אשר אנכי מצוך היום על לבבך

And this he had commanded previously, in the first paragraph of *Shema*:³¹ “And these words, which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart,”

כדי שעל ידי זה תבא לאהבה את ה', כדאיתא בספרי על פסוק זה

so that through this [meditation] you will come to love G-d, as is stated in the *Sifri* on this verse.³²

והנה על אהבה זו השנית, שייך לשון מצוה וצווי

An expression of command (“which I command you to do — to love”) *can* thus be applied to this second type of intellectually-generated love,

It might seem that to *command* a person to experience love would be either fruitless or superfluous. Not so, however, with regard to the kind of love that is born of contemplation. Here, one can indeed be given a command:

דהיינו: לשום לבו ודעתו בדברים המעוררים את האהבה

namely, to focus one’s heart and mind on matters that arouse love.

אבל באהבה ראשונה, שהיא שלהבת העולה מאליה, לא שייך לשון צווי ומצוה כלל

But an expression of command is not at all applicable to the first kind of love, which is a flame that ascends of its own accord.

ולא עוד, אלא שהיא מתן שכרם של צדיקים, לטעום מעין עולם הבא בעולם הזה

Furthermore, it is the reward of the *tzaddikim*, to savor a foretaste of the World to Come in this world.

In the World to Come the righteous bask in the rays of the Divine Presence: they delight in their perception of G-dliness. And it is this delight that *tzaddikim* enjoy in this world when they serve G-d with love.

שעליה נאמר: עבודת מתנה אתן את כהונתכם, כמו שיתבאר במקומה

Concerning this [level of love] it is written,³³ “I have granted [you] your priesthood as a Divine service which is a gift,” as will be explained in its proper place, namely, where the Divinely-bestowed gift of *ahavah betaanugim* is discussed.

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The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain what special quality lies in the lesser manner of service of “educating the child *according to his way*,” so that “even when he grows [spiritually] older he will not depart from it.” It is true that the lower level of love, that which is engendered by meditation, is a stage in one’s educational preparation, so to speak. Compared with the loftier level of essential and constant love that is revealed only within *tzaddikim*, it is a child’s service, within the reach of all. Yet there is something in it that must be retained even when one has graduated to the “adult” manner of love of G-d.

For it is possible that the superior kind of love will not always be manifest even when one is on the level of a *tzaddik*. Particularly so, since his mandatory advances from level to level demand that before reaching a higher rung he must first release his hold of the previous rung; otherwise, it will encumber his ascent.

When the *tzaddik* is bereft of his own level of love, he then nourishes his divine service with a resource that harks back to his spiritual childhood — with a love born of meditation, the lower level of love in which he was schooled before he attained the state of *tzaddik*.

אך הנה ידוע ליודעים טעמא דקרא, מאי דכתיב: כי שבע יפול צדיק וקם

Now, those who are familiar with the esoteric meaning of Scripture know the meaning of the verse,³⁴ “For a *tzaddik* may fall seven times, and yet rises again.”

Even a *tzaddik* can (as it were) fall from his level and then regain his stature. There thus exists a certain interval of time during which he does not maintain his higher level of love for G-d.

ובפרט שהאדם נקרא מהלך, ולא עומד

Especially so, since the conditions of spiritual service dictate that at given times he will not maintain his level, for man is called “mobile” and not “static”,

This phrase not only means that man is obliged to be ever reaching for ever greater heights; it means, moreover, that his newly-attained level is infinitely more elevated than his previous level.

When one is constantly on the same level, or even when one advances in finite stages from one comparable level to the next, there is no need to abandon one's former level before establishing one's foothold on the next; on the contrary, one's former position may well help one to take the next step upward. When one is truly mobile, however, climbing from one level to an infinitely higher one, *his previous level* — which is finite compared to the level he is about to attain — *actually hinders his progress*. Indeed, if he aspires to mature to a more exalted spiritual mindset, he must first purge himself of his previous one.³⁵

וצריך לילך ממדרגה למדרגה, ולא לעמוד במדרגה אחת לעולם

and must therefore advance from one level to another infinitely higher level, and not remain forever at one level.

For if his new level is merely within range of the first, he is essentially fixated at the same level.

ובין מדרגה למדרגה, טרם שיגיע למדרגה עליונה ממנה, הוא בבחינת נפילה ממדרגתו הראשונה

Between one level and the next, before he can reach the higher one, he is in a state of decline from his previous level, and thus he lacks the superior level of love in which he is accustomed to delight.

אך: כי יפול לא יוטל, כתיב

Yet, it is written,³⁶ “Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down” from his spiritual service and from his love for G-d.

ואינה נקראת נפילה אלא לגבי מדריגתו הראשונה, ולא לגבי שאר כל אדם, חס ושלוש

This is considered a decline only relative to his former state, and not (G-d forbid) relative to all other men; he is most assuredly loftier than those who have not attained the level of *tzaddik*,

שאף על פי כן הוא למעלה מכל האדם בעבודתו, כי נשאר בה בחינת רשימו ממדריגתו הראשונה

for notwithstanding his fall he still surpasses them in his divine service, inasmuch as it retains an impression of his former level.

אך עיקרה: מאהבה שנתחנך והורגל בה מנעוריו, בטרם שהגיע למדרגת צדיק

For the mainstay of his service while he is in this fallen state is the love of G-d in which he had been educated and trained from his youth, before he attained the level of *tzaddik*, with its higher reaches in the love of G-d.

Just as then his love of G-d was born of contemplation, so too now, this lower level of love is the root of his divine service.

וזהו שכתוב: גם כי יזקין וגו'

This, then, is what is meant by saying that “even as he grows old [he will not depart from it],” from the path of his youth.

Not “when he *is* old” but “as he *grows* old.” This implies an ongoing, lifelong climb from level to level. Yet even when he has risen to the dizzy heights of love for G-d, he will yet have occasion to revert to the path of his youth — to the lower, more measured level of love that is born of meditation.

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והנה ראשית הדברים המעוררים האהבה והיראה, ויסודן, היא האמונה הטהורה ונאמנה ביחודו ואחדותו, יתברך ויתעלה

First among the factors that arouse love and fear, and their foundation, is a pure and faithful belief in the Unity and Oneness of G-d, may He be blessed and exalted. (“Oneness” here means that all of creation is united with G-d and utterly nullified to Him.)

That is to say, pure faith in G-d’s Unity is the starting-point and foundation of one’s meditation on *yichuda ila’ah* (“higher-level Unity”) and *yichuda tata’ah* (“lower-level Unity”), and this meditation in turn leads to the love and fear of Him.

There are truths that transcend intellect and that can be perceived only through faith. At the same time, utilizing faith for something that can be comprehended is making use of the wrong faculty: intellect must grasp that which is within the reach of intellect, and faith must be used to apprehend that which transcends intellect. When within belief there is a mingling of the rational and the superrational — when truths that are accessible to comprehension are confused with things that defy comprehension — such belief is not “pure”, for pure belief deals only with that which transcends rationality. It is only when one utilizes his intellect to comprehend all that is subject to comprehension and his power of faith is then utilized solely for that which defies intellect, that such faith can then be deemed “pure faith.”

Since both categories are represented in the subject of G-d’s Unity and Oneness, it becomes necessary to explain those aspects of the subject that are capable of being comprehended so that one’s faith will be “pure” — relating only to those matters that entirely transcend comprehension.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) The twelve chapters of the work proper — *Likutei Amarim, Part Two* — are known as *Shaar HaYichud VehoEmunah* (“The Gate to [the Understanding of] G-d’s Unity and the Faith”). [2.](#) *Devarim* 6:4-9. [3.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “It should be mentioned that at the conclusion of *Pelach HaRimon*, Vol. I (Kehot, N.Y., 5714) there are glosses to this by R. Hillel of Paritch. References are to be found in *Or HaTorah* of the *Tzemach Tzedek* (on Chanukkah).” [4.](#) *Devarim* 6:4. [5.](#) *Pesachim* 56a. [6.](#) I, 18b. [7.](#) *Mishlei* 22:6. [8.](#) The Rebbe here distinguishes between these two terms, as follows. “Roots” refers to the original source from which one’s divine service ultimately emanates; “foundations” suggests the ongoing support of one’s present service (recalling the foundations upon which a building actually stands).

The Rebbe goes on to remark that this distinction is reflected in ch. 4 of the first part of *Tanya*: “from [the love of G-d the positive commands] *issue forth*, and without it they have no *true* (i.e., *enduring*) *substance*.” [9.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “As above, ch. 4 [of Part I].” [10.](#) *Tehillim* 34:15. [11.](#) The Rebbe raises the question why the Alter Rebbe does not add the expression “all prohibitive commandments” as he soon does with regard to positive commandments — “all the positive commandments.” In explanation, the Rebbe suggests that perhaps a word was inadvertently omitted, and the text below should read, “all positive and prohibitive commandments of the Torah,” thereby alluding both to the love and to the awe of G-d as the root and foundation of all commandments, both positive and prohibitive. [12.](#) *Tehillim*, *loc. cit.* [13.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [14.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “In addition to the fact that love itself and likewise awe are individual positive commandments [in and of themselves].” [15.](#) *Devarim* 11:22. [16.](#) *Tehillim* 97:12. [17.](#) *Iyov* 32:8. [18.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “As explained above, ch. 44 [of Part I].” [19.](#) Part III, 67a, 68a. [20.](#) *Yeshayahu* 26:9. [21.](#) The Rebbe notes that the Alter Rebbe terms this a “general way” in meditation, because its subject — life and the love of life — is by nature universal, with no great differences in the degree of love or in the details of the meditation. [22.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “As explained above, ch. 46 [of Part I].” [23.](#) *Bereishit* 24:9; see *Yalkut Shimoni*, *ad loc.*, and *Kohelet Rabbah* 1:4. [24.](#) *Devarim* 4:20. [25.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “And the more he knows in specific detail the infinite gap [between himself and G-d] etc., the greater will be his love [for Him]. See ch. 46 [of Part I].” [26.](#) *Mishlei* 27:19. [27.](#) A reference to *Tanya*, Part I, chs. 46-49, where this manner of love (“face reflecting face”) is discussed at length. [28.](#) *Devarim* 10:12, 14, 15, 16, 22. [29.](#) *Ibid.* 11:1. [30.](#) *Ibid.*, v. 22. [31.](#) *Ibid.* 6:6. [32.](#) The Rebbe notes that the above enables us to understand a related statement of the *Sifri* that is otherwise baffling. The *Sifri* states that the verse that teaches that “you shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart” does not explain how G-d is to be loved; the verse therefore goes on to tell us that “these words...shall be upon your heart,” for “thereby you come to know G-d and cleave to His ways.” The question here is obvious: How does “upon your heart” give a better explanation of how G-d is to be loved than “with all your heart”?

According to the above explanation of the Alter Rebbe, however, the *Sifri* is thoroughly understandable: “upon your heart” refers to the kind of meditation that inevitably leads to the fulfillment of the commandment to “love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart.” [33.](#) *Bamidbar* 18:7. [34.](#) *Mishlei* 24:16. [35.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Similar to R. Zeira, who fasted in order to forget the Babylonian *Talmud* [as a prerequisite to his attaining mastery of the spiritually more elevated Jerusalem *Talmud*]” (cf. *Bava Metzia* 85a). [36.](#) *Tehillim* 37:24.

Shaar Hayichud Vehaemunah

Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah^{[1](#)}

The theme of this treatise, as the Rebbe notes, is stated in its subtitle:

להבין מעט מזער מה שכתוב בזהר, דשמע ישראל כו' הוא יחודא עילאה, וברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד
הוא יחודא תתאה

Let us understand [at least] in a small measure, the statement of the *Zohar*,^{[2](#)} that^{[3](#)} *Shema Yisrael...* is *yichuda ila'ah* (“higher-level Unity”) and^{[4](#)} *Baruch shem kvod malchuto leolam vaed* is *yichuda tata'ah* (“lower-level Unity”). For *vaed* equals *echad* through the substitution (and thereby the descent) of letters,^{[5](#)} as stated in the *Zohar*.

Thus, the object of *Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah* will be to understand how it is possible to speak of two different levels of Divine Unity.

FOOTNOTES ^{[1](#)}. I.e., “The Gate to [the Understanding of] G-d’s Unity and the Faith.” ^{[2](#)}. I, 18b. ^{[3](#)}. I.e., “Hear, O Israel, G-d (*Havayah*) is our L-rd (*Elokim*), G-d is one”; *Devarim* 6:4. ^{[4](#)}. I.e., “Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever”; *Pesachim* 56a. ^{[5](#)}. *Zohar* II, 134a. Hebrew grammar classifies the letters of the alphabet according to their syntactic functions, their respective sources in the organs of speech, and so on. Within each group, the letters are interchangeable. The letters *alef* and *vav* both belong to the group of “connective letters” (*otiyot hahemshech*), and may thus be interchanged. The letters *chet* and *ayin* fall into the category of guttural letters (*otiot groniyot*), and may likewise be interchanged. Hence אהד is the equivalent of ועד.

Chapter 1

וידעת היום והשבות אל לבבך כי ה' הוא האלקים בשמים ממעל ועל הארץ מתחת, אין עוד

It is written:^{[1](#)} “Know this day and take it unto your heart that G-d is the [mighty and just] L-rd in the heavens above and upon the earth below; there is none other.”^{[2](#)}

The verse, if understood simplistically, seems to declare that there are no other gods dwelling in heaven or earth.

וצריך להבין. וכי תעלה על דעתך שיש אלקים נשרה במים מתחת לארץ

This requires explanation. For would it occur to you that there is a god dwelling in the waters beneath the earth,

שצריך להזהיר כל כך: והשבות אל לבבך

so that it is necessary to caution so strongly [and negate this thought by stating that one should] “take it unto your heart,” and come to the realization that this is indeed not so?

הנה כתיב: לעולם ה' דברך נצב בשמים

It is written:³ “Forever, O G-d, Your word stands firm in the heavens.”

ופירש הבעל שם טוב ז"ל

The Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory, has explained this concept at length, and made it widely known⁴ that this means:

כי דברך שאמרת: יהי רקיע בתוך המים וגו'

that “Your word” which you uttered, viz.,⁵ “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters...,”

תיבות ואותיות אלו הן נצבות ועומדות לעולם בתוך רקיע השמים

these very words and letters through which the heavens were created stand firmly forever within the firmament of heaven

ומלובשות בתוך כל הרקיעים לעולם להחיותם

and are forever clothed within all the heavens to give them life,

Note of the Rebbe: “The fact that these words were uttered thousands of years ago presents no problem, — ”

כדכתיב: ודבר אלקינו יקום לעולם

as it is written,⁶ “And the word of our L-rd shall stand firm forever,”

ודבריו חיים וקיימים לעד כו'

and as it is likewise written,⁷ “And His words live and stand firm forever....”

This refers not only to those creations such as the heavenly firmament which enjoy a permanent existence, but also to those creatures which perish as individuals, with only

their species continuing to exist. In all instances, the Divine life-force which created a particular creature must constantly be vested within it, incessantly creating and vivifying it anew, just as it ceaselessly recreates the heavenly firmament, as shall soon be explained.

כי אילו היו האותיות מסתלקות לרגע, חס ושלום, וחזורות למקורן

For if the creative letters were to depart even for an instant, G-d forbid, and return to their source, that source being the degree of G-dliness from whence they emanate,

היו כל השמים אין ואפס ממש, והיו כלא היו כלל

all the heavens would become naught and absolute nothingness, and it would be as though they had never existed at all,

וכמו קודם מאמר: יהי רקיע כו' ממש

exactly as before the utterance, "Let there be a firmament."

Before that Divine utterance the firmament did not exist at all. Were the letters that constitute the Divine utterance to depart from the firmament, it would revert to the state of never having existed at all.

The Alter Rebbe now concludes that this is true not only of the firmament, but of all created beings.

וכן בכל הברואים שבכל העולמות עליונים ותחתונים

And so it is with all created things, in all the upper and lower worlds,

ואפילו ארץ הלזו הגשמית, ובחינת דומם ממש

and even this physical earth and the realm of the completely inanimate.

Even immobile beings that show no signs of animation or spirituality, not even the degree of animation observed in the process of growth in the vegetative world, — even this extremely low life-form constantly harbors within it the Divine life-force that brought it into being.

אילו היו מסתלקות ממנה לרגע, חס ושלום, האותיות מעשרה מאמרות שבהן נבראת הארץ בששת ימי בראשית

If the letters of the Ten Utterances by which the earth was created during the Six Days of Creation were to depart from it but for an instant, G-d forbid,

היתה חוזרת לאין ואפס ממש, כמו לפני ששת ימי בראשית ממש

it would revert to naught and absolute nothingness, exactly as before the Six Days of Creation.

וזה שאמר האריז"ל, שגם בדומם ממש כמו אבנים ועפר ומים יש בחינת נפש וחיות רוחנית

This thought was expressed by the *AriZal*,⁸ when he said that even within that which appears to be utterly inanimate matter, such as stones or earth or water, there is a soul and spiritual life-force.

דהיינו: בחינת התלבשות אותיות הדבור מעשרה מאמרות המחיות ומהוות את הדומם

That is, i.e., although they evince no demonstrable form of animation, [within them] are nevertheless en clothed the letters of speech from the Ten Utterances which give life and existence to inanimate matter,

להיות יש מאין ואפס שלפני ששת ימי בראשית

enabling it to come into being out of the naught and nothingness that preceded the Six Days of Creation.

The Ten Utterances usher inanimate matter into a state of existence, in contrast to its former state of non-being, prior to the Six Days of Creation. Thus, the letters of the Ten Utterances which cause inanimate matter to be created are its soul and life-force.

ואף שלא הוזכר שם אבן בעשרה מאמרות שבתורה

Now, although the name אבן (“stone”) is not mentioned in the Ten Utterances recorded in the Torah, — how, then, can we say that letters of the Ten Utterances are en clothed within a stone?

אף על פי כן נמשך חיות לאבן על ידי צירופים וחילופי אותיות

nevertheless, life-force flows to the stone from the Ten Utterances by means of combinations and substitutions of their letters,

whereby an *alef*, for example, may take the place of a *hei*, since both letters are articulated by the same organ of speech, and so on,

המתגלגלות ברל"א שערים פנים ואחור, כמו שכתוב בספר יצירה

which are transposed in the “two hundred and thirty-one gates,” either in direct or reverse order,⁹ as is explained in *Sefer Yetzirah*,¹⁰

עד שמשתלשל מעשרה מאמרות ונמשך מהן צירוף שם אבן

so that ultimately the combination of letters [that forms] the name אבן descends from the Ten Utterances, and is derived from them,

והוא חיותו של האבן

and this combination of letters is the life-force of the stone.

וכן בכל הנבראים שבעולם

And so it is with all created things in the world.

The Holy Tongue, the Hebrew of the Torah, was the language used in creation. Thus, all created things are directly affected by their Hebrew names, as well as by the component letters of their names. In this, the Holy Tongue is unlike other, arbitrary languages, the meaning of whose words is the result of mere consensus.

השמות שנקראים בהם בלשון הקודש הן הן אותיות הדבור המשתלשלות ממדרגה למדרגה מעשרה מאמרות שבתורה

The names [of all creatures] in the Holy Tongue are the very letters of speech which descend, degree by degree, from the Ten Utterances recorded in the Torah,

להחיותו על ידי חילופים ותמורות האותיות ברל"א שערים, עד שמגיעות ומתלבשות באותו נברא

by means of substitutions and transpositions of letters through the "two hundred and thirty-one gates," until they reach a particular created thing and become invested in it, thereby giving it life.

לפי שאין פרטי הנבראים יכולים לקבל חיותן מעשרה מאמרות עצמן שבתורה

This descent is necessary because individual creatures, unlike the more pervasive beings such as the heavens, earth, sun and moon, cannot receive their life-force directly from the actual Ten Utterances recorded in the Torah,

שהחיות הנמשך מהן עצמן גדול מאד מבחינת הנבראים פרטיים

for the life-force issuing directly from them is far greater than the capacity of the individual creatures; i.e., it is far too intense to serve as their life-force.

ואין כח בהם לקבל החיות אלא על ידי שיורד החיות ומשתלשל ממדרגה למדרגה פחותה ממנה, על ידי חילופים ותמורות האותיות

They can receive the life-force only when it descends and is progressively diminished, degree by degree, by means of substitutions and transpositions of the letters,

וגימטריאות, שהן חשבון האותיות

and by means of *gematriot*, their numerical values,

The life-force may be so muted that it reaches a created being not even through a transposition of letters, but merely through their numerical equivalent.

עד שיוכל להתצמצם ולהתלבש ולהתהוות ממנו נברא פרטי

until [the life-force] can be condensed and enclothed, and a particular creature can be brought forth from it.

וזה שמו אשר יקראו לו בלשון הקדש, הוא כלי לחיות המצומצם באותיות שם זה

And the name by which [the creature] is called in the Holy Tongue is a vessel for the life-force condensed into the letters of that name

שנשתלשל מעשרה מאמרות שבתורה, שיש בהם כח וחיות לברוא יש מאין ולהחיותו לעולם

which has descended from the Ten Utterances recorded in the Torah, that have the power and vitality to create a being *ex nihilo* and give it life forever.

דאורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא כולא חד

Why does it have the power to do so? — For¹¹ “the Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are one.” Just as G-d has the ability to create *ex nihilo*, so too do the Ten Utterances of the Torah.

FOOTNOTES ^{1.} *Devarim* 4:39. ^{2.} Note of the Rebbe: “This verse continues the idea of an earlier verse [4:39], which begins with the phrase הראת אתה (‘You have been shown...’), and which refers to the time at which the Torah was given. At that time ‘G-d spoke to you...’ (4:12), [with a warning against worshiping any of the components of the created universe]: ‘Lest you become corrupt’ [and worship creatures] of the lowest level, [viz.,] ‘any fish in the water below the earth’ [4:18], or of the highest level, [viz.,] ‘Lest you raise your eyes heavenward...’ [4:19].” ^{3.} *Tehillim* 119:89. ^{4.} Note of the Rebbe: “As mentioned in *Likkutei Torah*, beginning of *Parshat Acharei*, the germ of this concept is to be found in *Midrash Tillim* [on this verse].” ^{5.} *Bereishit* 1:6. ^{6.} *Yeshayahu* 40:8. ^{7.} Liturgy, Morning Prayer. ^{8.} Note of the Rebbe: “See also *Etz Chayim*, Portal 50 (ch. 2, 10).” ^{9.}

Note of the Rebbe: “Enumerated in detail in *Sefer HaPardes, Shaar HaTziruf*, ch. 5.”

The twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet in two-lettered combinations yield a total of 462 combinations. Of these, half are the exact reverse of the other half, e.g., *alef-bet*, *bet-alef*. Hence, there are 231 two-lettered combinations in direct order and the same number in reverse order.

^{10.} Ch. 2:4-5. ^{11.} Cf. *Zohar* I, 24a; II, 60a.

Chapter 2

In his opening chapter the Alter Rebbe explained that the Divine life-force which brings all creatures into existence must constantly be present within them, in order to recreate and revivify them on an ongoing basis. Were this life-force to forsake any created being for even one brief moment, it would revert to a state of utter nothingness, as before the creation of the universe.

והנה מכאן תשובת המינים

From the foregoing, the answer to the heretics [may be deduced],

וגילוי שורש טעותם הכופרים בהשגחה פרטית ובאותות ומופתים התורה

and there is exposed the root of the error of those who are deemed heretics not because they deny that G-d created the world, but because they deny individual Divine Providence and the signs and miracles recorded in the Torah.

Why do they deny this, when they readily admit that G-d created the world? It is because:

שטועים בדמיונם הכוזב

They err in their false analogy, and the outcome would be quite different from what they imagine even if they were justified in their analogy,

שמדמין מעשה ה', עושה שמים וארץ, למעשה אנוש ותחבולותיו

in comparing the work of G-d, the Creator of heaven and earth, to the work of man and his schemes.

כי כאשר יצא לצורף כלי, שוב אין הכלי צריך לידי הצורף

For, when a silversmith has completed a vessel, that vessel is no longer dependent upon the hands of the smith,

כי אף שידי מסולקות הימנו, והולך לו בשוק, הכלי קיים בתבניתו וצלמו ממש, כאשר יצא מידיו הצורף

and even when his hands are removed from it and he goes his way, the vessel remains in exactly the same image and form as when it left the hands of the smith.

כך מדמין הסכלים הללו מעשה שמים וארץ

In the same way do these fools conceive the creation of heaven and earth.

They imagine that heaven and earth, once created, no longer need their Creator. They therefore deny individual Divine Providence and the signs and miracles recorded in the Torah, inasmuch as these indicate that G-d continues to be involved with creation, and from time to time chooses to change the course of nature through miraculous means.

אך טח מראות עיניהם ההבדל הגדול שבין מעשה אנוש ותחבולותיו, שהוא יש מיש

But their eyes are covered, so that they do not see the great difference between the work of man and his machinations, which consists of [making] one existent thing out of [another, already] existent thing,

רק שמשנה הצורה והתמונה, מתמונת חתיכת כסף לתמונת כלי

merely changing the form and appearance, e.g., from an ingot of silver to a vessel —

Man's work merely consists of shaping a preexisting mass. Moreover, even the new appearance already existed *in potentia*, for the nature of physical matter such as silver is such, that it may be extended and bent and made to assume different shapes and forms.

Thus, in reality the craftsman did not change the matter at all. Hence, once he finishes shaping his artifact he can leave it to its own devices, secure in the knowledge that it does not need him any more.

The above-mentioned misguided thinkers fail to see the difference between the activities of the craftsman —

למעשה שמים וארץ, שהוא יש מאין

and the making of heaven and earth, which is *creatio ex nihilo*.

Before heaven and earth were created they simply did not exist; only after they were created did they come into being as existing entities. Their being is thus something utterly novel, something which previously had not existed at all.

In such a situation, the Alter Rebbe will soon conclude, the creative force which brings them into existence must constantly recreate them in order for them to exist. Were this force to withdraw for even the briefest moment, creation would revert to nothingness.

והוא פלא גדול יותר מקריעת ים סוף, על דרך משל

This — *creatio ex nihilo* — is [even] more wondrous than, for example, the splitting of the Red Sea.^{[1](#)}

שהוליד ה' את הים ברוח קדים עזה כל הלילה

For then, G-d drove back the sea by a strong east wind all the night, i.e., the G-dly force that split the sea clothed itself in the wind,

ויבקעו המים, ונצבו כמו נד וכחומה

and the waters were split and not merely ceased their flow, but stood upright as a wall.

ואילו הפסיק ה' את הרוח, כרגע היו המים חוזרים ונגרים במורד כדרכם וטבעם

If G-d had stopped the wind, the waters would have instantly flowed downward, as is their way and nature,

ולא קמו כחומה, בלי ספק

and undoubtedly they would not have stood upright like a wall,

אף שהטבע הזה במים גם כן נברא ומחדש יש מאין

even though this nature of water [to flow downward] is also newly created *ex nihilo*,

As the Rebbe points out, the Alter Rebbe means to say that not only is water itself a creation *ex nihilo*, but the nature of water to flow downward is also created *ex nihilo*.

When the mighty wind caused the water to stand like a wall, nothing was newly created *ex nihilo*, *yesh me'ayin*; this was no more than a case of *yesh miyesh*: one existent state (the fluidity of water) was merely replaced by another existent state (its ability to remain upright).

Nevertheless, since the ability of water to stand rock-like is something novel, the force that is responsible for this novelty — even though this novelty involves no more than a progression from one *yesh* to another — must constantly cause it to come about; the moment it ceases to do so the novel event is arrested.

We thus see that the fluidity of water is not intrinsic to its essence. (By way of contrast, the fact that a created being occupies space, for example, is an essential characteristic that does not require separate creation *ex nihilo*.) In order for water to be fluid a distinct act of creation *ex nihilo* is required.

The Alter Rebbe makes this point by citing the contrasting case of a stone wall, which stands upright, independently of any external force.

שהרי חומת אבנים נצבת מעצמה בלי רוח, רק שטבע המים אינו כן

for a stone wall stands erect by itself without [the assistance of] the wind, but the nature of water is not so.

Since water by nature does not stand upright but flows downward, an additional degree of creation *ex nihilo* is called for if it is to do otherwise.

The above demonstrates that the Divine force that clothed itself in the wind did not have to create *yesh me'ayin*, a newly existent being within creation: it merely had to change one *yesh* to another *yesh*, one form of existence to another — the natural property of fluidity to the natural property of standing erect. Nevertheless, even in such a situation, since a radical degree of change *is* involved, it is necessary for the power causing the change to effect the change unremittingly.

Surely, then, the Alter Rebbe soon concludes, with regard to the creation of the world, which comes into being absolutely *ex nihilo*, the activating force of the Creator must continuously be present in the created universe, providing it with life and existence. Indeed, were it not to be constantly present, the universe would revert to absolute nothingness.

Thus, even those who mistakenly compare G-d's creation to the works of man should also realize that an act that effects a radical change in a preexisting entity (e.g., causing water to assume the properties of a wall) requires that the activating force renew its effect continuously. This in itself should suffice to demonstrate that the activating force of the Creator must continuously revivify creation.

We thus see that not only is the analogy of the heretics false, for one cannot meaningfully compare G-d's creation and the works of man, but even according to their view, a situation which requires radical change in a created being necessitates the constant input of the animating force.

וכל שכן וקל וחומר בבריאת יש מאין, שהיא למעלה מהטבע והפלא ופלא יותר מקריעת ים סוף

How much more so is it in the creation of something out of nothing, which transcends nature, and is far more miraculous than the splitting of the Red Sea,

על אחת כמה וכמה שבהסתלקות כח הבורא מן הנברא, חס ושלום, ישוב הנברא לאין ואפס ממש

that surely with the withdrawal of the power of the Creator from the thing created, G-d forbid, the created being would revert to naught and utter non-existence.

אלא צריך להיות כח הפועל בנפעל תמיד להחיותו ולקיימו

Rather,² the activating force of the Creator must continuously be present in the thing created to give it life and existence.

והן הן בחינת אותיות הדבור מעשרה מאמרות שבהם נבראו

[Activating forces such as the above] are the selfsame letters of speech [that constitute] the Ten Utterances by which [all beings] were created.

This is why the above-quoted verse states, “Forever, O G-d, Your *word* stands in the heavens.” G-d’s speech, which is the force that brings a created being into existence, must be present there forever, so as to give it life and existence.

--ועל זה נאמר: ואתה מחיה את כולם. אל תקרי מחיה אלא מהוה, דהיינו יש מאין

Concerning this Scripture says,³ “and You give life to them all.” I.e., G-d provides the heavens and earth and all the creatures found within them, with life. Read not “give life,” but “bring into being,” i.e., *ex nihilo*.

It is written in *Reishit Chochmah*, as well as in the *Shaloh* (*Shaar HaOtiot*, pp. 48b, 70a), that although the verse uses the phrase “give life,” this does not mean that G-d only provides created beings with life, in the way that the soul animates the already-existent body. Rather, the verse implies that this provision of life also serves to create them and to be responsible for their continued existence.

ואתה הן בחינת האותיות מאל"ף עד תי"ו

The word אתה (“You”) indicates all the letters from *alef*, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, to *tav*, the final letter of the alphabet,

והה"א היא ה' מוצאות הפה, מקור האותיות

and the letter *hei* of the same word alludes to the five organs of verbal articulation, i.e., the larynx, palate, tongue, teeth and lips, which are the source of the letters.

This, then, is the meaning of the phrase, “and You (אתה) give life to them all.” The spiritual letters that emanate from the five supernal organs of verbal speech, provide life *ex nihilo* to the whole of the created universe.

ואף שאין לו דמות הגוף

Although He has no bodily likeness,⁴

How, then, can we speak of letters existing in the worlds above, and indeed add that it is through them that creation takes place *ex nihilo*?

הרי מקרא מלא דבר הכתוב: וידבר ה', ויאמר ה'

yet Scripture itself explicitly applies [to Him anthropomorphic terms such as] “G-d spoke” or “G-d said,” thereby ascribing to Him letters and speech,

והיא בחינת התגלות הכ"ב אותיות עליונות לנביאים

and this — the meaning of “G-d spoke” or “G-d said” — is the revelation of the twenty-two supernal letters to the Prophets.

ומתלבשות בשכלם והשגתם במראה הנבואה

[These supernal letters] are enlothed in the intellect and comprehension which is to be found in their prophetic vision,

וגם במחשבתם ודיבורם, כמו שכתוב: רוח ה' דבר בי, ומלתו על לשוני

[and are enlothed] as well in their thought and speech, as it is written,⁵ “The spirit of G-d spoke within me, and His word is upon my tongue,”

וכמו שאמר האריז"ל בשער הנבואה

as has been explained by the *AriZal* (in *Shaar HaNevuah*).

Clearly, there exist letters and speech above which are capable of being garbed in the thought and speech of the Prophets.

וכעין זה היא התלבשות האותיות בברואים, כדכתיב: בדבר ה' שמים נעשו, וברוח פיו כל צבאם

Similar to this is the investment of the letters in created things, as it is written,⁶ “By the word of G-d were the heavens made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host,”

רק שהיא על ידי השתלשלות רבות ועצומות

except that [the enclothing of the letters in created beings] comes about through numerous and powerful descents,

עד שיורדות לעשיה גופנית

until [the letters] reach the corporeal World of *Asiyah*, which contains corporeal beings,

מה שאין כן השגת הנביאים היא באצילות המתלבשת בעולם הבריאה

whereas the apprehension of the Prophets is in the World of *Atzilut* as it becomes clothed in the World of *Beriah*.

It is from this lofty level that the spirit of prophecy descends upon the Prophets.

In similar fashion, the supernal letters descend and are invested within created beings, providing them with life and creating them *ex nihilo*.

FOOTNOTES ¹. *Shmot* 14:21-22; 15:8. ². Cf. *Kuzari III*, 11. ³. *Nechemiah* 9:6. ⁴. *Rambam, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 1:7-12. ⁵. *II Shmuel* 23:2. ⁶. *Tehillim* 33:6.

Chapter 3

The Alter Rebbe has explained that the activating force of the Creator must constantly be vested within creation, ceaselessly recreating and reanimating created beings *ex nihilo*. This force consists of the creative “letters” which emanate from the five supernal organs of verbal articulation.

והנה אחרי הדברים והאמת האלה

Now, following these words of truth concerning the nature of creation, namely, that the activating force must continually be vested in created beings and create them *ex nihilo*,

כל משכיל על דבר יבין לאשורו איך שכל נברא ויש הוא באמת נחשב לאין ואפס ממש

every discerning person will understand clearly that every creature and being, even though it appears to have an existence of its own, is in reality considered to be absolute naught and nothingness

לגבי כח הפועל ורוח פיו שבנפעל המהוה אותו תמיד ומוציאו מאין ממש ליש

in relation to the activating force which creates it and the “breath of His mouth” which is within it, continuously calling it into existence and bringing it from absolute non-being into being.

Since this function must be continuous, it follows that the creature’s activating force is the true reality of its existence; the being itself bears no comparison to the activating force which is wholly responsible for its existence.

ומה שכל נברא ונפעל נראה לנו ליש וממשות

The reason that all things created and activated appear to us as existing i.e., self-subsisting and tangible, and we fail to see the Divine activating source which is the true reality of any created being,

זהו מחמת שאין אנו משיגים ורואים בעיני בשר את כח ה' ורוח פיו שבנברא

is that we do not comprehend nor see with our physical eyes the power of G-d and the “breath of His mouth” which is in the created thing.

אבל אילו ניתנה רשות לעין לראות ולהשיג את החיות ורוחניות שבכל נברא

If, however, the eye were permitted to see and to comprehend the life-force and spirituality which is in every created thing,

השופע בו ממוצא פי ה' ורוח פיו

flowing into it from “that which proceeds from the mouth of G-d”¹ and “His breath,”

לא היה גשמיות הנברא וחומר וממשו נראה כלל לעינינו

then the physicality, materiality and tangibility of the creature would not be seen by our eyes at all,

כי הוא בטל במציאות ממש לגבי החיות והרוחניות שבו

for it (this physicality, etc.) is completely nullified in relation to the life-force and the spirituality which is within it

מאחר שמבלעדי הרוחניות, היה אין ואפס ממש כמו קודם ששת ימי בראשית ממש

since without the spirituality within it it would be naught and absolute nothingness, exactly as before the Six Days of Creation, at which time the creature was utterly non-existent.

והרוחניות השופע עליו ממוצא פי ה' ורוח פיו, הוא לבדו המוציא תמיד מאפס ואין ליש ומהוה אותו

The spirituality that flows into it from “that which proceeds from the mouth of G-d” and “His breath,” — that alone continuously brings it forth from naught and nullity into being, and this spirituality gives it existence.

אם כן אפס בלעדו באמת

Hence, there is truly nothing besides Him in any created being, apart from the Divinity — the only true reality — that brings it into existence.

The created being does not constitute a true reality, inasmuch as it is wholly dependent for its existence on the continuous flow of Divine life-force. Indeed, its existence verily consists of that activating force.

The Alter Rebbe proceeds to demonstrate how this is true of creatures that appear to be tangible, by means of an illustration:

והמשל לזה הוא אור השמש המאיר לארץ ולדרים

An illustration of this is the light of the sun which illumines the earth and its inhabitants.

שהוא זיו ואור המתפשט מגוף השמש ונראה לעין כל מאיר על הארץ ובחלל העולם

[This illumination] is the radiance and the light which spreads forth from the body of the sun and is visible to all as it gives light to the earth and the expanse of the universe.

והנה זה פשוט שאור וזיו הזה ישנו גם כן בגוף וחומר כדור השמש עצמו שבשמים

Now, it is obvious that this light and radiance is also present in the very body and matter of the sun-globe itself in the sky,

שאם מתפשט ומאיר למרחוק כל כך, כל שכן שיוכל להאיר במקומו ממש

for if it can spread forth and shine to such a great distance, then certainly it can shed light in its own place.

רק ששם במקומו ממש, נחשב הזיו הזה לאין ואפס ממש

However, there in its own place, this radiance is considered naught and complete nothingness,

כי בטל ממש במציאות לגבי גוף כדור השמש, שהוא מקור האור והזיו הזה

for it is absolutely non-existent in relation to the body of the sun-globe which is the source of this light and radiance,

שהזיו והאור הזה אינו רק הארה מאירה מגוף ועצם כדור השמש

inasmuch as this radiance and light is merely the illumination which shines from the body of the sun-globe itself.

Since the sun's light is merely an illumination deriving from the sun, it is in a state of complete nothingness while it is found within the sun-globe itself. One cannot say that within the body of the sun there is sunlight; only the sun itself is found there.

רק בחלל העולם, תחת כל השמים ועל הארץ, שאין כאן גוף כדור השמש במציאות

It is only in the space of the universe, under the heavens and on the earth, where the body of the sun-globe is not present, and all that is seen is but an illumination that emanates from it,

נראה כאן האור והזיו הזה ליש ממש לעין כל

that this light and radiance appears to the eye of all beholders to have actual existence.

ונופל עליו כאן שם יש באמת

And here the term "existence" (*yesh*) can truly be applied to it,

The sun's light and rays as they appear outside of the sun-globe can truly be said to exist, inasmuch as the sun itself is not found there.

מה שאין כן כשהוא במקורו בגוף השמש, אין נופל עליו שם יש כלל, רק שם אין ואפס

whereas when it is in its source, in the body of the sun, the term “existence” cannot be applied to it at all; it can only be called naught and non-existent.

כי באמת הוא שם לאין ואפס ממש, שאין מאיר שם רק מקורו לבדו, שהוא גוף השמש המאיר, ואפס בלעדו

There it is indeed naught and absolutely non-existent, for there only its source, the luminous body of the sun, gives light, and there is nothing besides it.

To sum up: Although the sun’s rays are surely found within the body of the sun, they cannot be said to “exist” there; they are found there in a manner of “non-existence”, in a state in which their separate identity is utterly nullified. That which can be deemed to exist within the sun-globe can be nothing other than the sun itself.

וכדברים האלה ממש בדמותם כצלמם הם כל הברואים לגבי שפע האלקי מרוח פיו השופע עליהם ומהוה אותם, והוא מקורם

The exact parallel [to this illustration] is the relationship between all created beings and the Divine flow [of the life-force that emanates] from the “breath of His mouth,” which flows upon them and brings them into existence and is their source.

והם עצמם אינם רק כמו אור וזיו מתפשט מן השפע ורוח ה' השופע ומתלבש בתוכם, ומוציאם מאין ליש

However, [the created beings] themselves are merely like a diffusing light and effulgence from the flow and spirit of G-d, which issues forth [from Him] and becomes clothed in them, and brings them from naught into being.

ולכן הם בטלים במציאות לגבי מקורם, כמו אור השמש שבטל במציאות ונחשב לאין ואפס ממש

Hence, their existence is nullified in relation to their source, just as the light of the sun is nullified and is considered naught and utter nothingness,

ואינו נקרא בשם יש כלל כשהוא במקורו, רק תחת השמים שאין שם מקורו

and is not at all referred to as “existing” when it is within its source, viz., the sun; the term “existence” applies to it only beneath the heavens, where its source is not present.

כך כל הברואים אין נופל עליהם שם יש כלל, אלא לעיני בשר שלנו

In the same manner, the term “existence” can be applied to all created things only as they appear to our corporeal eyes,

שאין אנו רואים ומשיגים כלל את המקור, שהוא רוח ה' המהוה אותם

for we do not see nor at all comprehend the source, which is the spirit of G-d that brings them into existence.

ולכן נראה לעינינו גשמיות הנבראים וחומרם וממשם שהם יש גמור

Therefore, since we do not see nor comprehend their source, it appears to our eyes that the physicality, materiality and tangibility of created things actually exist,

כמו שנראה אור השמש יש גמור כשאינו במקורו

just as the light of the sun appears to exist fully when it is not within its source, and is found within the expanse of the universe.

In truth, the Source of all creatures is constantly found within them, our failure to perceive this notwithstanding. Hence, their existence is totally nullified in relation to their source and they cannot be said to truly “exist”.

רק שבזה אין המשל דומה לנמשל לגמרי לכאורה

But in the following respect, the illustration is apparently not completely identical with the object of comparison.

שבמשל אין המקור במציאות כלל בחלל העולם ועל הארץ, שנראה שם אורו ליש גמור

For in the illustration, the source — the sun — is not present at all in the expanse of the universe and upon the earth, where its light is seen as actually existing.

Since the sun itself is not present upon the earth, its rays are able to assume a seeming reality of their own. It is therefore readily understandable why they are perceived as existing independently.

מה שאין כן כל הברואים הם במקורם תמיד

By contrast, all created beings are always within their source, the Divine activating force, which is continuously found within them, constantly creating and animating them *ex nihilo*,

רק שאין המקור נראה לעיני בשר

and it is only that the source is not visible to our physical eyes.

Since in reality they are indeed within their source at all times, —

ולמה אינם בטלים במציאות למקורם

Why are they not nullified in their source?

Why are creatures not nullified within their source in an obvious and revealed manner, so that there is no mistaking them as independently existing beings?

אך להבין זה צריך להקדים

To understand this, some prefatory remarks are necessary.

The Alter Rebbe will go on to explain that the Divine power of concealment and contraction is responsible for hiding G-d's light, so that it will not be perceptible to created beings. This enables creation to be perceived as possessing "existence", whereas in reality it is totally nullified within its source.

FOOTNOTES [1](#). *Devarim* 8:3.



Chapter 4

Since the Divine activating force responsible for the existence of created things must continuously be present within them, they are completely nullified in their source. This means, as the Alter Rebbe explained in the previous chapter, that in reality they do not "exist".

Why, then, do we nevertheless perceive created beings as enjoying a tangible "existence"? — Only because we are unable to see or comprehend the Divine utterance that is contained within each created thing and that calls it into being.

The Alter Rebbe illustrated this by considering the sun's rays. When they are not within their source, the sun, but diffused throughout the expanse of the universe, they are perceived as having independent existence. However, when they are contained within the sun-globe they clearly have no such "existence" at all.

The following question therefore arose: Since created beings, unlike the sun's rays, must constantly have their source within them, why do we not actually see how they are completely nullified in their source?

In order to answer this question the Alter Rebbe wrote that a certain preface would be necessary — and hence this, the fourth chapter, now elaborates on G-d's capacity for *tzimtzum*, or contraction.

כי הנה כתיב: כי שמש ומגן ה' אלקים

It is written,^{[1](#)} "For a sun and a shield is *Havayah Elokim*."

Just as the sun gives forth illumination, so too does the Four-Letter Divine Name *Havayah* provide us with spiritual illumination. Likewise, just as the sun's shield protects us from the intensity of its rays, so too does G-d shield us with the Divine Name *Elokim*.

פירוש מגן הוא נרתק לשמש

“Shield” refers specifically to [that shield which is] a covering for the sun,

להגן שיוכלו הבריות לסבלו

to protect creatures so that they should be able to bear it (i.e., the sun's heat).

כמאמר רז"ל: לעתיד לבא הקב"ה מוציא חמה מנרתקה, רשעים נדונין בה כו'

As our Sages, of blessed memory, have said,² “In time to come (i.e., in the Messianic Era), the Holy One, blessed be He, will take out the sun from its sheath; the wicked will be punished by it...,” as they will be unable to bear the intensity of the sun. The passage goes on to say that the righteous will not only be able to tolerate it: they will actually be healed by it.

וכמו שהנרתק מגין בעד השמש

Now, just as the covering shields the sun, protecting creatures from the intensity of its rays so that benefit may be derived from it,

-כך שם אלקים מגין לשם הויה ברוך הוא

so does the Name *Elokim* shield the Name *Havayah*, blessed be He, enabling the created universe to absorb the Divine illumination that emanates from it.

Our opening verse — “For a sun and a shield is *Havayah Elokim*” — thus means that the Name *Havayah* illumines like the sun, while the Name *Elokim* screens its illumination, like the sheath of the sun, enabling its light to be received.

-דשם הויה פירוש שמהוה את הכל מאין ליש

The meaning of the Name *Havayah* is “that which brings everything into existence *ex nihilo*.”

The Rebbe notes: “This refers to the [last three letters *hei*, *vav* and *hei* of this Name, which form the word *hoveh*, the root of the verb which means ‘[to bring into] being.’”

והיו"ד משמשת על הפעולה שהיא בלשון הוה ותמיד

The letter *yud*, prefixed to the stem הוה, modifies the verb, indicating that the action is present and continuous,

כדפירש רש"י על פסוק: ככה יעשה איוב כל הימים

as *Rashi* comments on the verse,³ “In this manner was Job (Iyov) accustomed to do (*ya‘aseh*) all the days.”

Just as here the prefix of the letter *yud* indicates an ongoing process, so too does the initial *yud* of the Name *Havayah* indicate that G-d creates everything *ex nihilo*, continuously.

והיינו החיות הנשפע בכל רגע ממש בכל הברואים, ממוצא פי ה' ורוחו, ומהוה אותם מאין ליש בכל רגע

This [action] is the life-force which flows at every single instant into all things created, from “that which proceeds from the mouth of G-d” and “His breath,” and brings them into existence *ex nihilo* at every moment.

כי לא די להם במה שנבראו בששת ימי בראשית, להיות קיימים בזה, כמו שכתוב לעיל

For the fact that they were created during the Six Days of Creation is not sufficient for their continued existence, as explained above; they must continuously be recreated.

It is the “sun” of *Havayah* whose illumination continuously brings creation into being. However, were this illumination to be revealed within created beings, they would be aware of their complete nullification within their source, and we would not see before us created beings. For as explained earlier, when the activating force is perceived the created being is “non-existent”.

This is why the “shield” of *Elokim* is necessary — in order to conceal from created beings the Divine illumination of *Havayah* that is within them, and that is responsible for their existence. Only then can they perceive themselves as existing independently of their life-force. And this perception in turn makes it possible for created beings to consider and feel themselves to be tangibly existing, as shall soon be explained.

והנה בסידור שבחיו של הקב"ה כתיב: הגדול הגבור כו'

In the enumeration of the praises of the Holy One, blessed be He, it is written,⁴ *HaGadol* (“the Great”), *HaGibor* (“the Mighty”), and so on.

ופירוש הגדול היא מדת חסד והתפשטות החיות בכל העולמות וברואים, לאין קץ ותכלית

“*HaGadol*” refers to the attribute of *Chesed* (“kindness”) and to the spreading forth of the life-force into all the worlds and created things, without end or limit,

להיות ברואים מאין ליש, וקיימים בחסד חנם

so that they shall be created *ex nihilo* and exist through gratuitous kindness, for G-d maintains all creatures, whether they are worthy of His kindness or not.

ונקראת גדולה, כי באה מגדולתו של הקב"ה בכבודו ובעצמו

[The attribute of *Chesed*] is called *Gedulah* ("greatness") for it derives from the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, from Himself in all His glory,

כי גדול ה' ולגדולתו אין חקר

for [5](#) "*G-d is great... and His greatness is unsearchable,*" inasmuch as it is infinite,

ולכן משפיע גם כן חיות והתהוות מאין ליש לעולמות וברואים אין קץ

and therefore, He also causes life-force and existence *ex nihilo* to issue forth for an unlimited number of worlds and creatures,

שטבע הטוב להטיב

for [6](#) "*it is the nature of the benevolent to do good.*"

G-d's benevolence thus dictates that there be an infinite number of worlds and creatures who will benefit from His beneficence.

והנה כמו שמדה זו היא שבחו של הקב"ה לבדו

Now, this attribute of "*HaGadol*", the attribute of *Chesed* that spreads forth His life-force into all the worlds so as to create them *ex nihilo*, is exclusively the praise of the Holy One, blessed be He,

שאין ביכולת שום נברא לברוא יש מאין ולהחיותו

for no created thing can create a being out of nothing and give it life.

Creatio ex nihilo is utterly beyond the realm of created beings. In the words of the *Midrash*: [7](#) "Even if all mankind were to gather together they would not be able to create even the wing of a gnat and animate it."

וגם מדה זו היא למעלה מהשכלת כל הברואים והשגתם

This attribute of benevolence, whereby G-d creates *ex nihilo*, is also beyond the cognition of all creatures and their understanding,

שאין כח בשכל שום נברא להשכיל ולהשיג מדה זו ויכלתה לברוא יש מאין ולהחיותו

for it is not within the power of the intellect of any creature to comprehend through the faculty of *Chochmah* or understand through the faculty of *Binah* this attribute and its ability to create a being out of nothing and vivify it.

כי הבריאה יש מאין היא דבר שלמעלה משכל הנבראים, כי היא ממדת גדולתו של הקב"ה

For *creatio ex nihilo* is a matter which transcends the intellect of all creatures, inasmuch as it stems from the Divine attribute of *Gedulah*.

והקב"ה ומדותיו אחדות פשוט, כדאיתא בזהר הקדוש: דאיהו וגרמוהי חד

Now the Holy One, blessed be He, and His attributes are a perfect unity, as the holy *Zohar* states,⁸ "He and His causations i.e., His attributes are One,"

וכשם שאין ביכולת שום שכל נברא להשיג בוראו, כך אינו יכול להשיג מדותיו

and just as it is impossible for the mind of any creature to comprehend its Creator, so is it impossible for it to comprehend His attributes, for they are One with Him.

Until now we have been speaking of the specific attribute of *Gedulah*, or *Chesed*. The Alter Rebbe will now say that just as this attribute, which is responsible for creation, is unfathomable, so too with regard to the attribute of *Gevurah*, or "contraction". The function of this attribute is to conceal from created beings the activating force within them, enabling them to exist as tangible entities, instead of being utterly nullified within their source.

In the Alter Rebbe's words:

וכמו שאין ביכולת שום שכל נברא להשיג מדת גדולתו, שהיא היכולת לברוא יש מאין ולהחיותו, כדכתיב:
עולם חסד יבנה

And just as it is impossible for the mind of any creature to apprehend His attribute of *Gedulah*, which is the ability to create a being out of nothing and give it life, as it is written,⁹ "The world is built by i.e., created through the attribute of kindness,"

כך ממש אין ביכולתו להשיג מדת גבורתו של הקב"ה, שהיא מדת הצמצום ומניעת התפשטות החיות מגדולתו

exactly so is it impossible for it to apprehend the Divine attribute of *Gevurah* ("might," "restraint"), which is the faculty of *tzimtzum* ("condensation," "contraction,"), restraining the spreading forth of the life-force from His attribute of *Gedulah*,

מלירד ולהתגלות על הנבראים, להחיותם ולקיימם בגילוי, כי אם בהסתר פנים

preventing it from descending upon and manifesting itself to the creatures, and providing them with life and existence in a revealed manner, but rather with His Countenance concealed; i.e., the Divine activating force is at work within creation in a concealed manner.

Thus, it is the attribute of *Gevurah* and *tzimtzum* that enables the life-force to be concealed from the very creature it is creating.

שהחיות מסתתר בגוף הנברא, וכאילו גוף הנברא הוא דבר בפני עצמו

For the life-force conceals itself in the body of the created being, [making it appear] as if the body of the created being had independent existence,

ואינו התפשטות החיות והרוחניות כהתפשטות הזיו והאור מהשמש, אלא הוא דבר בפני עצמו

and [making it appear as though] the created being was not [merely] an extension of the life-force and the spirituality that creates it — just like the diffusion of the radiance and light of the sun — but an independently existing entity.

ואף שבאמת אינו דבר בפני עצמו, אלא כמו התפשטות האור מהשמש

Although, in reality, [the created being] has no independent existence, and is only like the diffusion of the light from the sun,

Just as the sun's rays are merely a diffusion from the sun, so, too, all of creation is but a diffusion of G-d's activating force. Since, however, created beings are continuously found within their source (unlike the sun's rays which do leave their source), their Divine source should cause them to be completely nullified within it, just as the light of the sun is in a state of complete nullification when found within the sun.

מכל מקום הן הן גבורותיו של הקב"ה, אשר כל יכול

nevertheless, this nullification is not felt by created beings even though they are but a diffusion of G-d's activating force, for this [capacity for self-concealment] is the very restraining power of the Holy One, blessed be He, Who is Omnipotent,

G-d's omnipotence expresses itself not only in His ability to bring forth light and bestow life, but also in His ability to conceal this same light and life from the beings He creates.

לצמצם החיות והרוחניות הנשפע מרוח פיו ולהסתיר

[and hence able] to condense the life-force and spirituality which issues from the "breath of His mouth" and to conceal it,

שלא יבטל גוף הנברא במציאות

so that the body of the created being shall not become nullified out of existence, and hence, notwithstanding the fact that the created being is but a diffusion of the rays of its source, it is thus enabled to perceive itself to be an independently existing entity.

וזה אין בשכל שום נברא להשיג מהות הצמצום וההסתר

It is beyond the scope of the mind of any creature to comprehend the essential nature of the *tzimtzum* and concealment,

-ושיהיה אף על פי כן גוף הנברא נברא מאין ליש

and [to comprehend] that nonetheless — the *tzimtzum* notwithstanding — the creature itself be created *ex nihilo*.

But since creation is an act of revelation rather than concealment, *creatio ex nihilo* should surely consist of the revelation of the Divine life-force within the created being. How, then, do both these things manifest themselves at one and the same time? On the one hand, the revelation of the Divine life-force; on the other, the condensation and concealment of this life-force, so that created beings will be unaware of it and consider themselves to be independently existing entities, and not utterly nullified within their source.

Indeed, the paradox of *tzimtzum* defies the comprehension of mere created beings, —

כמו שאין יכולת בשכל שום נברא להשיג מהות הבריאה מאין ליש

just as it is not within the capacity of the mind of any creature to comprehend the essential nature of the creation of being out of nothing.

Since the capacity for *tzimtzum* emanates from the Divine attribute of *Gevurah*, one might erroneously infer that it actually serves to create an independently existing entity; i.e., not only does the created being regard itself as such, but the Creator views it so as well.

For inasmuch as G-d causes this concealment, and His attribute of *Gevurah*, the ability to conceal, is as real and as effective as His attribute of *Gedulah*, His ability to reveal, we may mistakenly liken creation to the sun's rays insofar as they exist beyond the confines of the sun-globe.

Forestalling this possible error, the Alter Rebbe now explains that G-d's power to reveal and His power to conceal are truly one and the same. For revelation and concealment are respectively "light" (*or*) and its "vessels" (*kelim*), which are fused in complete and total unity. Moreover, in the state in which they exist in their supernal source, they are not only united: they are one and the same.

Now it is axiomatic that "No entity can conceal itself from itself."

An illustration of this concept is found in the *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim*, where it is stated that covering one's head with one's hand does not serve as a valid head-covering, because head and hand are part of the selfsame individual; the hand cannot be said to conceal that which the head itself reveals.

The same is true here too: Since the power to reveal and the power to conceal are essentially one and the same power, which is a manifestation of G-d's limitless ability, it is impossible for *tzimtzum* to bring about a real concealment that will be so regarded

when viewed from the Divine perspective. *Tzimtzum* only enables created beings to perceive themselves as independently existing entities; G-d does not view them this way at all.

(והנה בחינת הצמצום והסתרת החיות נקרא בשם כלים, והחיות עצמו נקרא בשם אור)

[10](#)(The *tzimtzum* and concealing of the life-force is called in kabbalistic terminology *kelim* (“vessels”), and the life-force itself is called *or* (“light”),[11](#) which signifies revelation.

שכמו שהכלי מכסה על מה שבתוכו, כך בחינת הצמצום מכסה ומסתיר האור והחיות השופע

For just as a vessel covers that which is within it, so does the *tzimtzum* cover and conceal the light and the life-force that flows into created beings, and this *tzimtzum* makes it impossible for them to perceive the G-dliness that is vested within them.

והכלים הן הן האותיות

The *kelim* are verily the letters of the Ten Divine Utterances (or their substitutions and transpositions, etc.) which are the life-force of created beings,

ששרשן ה' אותיות מנצפ"ך

and [all these letters] are rooted in the five letters [12](#) מנצפ"ך

It is explained in the Kabbalah that these are the source of all letters, —

שהן ה' גבורות המחלקות ומפרידות ההבל והקול בה' מוצאות הפה, להתהוות כ"ב אותיות

since they represent five degrees of *Gevurah* i.e., five restraining forces that divide and separate the breath and voice in the five organs of speech, thus enabling the twenty-two letters to be formed.

Just as the five physical organs of speech divide sounds and letters into five separate categories (labial, guttural, etc.), so too do the five spiritual levels of *Gevurah* give rise to the twenty-two supernal letters.

ושרש הה' גבורות הוא בוצינא דקרדוניתא

The source of the five levels of *Gevurah* is termed in the Kabbalah *Butzina deKardunita*, which is Aramaic for (lit.) “light out of darkness,” signifying a level of concealment that transcends light.

שהיא גבורה עילאה דעתיק יומין

This is the supernal *Gevurah* of *Atik Yomin*, the spiritual level of *Keter* that transcends all Worlds, including *Atzilut*;

ושרש החסדים הוא גם כן חסד דעתיק יומין

and, correspondingly, the source of [the various levels of Divine] kindness is *Chesed* of *Atik Yomin*,

(כידוע ליודעי ח"ן)

as is known to those well versed in the Esoteric Wisdom,¹³ i.e., the Kabbalah.

Since the *tzimtzum* and the letters (on the one hand) and the revelation of the Divine light and life-force (on the other hand) both emanate from the level of *Atik Yomin*, it follows that the *tzimtzum* does not effect an objective concealment, as viewed from their common source Above. For, as previously explained, “No entity can conceal itself from itself.”

Thus, *tzimtzum* affects and is only felt by created beings, who because of this concealment are unable to perceive the Divine life-force that continuously creates them. This is necessary in order for them to think of themselves as independently existing — a state which must be felt by them if they are to “tangibly exist.”

In truth, however, they are utterly nullified within their source Above.

FOOTNOTES ^{1.} *Tehillim* 84:12. ^{2.} See *Nedarim* 8b. ^{3.} *Iyov* 1:5; cf. *Rashi* on *Bereishit* 24:45, *Shmot* 15:1. ^{4.} Liturgy, *Amidah* prayer; cf. *Yoma* 69b. ^{5.} *Tehillim* 145:3. ^{6.} R. Zvi Hirsch Ashkenazi, *Chacham Zvi* (Responsa), Sec. 18; R. Yosef Irgas, *Shomer Emunim*, 2:14, quoting kabbalistic sources. ^{7.} See *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Sanhedrin*, beginning of ch. 7; *Bereishit Rabbah* 39:14; *Sifri*, *Va'etchanan* 6:5. ^{8.} Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar* (3b). ^{9.} *Tehillim* 89:3. ^{10.} The parenthesis is in the original text. ^{11.} The *Sefirot* are comprised of both “lights” and “vessels”, which are, respectively, the infinite and the finite aspects of the *Sefirot*. The function of the “lights” is to reveal; the function of the “vessels” is to conceal, i.e., to allow “light” to be revealed in proportion to the capacity of the finite beings. ^{12.} These five letters have two alternative forms, one of which is used (e.g., ך instead of ם) when it terminates a word. Since their use in this way restricts the appearance of any other further letters, it is an act of limitation, and hence an expression of the attribute of *Gevurah*. ^{13.} The closing parenthesis is missing in many editions of *Tanya*. See the commentary of the Rebbe, which appears below, following ch. 5.

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Chapter 5

Thanks to G-d's attribute of *Gevurah* and His capacity for *tzimtzum* — so the Alter Rebbe explained in the foregoing chapter — created beings live in the illusion that they possess an independent and tangible existence: they are unaware of the Divine life-force continuously found within them.

Being thus insensitive to the force that animates them, they are able to think of themselves as existing independently of their source. They fail to perceive that in truth they are but a diffusion of the rays of their source, like the diffusion of the sun's rays as they are found within the sun.

והנה על זה אמרו רז"ל

Concerning this i.e., concerning the concept that all of creation came about through the process of *tzimtzum*, which enables created beings to believe that they enjoy an independent form of existence, our Sages, of blessed memory, said:¹

בתחלה עלה במחשבה לברוא את העולם במדת הדין

“Originally it arose in [G-d's] thought to create the world through the attribute of stern judgment, through the attribute of *tzimtzum* and *Gevurah*;

ראה שאין העולם מתקיים

He saw, however, that in this manner the world could not endure,

שתף בו מדת רחמים

so He associated the attribute of mercy in it[s creation].“

At first glance this is incomprehensible: G-d “desires to act with goodness,” to treat His creatures benevolently. Why, then, did He first plan to create the world through the attribute of strict justice?

According to what has been explained above, this is entirely understandable: In order for created beings to believe that they possess independent existence there must be the process of *tzimtzum*, which is an expression of the stern attribute of *Gevurah*. Without it, all of creation would be completely nullified within its source.

G-d, however, desired that created beings maintain that they possess independent existence, in order for them to be able to serve Him and ultimately be rewarded for their service. Thus, it is specifically *Gevurah* and *tzimtzum* that enable them to realize the ultimate purpose of creation.

The original plan for creation, therefore, was that it should be dominated by the attribute of stern judgment. When, however, G-d saw that if He created the world in this manner it could not endure, He tempered it by the attribute of mercy.

Why, indeed, would the world not be able to endure otherwise? — Because if creation had come about under such auspices alone, the life-force of holiness would have been utterly hidden. Accordingly, the spiritual task of revealing G-dliness in such a world would have been inordinately arduous. G-d therefore involved the attribute of mercy in the creation of the world, so that holiness and G-dliness could be revealed within it.

דהיינו: התגלות אלקות על ידי צדיקים, ואותות ומופתים שבתורה

That is, i.e., “He combined with it the attribute of mercy” means: the revelation within the world of G-dliness and of supernatural power through the *tzaddikim*, and through the signs and miracles recorded in the Torah.

It was stated in the previous chapter that both the expansive and creative attribute of *Chesed* and the concealing and constrictive attribute of *Gevurah* transcend the grasp of created beings. Here the Alter Rebbe adds that these attributes transcend even the comprehension of those souls that proceed from the level of *Atzilut*. Even so lofty a soul as Moses’, which is a soul of the World of *Atzilut*, cannot fathom the Supernal attributes which are One with G-d Himself.

והנה על זה אמרו בזהר, דלעילא, בסטרא דקדושה עילאה, אית ימינא ואית שמאלא, דהיינו חסד וגבורה

Regarding this, i.e., regarding the fact that the attributes of *Chesed* and *Gevurah* transcend intellect, it was stated in the *Zohar*:² “Above, in the ‘Side of Supernal Holiness,’ i.e., in the World of *Atzilut*, which is far superior to the three lower Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, there is right and left,” namely, *Chesed* and *Gevurah*.

פירוש: דשתיהן הן מדות אלקות למעלה משכל הנבראים והשגתם

This statement was surely not written simply to inform us that *Chesed* and *Gevurah* exist, for this is already well-known; rather: This means that both — *Gevurah* as well as *Chesed* — are attributes of G-dliness that transcend the intellect and comprehension of created beings,

The fact that they are Supernal attributes also helps us understand how they are able to combine, when by definition they are opposites. Within the “Side of Supernal Holiness” there is no dissonance, G-d forbid, for all its components are complementary and integrated. At that level, *Chesed* and *Gevurah*, though opposed by nature, coexist and conjoin as “two opposites within a unity.” This is possible because of their complete and total union with G-d.

דאיהו וגרמוהי חד בעולם האצילות

for³ “He and His attributes are One in the World of *Atzilut*,” both *Chesed* and *Gevurah* being thus wholly united with Him.

ואף השגת משה רבינו עליו השלום בנבואתו לא היתה בעולם האצילות

Even the comprehension of Moses our Teacher (peace unto him) in his prophetic vision did not extend to the World of *Atzilut* itself,

אלא על ידי התלבשותו בעולם הבריאה

except through its being clothed in the World of *Beriah*;

ואף גם זאת, לא בשתי מדות אלו, חסד וגבורה

and even then, [his comprehension of the World of *Atzilut* did] not [extend] to these two attributes, viz., *Chesed* and *Gevurah*,⁴

אלא על ידי התלבשותן במדות שלמטה מהן במדרגה, שהן מדות נצח הוד יסוד

but only insofar as they were previously clothed in attributes which are of lower levels than themselves, viz., the attributes of *Netzach* (“victory”, “eternity”), *Hod* (“splendor”), and *Yesod* (“foundation”), the attribute of *Netzach* being merely an offshoot of *Chesed*, and *Hod* an offshoot of *Gevurah*, so that through them *Chesed* and *Gevurah* percolate down into *Yesod*, which in turn transmits its influence to yet lower levels.

(כמו שכתוב בשער הנבואה)

(⁵as is explained in *Shaar HaNevuah*) concerning the level of Moses’ prophecy.

רק שמתן שכרם של צדיקים בגן עדן הוא השגת התפשטות החיות ואור, הנמשך משתי מדות אלו, חסד וגבורה

It is only the *tzaddikim* in *Gan Eden* who are granted the reward of comprehending the spreading forth of the life-force and light which issues from these two attributes, *Chesed* and *Gevurah*.

והוא מזון נשמות הצדיקים שעסקו בתורה לשמה בעולם הזה

This comprehension of the spreading forth of life-force and light which issues from these two attributes is the “food” of the souls of the *tzaddikim* who, in this world, engaged in the study of Torah for its own sake.

כי מהתפשטות שתי מדות אלו, נמתח רקיע על הנשמות שבגן עדן

For from the diffusion of these two attributes, a firmament i.e., an *or makkif*, a transcendental (lit., “encompassing”) degree of illumination is spread over the souls in *Gan Eden*, and it is this firmament that empowers them to receive this diffusion.

ורקיע זה נקרא רזא דאורייתא

This firmament is called *Raza deOrayta* (“the secret of the Torah”); i.e., the mystical dimension of the Torah.

ובו סוד כ"ב אותיות התורה, הנתונה משתי מדות אלו

Within this firmament is the secret of the twenty-two letters of the Torah (which derive from an even higher level than the rational and comprehensible aspect of the Torah), which was given as an expression of these two attributes,

כדכתיב: מימינו אש דת למו

as it is written,⁶ “From His right hand [He gave] unto them a fiery Law.” The “right hand” represents *Chesed*, while “fiery” alludes to the element of *Gevurah* that is present in the Torah.

ומרקיע זה נוטף טל למזון הנשמות

From this firmament, from this transcendental illumination, drops dew, symbolic of the esoteric insights of the Torah, as food for the souls,

I.e., an *or pnimi*, a degree of illumination that can be internalized and comprehended, issues forth from the firmament. Being comprehensible, this level of perception is likened to food, which is ingested internally.

דהיינו ידיעת סוד כ"ב אותיות התורה

i.e., a knowledge of the secret of the twenty-two letters of the Torah.

כי הרקיע הזה הוא סוד הדעת

For this firmament is the secret and level of knowledge (*Daat*), and the “dew” that issues forth from it is the knowledge of the secret of the twenty-two letters of the Torah,

והתורה היא מזון הנשמות בגן עדן, והמצות הן לבושים

and the Torah is the “food” of the souls in *Gan Eden*, and the commandments are [their] “garments”,

כמבואר כל זה (בזהר ויקהל דף ר"ט ור"י, ובעץ חיים שער מ"ד פרק ג')

as all this is explained (⁷in *Zohar, Vayakhel*, pp. 209-210, and in *Etz Chayim, Shaar 44*, ch. 3).

We thus see that the attributes of *Chesed* and *Gevurah* of the World of *Atzilut* transcend not only the comprehension of created beings, but even souls of the level of *Atzilut* cannot comprehend them. Only as a reward are the souls in *Gan Eden* enabled to comprehend a mere diffusion of these two attributes.

Commentary of the Rebbe on End of Chapter Four and Chapter Five

...The entire fifth chapter of *Shaar HaYichud VehoEmunah* as well as the conclusion of the fourth chapter do not at all appear to advance our understanding of the concept of Divine Unity.

Ch. 4 concludes by explaining that the life-force is termed *or* (“light”) and the *tzimtzum* is termed *kelim* (“vessels”). It goes on to state that the *kelim* originate from the five consonants ך"מנצפ, and that they have an additional, even higher source: *Gevurah* of *Atik*. Correspondingly, *Chesed* of *Atik* is the source of the attribute of *Chesed* [of *Atzilut*].

At first glance, these seem to be strictly kabbalistic concepts that have absolutely no bearing on our understanding of Divine Unity, especially as the Alter Rebbe endeavors to explain it in a manner that will make it “very near to you.”

(Although the conclusion of ch. 4 is enclosed in brackets, the Alter Rebbe nevertheless chose to incorporate it in the body of *Tanya* rather than relegating it to a marginal note (as with many comments in the first part of the book, as well as in the second part⁸). This indicates that even the bracketed text must be directly related to the general theme of this work.)

The same question applies to the whole of the fifth chapter: it deals throughout with matters that seemingly have no connection with the concept of Divine Unity. The Alter Rebbe first explains a *Midrash*, then the level of Moses’ apprehension of Divinity, and finally the level of *Gan Eden*. Since none of this seems to be related to Divine Unity, why did the Alter Rebbe include it in *Shaar HaYichud VehoEmunah*?

It is indeed true that many subjects obliquely alluded to in *Tanya* are not directly related in their simple context to making its stated goal “very near,” nor do they appear to be directly related to the subject of “Unity and Faith.” (Witness the many points quoted from *Tanya* and explained in various chassidic discourses at length, whereas in *Tanya* itself they are only hinted at.)

Nevertheless, these are matters which are only alluded to obliquely. Those topics, however, that are plain for all to see, must clearly be connected to the overall theme of the book.

This is similar to the written Torah in general, and especially according to the commentary of *Rashi* on the *Chumash*. Although many interpretations are alluded to there on the homiletical and mystical levels of *Remez*, *Derush* and *Sod*, it is nevertheless a principle sanctioned by law that in the revealed context “a verse does not depart from its plain meaning.” And it is this *Pshat*, this plain or literal meaning, that the commentary of *Rashi* seeks to explain.

The same is true of *Tanya*, which is the Written Torah of *Chassidut*. Although all aspects of Torah are to be found within it, it always retains its simple meaning (as *Pshat* is to be understood in the context of the esoteric dimension of Torah).

Hence all subjects appearing in *Tanya* must be connected with the general theme of the book. They must all be “very nigh”; they must all explain “Unity and Faith”; and they must do so in a manner that enables one to “train a child” in them all. Those subjects that do not meet these criteria never found their way into *Tanya*. In the words of the Rebbe Rashab, of blessed memory,⁹ “*Tanya* is like the *Chumash*..., which is understood.”

Accordingly, it is very difficult to understand how the topics discussed at the conclusion of ch. 4 and throughout ch. 5 found a place in *Shaar HaYichud VehoEmunah*. We must therefore say that they deepen our understanding of the theme of Unity, as shall soon be explained.

* * *

The first chapter of this book explains how each individual created being has within it letters of the Ten Divine Utterances, which continuously create it and provide it with life.

The third chapter goes on to explain that since these creative letters are constantly found within the created being, it is always in a state of absorption within them, similar to the light of the sun within the sun-globe. The created being is thus completely nullified out of existence.

The reason that the created being perceives itself as possessing independent existence is explained by the Alter Rebbe in the fourth chapter. Only because of the *tzimtzum*, by which G-d conceals and contracts His life-force so that the created being should not be aware of it, does that being appear — and perceive itself — to be a separate entity. “If, however, the eye were permitted to see..., then the physicality, materiality and tangibility of the creature would not be seen by our eyes at all.”

However, this does not suffice. Although it is true that G-d caused this concealment, yet man, as an intelligent being, should surely use his mind’s eye to see through the concealment; his understanding should inevitably lead him to the realization and the sensation that he is completely nullified within his source.

The Alter Rebbe answers this question by stating (in ch. 3) that a created being feels that he exists because “we do not comprehend nor see with our physical eyes the power of G-d and the ‘breath of His mouth’ which is in the created thing.” Thus it is man’s very corporeality that blinds him to the Divine life-force contained within every created being.

This whole subject as explained until the end of the fourth chapter poses numerous difficulties regarding fundamental aspects of Divine Unity. And without the explanations furnished at the end of the fourth chapter and the whole of the fifth chapter these questions cannot be answered.

* * *

The following are the questions:

(a) Each creature is animated by different letters from among the Ten Utterances, for, as explained in ch. 1, the life-force descends through numerous combinations and substitutions of these Divine creative letters until it is clothed in each particular creature. It would therefore seem that there exists (G-d forbid) a multiplicity of G-dliness, with the number of letters equalling the number of creatures. In fact, the multitude of letters is even greater than the number of created beings, for, as explained in ch. 1, many letters are invested within each creature. This seeming multitude of G-dliness would appear to be the very antithesis of Divine Unity.

Moreover, the above question specifically arises out of the Alter Rebbe's explanation!

There are those who mistakenly understood the doctrine of *tzimtzum* in a literal sense, as if G-d actually removed His Presence from this world. If we were to assume their view then there would be no problem, for we could then say (as they do) the following: G-d is indeed a complete Unity, but his relation to the proliferation in the created universe is that of a king who sits in his palace and gazes at a garbage heap outside.

However, according to the explanation in *Tanya* — that “Forever, O G-d, Your word stands firm in the heavens,” i.e., that letters of the Ten Utterances are clothed within each individual creature — there arises the question: how can there possibly be a multiplicity in G-dliness?

We cannot answer that the multiplicity results from the attribute of *Gevurah* of the Divine Name *Elokim*. For as explained in ch. 4 (until the bracketed ending), the *tzimtzum* which comes from the Name *Elokim* adds nothing to creation itself: it merely acts as a barrier and concealment so that the life-force will not be felt by the created being. (This prevents the creature from being wholly nullified within its source, enabling it instead to feel its own separate and distinct existence.) The life-force itself emanates strictly from the utterance of the Divine Name *Havayah*. (This is also why in ch. 3 the Alter Rebbe likens the created being to the sun's rays, and the life-force to the sun itself — for the source of the life-force within the creature (i.e., the letters) is the “sun” of *Havayah*.)

It would thus seem that the multiplicity in the universe does not result from the Name *Elokim*, a name which utilizes the plural form, but from the Name *Havayah* itself. This would seem to imply that in *Havayah* as well there is multiplicity. This prompts the question: “How many suns (Divine Presences) are there?” [Cf. *Likutei Amarim*, end of ch. 35.]

(b) According to the Alter Rebbe's explanation, created beings are in reality found within their source. They perceive themselves as existing separately from it merely because of the concealment of the *tzimtzum*; in reality, however, they are G-dliness. Therefore, “if the eye were permitted to see,” we would perceive that they are G-dly.

This gives rise to a cataclysmic question regarding the entire essence of Torah and *mitzvot*.

The purpose of Torah and *mitzvot* is to draw down G-dliness into the physical substances with which the *mitzvot* are performed. This is what is meant by the teaching that only by performing a *mitzvah* does the physical object become holy. Indeed, this concept is implicit in the recitation of blessings before the performance of *mitzvot*, for the Hebrew word for blessing (ברכה) implies the *drawing down* of G-dliness within the object with which the *mitzvah* is performed.

The *mitzvah* of *tefillin*, for example (and so, too, all other *mitzvot*, all of which are likened to *tefillin*), is intended to draw down G-dliness into the physical parchment and ink, etc.

Now, since the parchment is G-dly (even before the performance of the *mitzvah*), how is it possible for a *mitzvah* originating in the “Torah of *truth*” to imply by its effect (and by its inherent truth) that the parchment is in fact mundane, and only by virtue of what is inscribed on it, and so on, does it begin to become G-dly? In fact it is G-dly even before this; it is only the corporeal eyes of man that fail to perceive it to be so.

We mortals fail to perceive the truth. Torah, however, is truth, and its *mitzvot* are true. How, then, can there possibly be a *mitzvah* (and the very fact that there is such a *mitzvah* indicates the truth of the matter) of taking parchment and transforming it into G-dliness, when in reality it was G-dly even before it was used for a *mitzvah*?

This difficulty too springs from the explanation of *Tanya*. Were we to say that the doctrine of *tzimtzum* is to be understood (as its erroneous exponents understand it) in its literal sense — as if G-d literally withdrew His Presence from creation, thereafter gazing upon creation from a distance like the proverbial king through his palace window — then there would be no difficulty.

However, according to the concept of Unity as explained here in *Tanya*, whereby the King Himself is found in the place of the parchment or whatever, then the difficulty manifests itself. For according to this explanation the place itself and all its aspects are themselves G-dliness.

If so, what is the meaning of Torah study and performing precepts? What is the point of studying the law that applies to “one who exchanges a cow for a donkey,” what is the point of performing a *mitzvah* involving parchment and ink, when in reality there is no cow and no donkey, no parchment and no ink, but everything is G-dliness? What *is* the significance of Torah and *mitzvot*?

(c) The question now becomes even greater. The reason we perceive the world to exist as an independent entity is that we view it with “physical eyes,” and “the eye [was not] permitted to see,” and so on; i.e., our tangible corporeality prevents us from beholding the truth.

It would therefore be logical to assume that *tzaddikim*, inasmuch as they are not hindered by the concealment occasioned by corporeal flesh and inasmuch as they transcend materiality, should be able to perceive the truth — that the world truly does not exist, for

everything is G-dliness alone. Those *tzaddikim* who are at the level of the World of *Yetzirah* or *Beriah*, and surely the truly great *tzaddikim* who have become a “chariot of *Atzilut*” (as explained in *Likutei Amarim*, ch. 39), should not be subject to the restrictions of the concealment. With regard to them the above question becomes even stronger: What is the meaning of Torah and *mitzvot* for *them*? Since the G-dliness manifest in this world is revealed to them, there would seem to be no need for them (G-d forbid) to perform Torah and *mitzvot*!

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It was in order to answer all these questions that the Alter Rebbe wrote the end of ch. 4 and the whole of ch. 5, as shall soon be explained.

The Alter Rebbe explains at the conclusion of ch. 4 that the *tzimtzum* and concealment of life-force is termed *kelim* (“vessels”), while the life-force itself is called *or* (“light”). He then goes on to explain that “the *kelim* are verily the letters.”

This seems to contradict what was explained in the previous chapters. Earlier on, in the first chapter, the Alter Rebbe writes that the letters are the life-force of created beings. Here, however, he says that the life-force is the light, while the letters are the vessels, which contract and conceal the life-force. How is this to be reconciled with his previous statement that the letters are the life-force that reveal, as opposed to the *kelim*, which conceal?

But in truth, not only is the present statement not a contradiction to what was stated earlier: it is actually an explanation of the previous statement that the letters are the life-force.

The question was raised earlier that since the letters are the life-force of creatures, it would seem that there is a multiplicity of G-dliness. For since *tzimtzum* itself is not a party to creation (but only conceals the Creator from the created), the multitude of letters is thus caused not by *tzimtzum* but by *Elokut*, by G-dliness Itself. The question then is: How can there possibly be a multitude of G-dliness?

The Alter Rebbe answers this in the bracketed text by stating that “the *tzimtzum* and concealing of the life-force is called *kelim*.” One of the novel insights contained in this statement is that *tzimtzum* is an actual entity.

Just as *kelim* are more than just a concealment of the light, being entities unto themselves, so, too, with regard to the *tzimtzum* and concealment which are deemed to be *kelim*; they too are an entity. And it is this entity that brings about the contraction and concealment of the light (just as an actual vessel, being an entity, conceals that which is found within it).

We are now able to understand the multiplicity of letters. The multitudinous letters are not intrinsic to the light itself; they are a result of its passage through the *tzimtzum* of the *kelim*.

This is illustrated by the well-known comparison with the sun's rays that pass through white, green or red glass. The light itself remains simple, unaffected by its passage. However, there is an evident change with regard to its effect; after passing through red glass the light functions as red light, through green glass — as green light, and so forth.

This is what the Alter Rebbe means when he says that “the *kelim* are verily the letters”; i.e., the shaping of the life-force into letters is not a function of the life-force itself, for “the life-force itself is called *or* (light)” — and light itself is simple, transcending any particular form or shape. (For light is rooted in the “‘sun’ of *Havayah*,” and in the Name *Havayah* there can be no multiplicity, heaven forbid, as has been explained earlier.) The letters contained in the life-force result from the *kelim*, which cause the light clothed in them to be shaped (with regard to their effect).

Accordingly, the second question, regarding the relevance of Torah and *mitzvot*, is answered as well. Were *tzimtzum* to be a non-entity and only constitute a state of concealment, its sole purpose being to hide and act as a barrier to the light, then created beings that emerge as a result of this *tzimtzum* would in reality not exist at all. (It would only seem to corporeal eyes that they enjoy a true state of existence.)

Since *tzimtzum* does, however, constitute an entity — the entity of *kelim*, it possesses existence. As such, its effect in concealing is similar to its effect when bringing letters into being.

Regarding the latter, it was explained earlier that the effect of *tzimtzum* on the light was that it caused it to assume the “shape” of letters, even though the light itself is not affected; its effect exists only in relation to created beings. Thus it is similar to the sun's rays which do not really change in themselves, although the effect of the colored glass on them is to produce red or green light, and so on.

The same is true with regard to the effect of *tzimtzum* in concealing the life-force so that it will not be perceived by created beings. The concealment itself is a real entity. It is true that in relation to the light, the *tzimtzum* does not conceal at all. From the perspective of created beings, however, the *tzimtzum* is truly an existing entity. It therefore follows that [since they were created through it] they have true tangible existence as well.

* * *

After the Alter Rebbe concludes his explanation that the *tzimtzum* and concealment of the life-force is termed *kelim*, which “are verily the letters,” he goes on to add that these letters derive from the five letters מנצפך, which are the “five degrees of *Gevurah*.” He also states that their source in turn is the supernal *Gevurah* of *Atik Yomin*, etc.

What does this have to do with his previous statement that the *tzimtzum* and concealment is termed *kelim*, and so on?

By stating the above the Alter Rebbe forestalls a formidable problem: How is it possible for the *tzimtzum* to conceal the light? If we were to hold that the *tzimtzum* merely prevents the light from being revealed within creation, then there would be no problem. However, in the bracketed text the Alter Rebbe teaches us a novel concept — that the *tzimtzum* results from the *kelim*. Now since they are a separate entity distinct from the light, the question arises: How is it possible for the *kelim* (a distinct and separate entity from light) to effect a change, as it were, in the light?

The question is even greater: Light is the attribute of *Chesed*; *tzimtzum* is the attribute of *Gevurah*. In the order of the *Sefirot*, *Chesed* precedes *Gevurah* (qualitatively as well). How can *Gevurah* possibly cause a change in an attribute which is spiritually superior to it?

The Alter Rebbe therefore explains that the root of the letters is the “five degrees of *Gevurah* that divide and separate the breath and voice....” I.e., the Alter Rebbe is teaching us that the concept of letters is not found only within the *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*, but far higher, until ultimately the source of the *Gevurot* is the “supernal *Gevurah* of *Atik Yomin*,” while “correspondingly, the source of [the various levels of Divine] kindness is also *Chesed* of *Atik Yomin*.” Thus, both *Gevurah* and *Chesed* are rooted in *Atik Yomin*.

Since both attributes are rooted in *Atik Yomin*, the meaning of which is “removed (נִעְתָּק) and separated from ‘days’ [i.e., the attributes of *Atzilut*],” it follows that because of their common source they are indeed not opposites: they are one. For, as the Alter Rebbe will soon explain (in chs. 6 and 7), even in *Atzilut* “He and His attributes are One.” How much more certainly must this be the case insofar as they exist in their source in *Atik Yomin*, which is far superior to *Atzilut*. It is therefore possible for the light of *Chesed* to be modified by the *tzimtzum* of *Gevurah*.

* * *

In light of the above, we will understand why the Alter Rebbe opens ch. 5 by quoting the Midrashic statement, “Originally it arose in [G-d’s] thought to create the world through the attribute of stern judgment.” Since this *Midrash* does not seem to offer any further explanation of the topic at hand, why quote it at all?

One reason the Alter Rebbe does so is that it enhances our understanding of the entire concept of *tzimtzum*. This will be understood after several prefatory remarks.

This *Midrash* is generally thought to be saying that G-d originally planned that the world be conducted with the attribute of *Gevurah*, stern judgment. However, when He saw that the world could not endure this, He combined with it the attribute of mercy.

The wording of the *Midrash*, however, is not “to conduct the world” but “to create the world.” Clearly the *Midrash* refers to G-d’s manner of creation — that He had originally planned to create the world solely through the attribute of *Gevurah*.

The question thus becomes: How is it possible for creation to come about from the attribute of *Gevurah*, an attribute of *tzimtzum*? I.e., how is it possible for *tzimtzum* to bring about creation, when (simplistically) *tzimtzum* is a non-entity, its function being only to contract and constrain the Divine life-force. How can the non-entity of *tzimtzum* create?

This serves to prove that *tzimtzum* is indeed an entity, for as explained previously *tzimtzum* corresponds to *kelim*.

This, then, is what the *Midrash* means when it says, “Originally it arose in [G-d’s] thought to create the world through the attribute of stern judgment.” G-d’s initial intention was that creation come about by means of the *kelim*, through the power of the light vested in them — that creation result from the letters that are formed in the light through its being clothed in *kelim*.

Accordingly, we will also understand the continuation of this passage — that “He associated the attribute of mercy in it[s creation]” refers to “the revelation of G-dliness through the *tzaddikim*, and through the signs and miracles....” Why must this necessarily be the explanation of the role of the attribute of mercy?

In light of the above, this is clearly understood: Since the “attribute of stern judgment” refers to the letters, we must therefore say that the “attribute of mercy” refers to the light as it transcends the shape of letters. This light finds expression in “the revelation of G-dliness through the *tzaddikim*, and through the signs and miracles...” — by effecting a change in the course of nature. (The letters cause each individual creature to have its own characteristics and nature; a change in nature must necessarily derive from the spiritually superior light.)

In explaining that the attribute of mercy refers to “the revelation of G-dliness through the *tzaddikim*, and through the signs and miracles,” the Alter Rebbe adds the words “recorded in the Torah.” At first glance, it is unclear what this phrase means; does the Alter Rebbe refer specifically to the Written Torah, or is the Oral Torah included as well? Furthermore, the miracles that occurred after the forty-year sojourn of the Jewish people in the desert; that occurred after the first Holy Temple (concluding the events and miracles recorded in the Written Torah); that occurred even after the *Talmud* (the Oral Torah) had been finally recorded; up to and including the miracles¹⁰ “witnessed by our own eyes and not by a stranger,” i.e., the miracles that occurred on the 12th and 13th of Tammuz 5687;¹¹ — *all* these are “revelations of G-dliness” emanating from the “attribute of mercy.” Why then does the Alter Rebbe specify the miracles “recorded in the Torah”?

The Alter Rebbe added this phrase in order to answer two very strong questions:

(a) Since the world was created from the letters (for which reason each individual creature has its own character and nature), how is it possible that there be revealed within the world (through signs and miracles that transcend nature) a light which is superior to

letters? Inasmuch as the world was created through the letters, one would expect it to be incapable of housing a light that transcends letters, which would still continue to exist as tangible entities.

(b) As mentioned earlier, the *Midrash* addresses itself not to the manner in which the world is conducted, but to the manner of its creation. G-d first intended to create the world through the attribute of stern justice. Thereafter — but prior to the actual creation — G-d combined in it, i.e., within creation, the attribute of mercy. Thus the act of creation is brought about by the attribute of mercy as well as by the attribute of stern judgment.

This leads to the following question:

“The revelation of G-dliness through the *tzaddikim*, and through the signs and miracles” took place long after creation. What then does the *Midrash* mean by stating that “He associated the attribute of mercy *in it[s creation]*,” when this attribute was only revealed long after creation?

It is in order to answer these two questions that the Alter Rebbe adds the words, “recorded in the Torah.” One of the meanings of this phrase is: The G-dliness that is revealed through *tzaddikim* and miracles (which emanate from the light that is superior to the letters, as has already been explained), — this too was first recorded in the Torah. It follows that it is found in creation as a whole, inasmuch as creation proceeds from the Ten Utterances recorded in the Torah, as explained above (at the end of the first chapter of *Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah*).

Accordingly, we will also understand why the *Midrash* states that “Originally it arose in [G-d’s] *thought* to create the world through the attribute of stern judgment”; it was only in thought that G-d considered creating the world solely with the attribute of stern judgement, that is, from the letters themselves bereft of the light that transcends the *kelim*. When it came to actual creation, however, i.e., when it came to the speaking of the Ten Utterances that brought about creation, these letters were invested with the light that transcends *kelim*.

Since the letters contain this light, signifying the negation of the *tzimtzum* of these letters, it is then possible that at the appropriate time — preordained when the Utterances were first spoken — there occur the signs and miracles that signify the negation of the *tzimtzum* as found below.

Thus, all these miracles were not something that came about later; rather, they emanate from the light and G- dliness that transcend *kelim* and that were invested within the letters. This degree of G-dliness is then revealed at a later time through the *tzaddikim* and through signs and miracles.

This, then, is what is explained here in *Tanya* — that at the very moment of creation G-d combined and vested within creation the attribute of mercy; that in the letters of the Ten

Utterances which are en clothed within every creature there is invested the light that transcends the *kelim*, this light to be later revealed through the signs and miracles.

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One question, however, still remains: What of those great *tzaddikim* who are on the level of a “chariot of *Atzilut*,” for whom the corporeal eye of created beings does not conceal G-dliness? How do Torah and *mitzvot* apply to them? It is concerning this that the Alter Rebbe goes on to explain “the comprehension of Moses our Teacher (peace unto him) in his prophetic vision.”

The above question applies primarily to Moses. His soul was always in a state of total revelation, and not at all concealed by his body, for it was completely penetrated and elevated by his Divine service. For a person such as Moses, for whom there is no concealment of G-dliness, what is the meaning of Torah and *mitzvot*?

And with regard to Moses himself, the question stems not so much from his qualities in general as it does from the distinctive nature of “his prophetic vision.” Moses was unique among prophets in that not only his soul, but his very body too was equally a fit receptacle for prophecy. His body was not only able to understand G-dliness, it could actually perceive the G-dly prophetic vision. This being so, the question becomes all the more demanding of an answer: What is the meaning of Torah and *mitzvot* to so lofty an individual as Moses?

The Alter Rebbe answers this by saying: “Even the comprehension of Moses...in his prophetic vision did not extend to the World of *Atzilut*.” This means to say, that even for an individual as great as Moses the world could be said to exist. True it is that this manner of existence was ever so much higher than our own conception of existence, but existence it was. Torah and *mitzvot* thus applied to Moses as well, so that he could transform this existence (of his world) into G-dliness.

Although [Moses was of the World of *Atzilut*, and] the attributes of *Chesed* and *Gevurah* as they exist within *Atzilut* are G-dly attributes and wholly at one with G-d Himself, and thus *Gevurah* does not conceal *Chesed*, nevertheless, Moses’ comprehension “did not extend to the World of *Atzilut*, except through its being clothed in the World of *Beriah*.”

This, however, does not suffice. While it is true that Moses’ comprehension of (the *Chesed* and *Gevurah* of) *Atzilut* extended to the degree that it clothed itself in the World of *Beriah*, it is only in the World of *Beriah* that creation first takes place. Moses was therefore able to see in prophetic vision the limitlessness of G-dliness (as explained in ch. 4). And surely Moses did not behold creation there with corporeal eyes.

G-d’s *Gevurah* even after being clothed in *Beriah* still remains G-d’s *Gevurah*. Since Moses was not subject to the concealment inherent in corporeal eyes, he was able to perceive the attribute of *Gevurah* as clothed in the World of *Beriah*; he did not perceive a

concealing attribute of *Gevurah*: he perceived a luminous *Gevurah*. The question thus remains: What was the meaning of Torah and *mitzvot* for Moses?

The Alter Rebbe answers this by adding that the attributes of *Chesed* and *Gevurah* as they were clothed in the World of *Beriah* were not themselves apprehended by Moses, but “but only insofar as they were clothed in attributes which are of lower levels than themselves, viz., the attributes of *Netzach*, *Hod* and *Yesod*.”

Thus when Moses apprehended *Chesed* and *Gevurah* of *Atzilut*, he apprehended *Chesed* insofar as it is clothed in *Netzach*, *Gevurah* insofar as it is clothed in *Hod*, and both of them insofar as they are clothed in *Yesod*. Since his comprehension of *Chesed* and *Gevurah* related to them only insofar as they were garbed in the concealing cloak of *Netzach*, *Hod* and *Yesod*, therefore even for Moses the world was endowed with existence. It was, to be sure, a very rarefied form of existence, but it was existence nonetheless. Torah and *mitzvot* thus applied to him as well.

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According to the above it would seem that within the three lower Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, the comprehension of G-dliness is an impossibility: all that there can be is G-dly revelation. This, however, is not the case. For as explained in ch. 39 of *Tanya*, the distinctive quality of *Gan Eden* (whose place is in *Beriah*; *ibid.*) lies in the fact that there it is possible to [12](#) “derive pleasure from the radiance of the Divine Presence”; the Divine Presence itself becomes revealed and accessible to comprehension, making it possible that pleasure be derived from it.

Now according to that which was just explained, how can it be possible to “derive pleasure from the radiance of the Divine Presence” in any of the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* or *Asiyah*?

The Alter Rebbe therefore explains that in *Gan Eden* there is an apprehension of the “spreading forth of the life-force and light which issues from these two attributes, *Chesed* and *Gevurah*”; i.e., in *Gan Eden* one is able to comprehend the life-force as it spreads forth from *Chesed* and *Gevurah* themselves, without the intermediacy of *Netzach*, *Hod* and *Yesod*. (The “spreading forth” is to be understood as explained in *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 19.) This comprehension, the Alter Rebbe goes on to say, is “the food of the souls”; i.e., it is internalized, like food which is ingested internally.

However, this gives rise to yet another question: Would we not expect *Gan Eden* itself to be nullified out of existence, inasmuch as the radiance of the Divine Presence is revealed there? Moreover, *Gan Eden* has to do with comprehension. [13](#) How does it relate to the emotive attributes of *Chesed* and *Gevurah*?

In answer to this the Alter Rebbe states: “For from the diffusion of these two attributes, a firmament is spread.... Within this is the secret of the twenty-two letters of the Torah.” Within these letters of the Torah which bring all created beings into existence, was

clothed the Divine light which transcends the *tzimtzum* of these letters, as explained earlier.

From the perspective of Torah, these two attributes — the revelation of *Chesed* and the concealment of *Gevurah* — do not contradict one another. This is because Torah encompasses them both, [as the Alter Rebbe goes on to say:] “as it is written, ‘From His right hand [He gave] unto them a fiery Law.’ ” Torah is thus composed both of “right” (*Chesed*) and “fire” (*Gevurah*). It is therefore possible for these two opposites to coexist — *Gan Eden* existing as an entity, and within it, the revealed radiance of the Divine Presence.

The question of how *Gan Eden*, which is intellectual perception, relates to *Chesed* and *Gevurah*, which are emotive, is answered by the Alter Rebbe when he states: “For this firmament is the secret of knowledge (*Daat*).” This means to say that the one intellectual faculty of *Daat* encompasses both emotive attributes of *Chesed* and *Gevurah*, and yet *Daat* is a faculty of intellect.

But another matter remains to be understood. *Gan Eden* comprises two aspects: (a) In *Gan Eden* there is Torah study (see *Likutei Amarim*, ch. 41); (b) Though in *Gan Eden* there is no performance of *mitzvot* (as alluded to in the verse, *הפשי במתים*), there is, however, reward for prior performance.

Now it is understandable how Torah can be found in *Gan Eden*, for as explained previously, Torah is comprised of the harmonious conjoining of *Chesed* and *Gevurah*. *Mitzvot*, however, are individualized.

For it is known¹⁴ that Torah is likened to blood and the *mitzvot* to bodily organs; whereas blood courses throughout all parts of the body, the organs are separate from one another, each with its own individual function.

Since, from the perspective of *mitzvot*, *Chesed* and *Gevurah* are two separate attributes, it would seem that from this perspective *Gan Eden* could not possibly exist, inasmuch as it is a composite of both *Chesed* and *Gevurah*. Furthermore, if the light elicited by the performance of precepts would indeed be drawn down, this light being a manifestation of *Chesed*, would this not cause the very existence of *Gan Eden*, whose source is *Gevurah*, to be completely nullified?

The Alter Rebbe therefore says, “and the commandments are [their] garments.” Since the *mitzvot* comprise both *Chesed* and *Gevurah*, which are two distinct attributes, it is indeed impossible for the light elicited by the *mitzvot* to permeate [the souls in *Gan Eden*] inwardly, for if it were to do so they would be nullified out of existence.

For this reason, the reward in *Gan Eden* for the performance of *mitzvot* is granted only in the protective and auxiliary manner of a garment; this light is not drawn down into the souls in a permeating manner.

Torah, however, which is comprised of the conjoining of *Chesed* and *Gevurah*, is truly “food” for the souls in *Gan Eden*. It permeates them without causing their nullification, unlike the *mitzvot*, which are merely “garments”.

* * *

The Rebbe concludes that according to the above discussion another difficulty (not quite incidental) will be resolved, namely: Where is the concluding bracket at the end of ch. 4? (Even in the first edition of *Tanya* this bracket is missing.)

According to all the above-mentioned questions, whose answers are provided by the Alter Rebbe beginning with the bracketed text in ch. 4, and continuing until the final bracket of ch. 5, this difficulty finds the following simple resolution:

The bracketed text beginning near the conclusion of ch. 4 extends *until the end of ch. 5*. The worthy typesetter, however, seeing two brackets at the end of ch. 5, assumed that one of them was surely superfluous — not taking into consideration that one of them possibly marked the conclusion of the bracketed passage beginning in ch. 4.

Excerpted from a *Sichah* delivered on *Shabbat, Parshat Mishpatim*, 5727.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) See *Rashi* on *Bereishit* 1:1; *Bereishit Rabbah* 12:15. [2.](#) I, 53a. [3.](#) Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar*. [4.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “According to that which is explained in *Iggeret HaKodesh* (Epistle 19), it is clear that this does not preclude [comprehension of] a higher level (for there have been souls whose comprehension has reached up to *Chochmah* and *Binah*). Rather, the comprehension of *Chesed* and *Gevurah* (the source of creation and its *tzimtzum*), which is the matter at hand, became possible only through their being clothed in *Netzach*, *Hod* and *Yesod*.” [5.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [6.](#) *Devarim* 33:2. [7.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [8.](#) Chs. 9 and 12. [9.](#) *He‘arot VeKitzurim*, p. 126. [10.](#) Cf. *Iyov* 19:27. [11.](#) I.e., the release of the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, from incarceration and capital sentence in Leningrad in 1927. [12.](#) *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 5. [13.](#) *Tanya*, ch. 39, *et passim*. [14.](#) Explained at length in *Likkutei Torah, Parshat Bamidbar*.

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Chapter 6

Earlier on, in ch. 4, the Alter Rebbe explained that the Supernal attributes of *Chesed* and *Gevurah* — the former finding expression in the *diffusion* of the Divine life-force that creates and animates created beings, and the latter finding expression in the *obscuring* of this life-force from them (so that they conceive of themselves as independently existing beings) — both possess one source. He explained there that since these two attributes are

essentially one, the *tzimtzum* of *Gevurah* does not truly conceal, for “an entity cannot conceal its own self.”

All this applies to *Chesed* and *Gevurah* in the state in which they are found within their source. One might, however, think that in their revealed state (whether in a *Sefirah*, or in a mortal *middah* or attribute) they are indeed two separate and opposite entities — revelation and concealment, respectively. The Alter Rebbe therefore goes on to say in this chapter, that even when these attributes are revealed they are still in a state of *hitkalelut*, mutual incorporation, and both serve to bring about one result — a physical world with corporeal creatures. Were the Divine life-force to be revealed within these creatures they would be completely nullified within their source; there would be no such thing as created beings.

Thus the ultimate purpose of the *tzimtzum* brought about by *Gevurah* is also motivated by *Chesed*, for this concealment makes creation possible. *Gevurah* and *Chesed* are thus joined in a state of mutual incorporation. What makes this fusion possible is the fact that they are both united with the light of the *Ein Sof*. Hence, even when they are in a revealed state and appear to be two disparate entities, they are essentially one.

והנה שם אלקים הוא שם מדת הגבורה והצמצום

Now the Name *Elokim* is the Name which indicates the attribute of *Gevurah* and *tzimtzum*,

Each of G-d's Names denotes a particular Divine attribute. The Name pronounced *Keil*, for example, indicates the attribute of *Chesed*, as in the verse,¹ “The kindness of *Keil* endures throughout the day.” Likewise, the Name that indicates the attribute of *Gevurah* or *tzimtzum* is *Elokim*; i.e., when the light of the *Ein Sof* garbs itself in the attribute of *Gevurah* to bring about its own *tzimtzum* and concealment, it is known by the Name *Elokim*.

ולכן הוא גם כן בגימטריא הטבע

hence it is also numerically equal to *hateva* (“nature”), which equals 86,

“Nature” signifies the ordered way of the world. Because of its repetitiveness, people become accustomed to it and it arouses no sense of wonder. No thought is given to the Divine power and life-force which is concealed in those things which have an established order and are repeated constantly.

לפי שמסתיר האור שלמעלה, המהוה ומחיה העולם

for it (the Divine Name *Elokim*) conceals the supernal light that brings the world into existence and gives it life,

The supernal light constantly creates the world *ex nihilo* — a feat more wondrous than the Splitting of the Red Sea. The Divine Name *Elokim*, however, conceals this light, so that it will not be visible to created beings,

ונראה כאלו העולם עומד ומתנהג בדרך הטבע

and it appears as though the world exists — without having to be constantly renewed, as if permanently programmed — and is conducted according to the laws of nature, independently of any supernatural influence.

Thus, even those things which are observed to undergo some degree of renewal are also perceived as “the way of nature,” inasmuch as they follow these seemingly immutable laws.

Chassidus explains that the word טבע (“nature”), has a number of meanings, including “entrenched” and “submerged”. This means that the laws of nature are so “entrenched” in creation that it is difficult to detect the ongoing process of its renewal. Additionally, just as a submerged object is completely concealed by water, so, too, is the Divine life-force utterly “submerged” and concealed within created beings.

ושם אלקים זה

And *this* Name *Elokim*, not as it exists in its supernal source, but as it acts through the attribute of *Gevurah*, so that the world appears to be conducted in a natural manner,

הוא מגן ונרתק לשם הויה

is a shield and a sheath for the Name *Havayah*,

The Divine Name *Havayah* — as mentioned earlier, in explanation of the verse, “For a sun and a shield is *Havayah Elokim*”— is like the illuminating sun, while the Name *Elokim* conceals its light as does the sun’s shield, thereby enabling created beings to benefit from it.

להעלים האור והחיות הנמשך משם הויה, ומהוה מאין ליש

concealing the light and life-force which flows from the Name *Havayah* and bringing creation into existence from naught, this being the purpose of *Havayah*, the Name itself meaning “to bring into existence.” This light and life-force is concealed by *Elokim*:

שלא יתגלה לנבראים, ויבטלו במציאות

so that it should not be revealed to the creatures, which would thereby become absolutely nullified.

Since it is only through the concealment effected by the Name *Elokim* that created beings are able to exist:

והרי בחינת גבורה זו וצמצום הזה הוא גם כן בחינת חסד, שהעולם יבנה בו

The quality of *this*² *Gevurah* and *tzimtzum* is also an aspect of *Chesed*, through which the world is built.

This is an allusion to the verse that states:³ “For I declared that the world be built through [the attribute of] *Chesed*.” For inasmuch as the world could not possibly have been created without the *tzimtzum* and concealment afforded by the Divine Name *Elokim*, it follows that the ultimate intent of this *tzimtzum* is actually *Chesed*.

וזו היא בחינת גבורה הכלולה בחסד

And this is the quality of *Gevurah* which is included in *Chesed*.⁴

I.e., this is a form of *Gevurah* through which an act of *Chesed* is accomplished. As such it is included within *Chesed*.⁵

והנה מהתכללות המדות זו בזו, נראה לעין דאיהו וגרמוהי חד, שהן מדותיו

From the mutual inclusion of the attributes, their opposite natures notwithstanding, it is evident that “He and His causations” — i.e., His attributes — “are One,”

כי מאחר שהן ביחוד גמור עמו, לכן הן מתייחדות זו בזו וכלולות זו מזו

for since they are in complete unity with Him, they therefore unite with each other and are comprised of each other.

כמאמר אליהו: ואנת הוא דקשיר לון ומייחד לון וכו' ובר מינך לית יחודא בעילאי כו'

As Eliyahu said, in the passage beginning *Patach Eliyahu*, in the introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar*, “And You are He Who binds them (i.e., the *Sefirot* and the attributes) together and unites them...; and apart from You there is no unity among those [attributes] above...”

The Alter Rebbe will say a little later that since the Divine Name *Elokim*, signifying the attribute of *tzimtzum* and concealment, is one with the Name *Havayah*, it follows that the concealment brought about by the Name *Elokim* is not a true concealment, for “an entity cannot conceal its own self.” Created beings are therefore absolutely nullified in relation to their source.

וזהו שכתוב: והשבות אל לבבך כי ה' הוא האלקים

This, then, is the meaning of the Scriptural phrase,⁶ “and take it unto your heart that *Havayah* is *Elokim*.”

Concerning this verse the question was asked in the first chapter: “Would it occur to you that there is a god dwelling in the waters beneath the earth, so that it is necessary to caution so strongly [and negate this thought by stating that one should] ‘take it unto your heart’?”

According to the explanation given here this question is answered: The statement that “in the heavens above and upon the earth below, there is no other,” is not intended to negate the existence of another god. Rather, the verse is telling us that there is *nothing else* besides G-d: He alone enjoys true existence; everything else is totally nullified in relation to Him. And for this concept to be understood well, one must indeed “take it unto his heart.”

פירוש: ששני שמות אלו הם אחד ממש

That is, these two Names are actually one; i.e., although *Havayah* represents *Chesed* and revelation, and *Elokim* represents *tzimtzum* and concealment, they are nevertheless truly one,

שגם שם אלקים, המצמצם ומעלים האור, הוא בחינת חסד כמו שם הויה

for even the Name *Elokim*, which conceals and contracts the light of the Divine life-force that is responsible for creation, is a quality of *Chesed*, just like the Name *Havayah*.

משום שמדותיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא מתיחדות עמו ביחוד גמור

For the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He, unite with Him in a complete unity,

והוא ושמו אחד, שמדותיו הן שמותיו

and “He and His Name are One,” for His attributes are His Names; i.e., the attributes correspond to His specific Names.

ואם כן

Since this is so, i.e., once you understand that *Elokim* is one with *Havayah*,

ממילא תדע שבשמים ממעל ועל הארץ מתחת אין עוד

you will consequently know that “in the heavens above and on the earth below, *ein od*” — there exists nothing else besides G-d.

פירוש: שגם הארץ החומרית, שנראית יש גמור לעין כל, היא אין ואפס ממש לגבי הקב"ה

This Hebrew phrase means that even the material earth, which appears to everyone’s eyes to be actually existing, is naught and utter nothingness in relation to the Holy One, blessed be He.

כי שם אלקים אינו מעלים ומצמצם אלא לתחתונים

For the Name *Elokim* obscures and contracts the light and life-force only for the nether creatures, so that they perceive themselves as possessing independent existence,

ולא לגבי הקב"ה, מאחר שהוא ושמו אלקים אחד

but not for the Holy One, blessed be He, since He and His Name *Elokim* are One. Hence the Name *Elokim* cannot possibly act as a concealment for Him.

ולכן גם הארץ ומתחת לארץ הן אין ואפס ממש לגבי הקב"ה

Therefore, even the earth and that which is below it are naught and utter nothingness in relation to the Holy One, blessed be He,

ואינן נקראות בשם כלל, אפילו בשם עוד, שהוא לשון טפל

and are not called by any name at all, not even by the name *od* ("else"), which would indicate a subordinate status,

כמאמר רז"ל: יהודה ועוד לקרא

as in the statement of our Sages, of blessed memory:⁷ *Yehudah ve'od likra* — "Does a verse in the Torah require secondary (*od*) substantiation from [the customs of] the Land of Judah?!"

We thus see that the term *od* signifies secondary status.

וכגוף שהוא טפל לנשמה וחיות שבתוכו

This too is the case with the body, which is subordinate to the soul and life-force within it, for which reason it is referred to as *od*.

וזהו שכתוב: אהללה ה' בחיי, אזמרה לאלקי בעודי

(⁸And this is the meaning of the verse,⁹ "I will praise *Havayah* with my life, i.e., with my soul; I will sing to *Elokai* ("my L-rd") *be'odi*, i.e., with my body."

We thus see that the body is termed *od*, inasmuch as it is subservient to the soul. The reason the term *Elokai* is used in connection with the body's song is this:

שהחיים נמשכים משם הויה, והעוד, שהוא הגוף הטפל, משם אלקים

For the life, i.e., the soul, is derived from the Name *Havayah*, and the *od*, which is the body, its subordinate, from the Name *Elokim*.)

We thus see that the body is nullified in relation to the soul to the extent of *od*, i.e., it is subordinate to it; it is not, however, nullified out of existence in relation to the soul. The reason for this:

לפי שהנשמה אינה מהוה הגוף מאין ליש

For the soul does not bring the body into existence *ex nihilo*: it only provides it with life. The body is therefore called *od*, i.e., secondary to the soul, inasmuch as it is the soul that provides the body with life.

אבל הקב"ה, המהוה את הכל מאין ליש, הכל בטל במציאות אצלו, כמו אור השמש בשמש

But as to the Holy One, blessed be He, Who brings everything into existence *ex nihilo*, everything is absolutely nullified in relation to Him, just as the light of the sun is absolutely nullified in the sun.

ולכן הוצרך הכתוב להזהיר: וידעת היום והשבות אל לבבך וגו'

This is why it was necessary for the Torah to warn, "Know this day and take it unto your heart" [that "in the heavens above and upon the earth below there is none other"],

שלא תעלה על דעתך שהשמים וכל צבאם והארץ ומלוואה הם דבר נפרד בפני עצמו

so that it should not enter your mind that the heavens and all their host, and the earth and all it contains, are separate entities in themselves, i.e., distinct and apart from their Creator and the Provider of their life,

והקדוש ברוך הוא ממלא כל העולם כהתלבשות הנשמה בגוף

and that the Holy One, blessed be He, fills the whole world in the same way as the soul is invested in the body,

ומשפיע כח הצומח בארץ

and that He causes the flow of the "vegetative force" into the earth, this being the life-force revealed within the earth,

וכח התנועה בגלגלים, ומניעם ומנהיגם כרצונו

and the power of motion into the celestial spheres, and moves them and directs them according to His Will,

כמו שהנשמה מניעה את הגוף ומנהיגתו כרצונה

just as the soul moves the body and directs it according to its will.

Though the body is a totally separate and different entity from the soul, the soul is nevertheless able to direct it according to its will, because it provides it with life. One might mistakenly believe that G-d animates and conducts the world in a similar manner, and conceive of the world as being separate from Him, just as the body is separate from the soul. Anticipating this, the verse therefore points out that the relation between the soul and the body is entirely unlike the relation between G-d, and His creation and vivification of created beings.

אך באמת אין המשל דומה לנמשל כלל

In truth, however, the analogy of soul and body bears no similarity whatsoever to the object of comparison — G-dliness and the world,

כי הנשמה והגוף הם באמת נפרדים זה מזה בשרשם

since the soul and the body are actually separate from each other at their sources.

כי אין התהוות שורש הגוף ועצמותו מנשמתו, אלא מטפות אביו ואמו

The source of the body and its essence comes into being not from the soul,¹⁰ but from the seed of one's father and mother;

וגם אחרי כן, אין גידולו מנשמתו לבדה, אלא על ידי אכילת ושתיית אמו כל תשעה חדשים

and even afterwards — after its creation — its growth is not from the soul alone, but through the mother's eating and drinking throughout the nine months [of gestation],

ואחר כך, על ידי אכילתו ושתייתו בעצמו

and subsequently, through his own eating and drinking.

The body is thus a truly separate entity from the soul, inasmuch as the soul only provides it with life.

מה שאין כן השמים והארץ, שכל עצמותם ומהותם נתהוה מאין ואפס המוחלט

This is not so, however, in the case of heaven and earth, for their very being and essence was brought into existence from naught and absolute nothingness,

Before creation there was no space at all (as it were) for the existence of created beings, by virtue of the Divine *Ayin* which is ultimately responsible for creation.

רק בדבר ה' ורוח פיו

solely through the “word of G-d” and the “breath of His mouth.”

וגם עדיין נצב דבר ה' לעולם, ושופע בהם תמיד בכל רגע

And now, too, the word of G-d still stands forever in all created things, and flows into them continuously at every instant,

ומהוה אותם תמיד מאין ליש, כהתהוות האור מהשמש תוך גוף כדור השמש עצמו, דרך משל

constantly creating them anew from nothing, just as for example, the coming into existence of the light from the sun within the very globe of the sun.

It has already been explained that the light of the sun as it is found within the sun-globe does not possess true existence, for it is completely nullified within the sun. Only after it leaves the sun-globe can it be said to possess independent existence. Created beings likewise are always wholly nullified in relation to their source, since they are constantly found within it, i.e., within the Divine life-force that creates them.

ואם כן הם בטלים באמת במציאות לגמרי לגבי דבר ה' ורוח פיו יתברך, המיוחדים במהותו ועצמותו יתברך

Hence, in reality they — created beings — are completely nullified out of existence in relation to the “word of G-d” and the “breath of His mouth,” which are unified with His Essence and Being,

כמו שיתבאר לקמן

as this union will be explained later,

Thus, created beings are completely nullified to the “word of G-d” and the “breath of His mouth,” as well as to G-d Himself,

כביטול אור השמש בשמש

just as the light of the sun is nullified in the sun.

Why, then, are created beings unaware of this, considering themselves instead as possessing independent and true existence? The Alter Rebbe answers this by saying:

רק שהן הן גבורותיו, במדת הגבורה והצמצום, להסתיר ולהעלים החיות השופע בהם

Yet these are His restraining powers, to hide and conceal, through the attribute of *Gevurah* and *tzimtzum*, the life-force that flows into them,

שיהיו נראים השמים והארץ וכל צבאם כאילו הם דבר בפני עצמו

so that heaven and earth and all their host should appear as if they were independently existing entities.

The effect of *tzimtzum* is to conceal from created beings the source of existence continuously found within them. This is why they are able to think of themselves as possessing independent existence.

אך אין הצמצום וההסתרה אלא לתחתונים

However, the *tzimtzum* and concealment is only for the lower [worlds],

אבל לגבי הקב"ה, כולא קמיה כלא ממש חשיבי, כאור השמש בשמש

but in relation to the Holy One, blessed be He,¹¹ “Everything before Him is considered as actually naught,” like the light of the sun within the sun.

ואין מדת הגבורה מסתרת חס ושלוה לפניו יתברך

The attribute of *Gevurah* does not, heaven forbid, conceal for Him,

כי איננה דבר בפני עצמו, אלא ה' הוא האלקים

for it is not an independent entity; rather, *Havayah* is *Elokim*.

The concealment resulting from the Divine Name *Elokim* and the attribute of *Gevurah* are one with the Divine Name *Havayah*, the attribute of *Chesed* and revelation. Thus, from the Divine perspective there is no concealment, for “an entity cannot conceal its own self.”

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Tehillim* 52:3. [2.](#)

Note of the Rebbe: “As distinct from that [*Gevurah*] of Part I, end of ch. 6.”

In this brief note, the Rebbe explains why the Alter Rebbe stresses here that specifically “*this* [manner of] *Gevurah* and *tzimtzum* is also a quality of *Chesed*.” His intention is to exclude thereby the *Gevurah* and *tzimtzum* discussed earlier, in the sixth chapter of the first part of *Tanya*. When he says there that the life-force of holiness descends through many degrees of *tzimtzum* that enable it to be invested within the *kelipah* and *sitra achra* so as to provide them with life, it is clear that there the *tzimtzum* is truly one of *Gevurah* and concealment, and by no means a quality of *Chesed*. For the Divine intent there is that there should be no revelation whatever.

[3.](#) *Tehillim* 89:3. [4.](#)

The Rebbe explains why the Alter Rebbe states that “this is the quality of *Gevurah* which is included in *Chesed*,” after having already said that “this quality of *Gevurah* and *tzimtzum* is also a quality of *Chesed*.”

The Alter Rebbe's purpose here is to introduce a basic new point, and thereby to forestall a powerful question, which because of its apparent simplicity — says the Rebbe — seems to be overlooked.

The question is as follows: We are speaking here of G-d's infinite attributes. Just as the effect of His *Chesed* is limitless, creating as it does an infinite multitude of beings (see above, ch. 4), so too should the infinite effect of *Gevurah* be an infinite degree of concealment. This concealment should therefore only allow (heaven forbid) such creation of which it may be said (as the Alter Rebbe says in *Tanya*, ch. 36) that "there is none lower than it in terms of concealment of His light." Accordingly, it would seem that the infinite concealment of *Gevurah* should only allow for the creation of an infinite multitude of creatures which are of the lowest level of this gross and material world, "the lowest in degree," inasmuch as only within this lowest level is there to be found the utmost concealment — the infinite effect of *Gevurah*. How, then, did the rest of creation come about?

According to the analogy of the sun's shield and sheath, as well as the above explanation that the purpose of the concealment is not concealment alone, but also that creation not be totally nullified within the Divine light, the question is resolved as follows.

The sun not only operates by means of its shield; being a luminary, it also shines — and may be seen — through it. Thus, the effect of the shield is also to allow the revelation of the sun.

The same is true of the infinite degrees of creation which emanate from the "sun" of *Chesed* and the infinite degrees of concealment emanating from the "shield" of *Gevurah*. Every level of the infinity of creatures created by *Chesed* is protected from being nullified in relation to its source, by the corresponding level of the infinity of shields brought into being through the infinite attribute of *Gevurah*.

This, then, is the new and basic point the Alter Rebbe indicates when he says that "this is the quality of *Gevurah* which is included in *Chesed*": Within each of the infinite degrees and levels of creatures generated by *Chesed*, there is to be found the quality of *Gevurah* which is included in *Chesed*, so that they will not be nullified in relation to their source.

We thus have two novel points explained here by the Alter Rebbe: (a) The quality of *Gevurah* is not only an expression of concealment and *tzimtzum*, but also a quality of *Chesed*, for it makes creation possible; (b) this quality of *Gevurah* is included in *Chesed*.

This latter point finds expression in the fact that each level of creation and each creature was brought into being through a manner of *tzimtzum* that is likened to "individual droplets" of rain that are channeled and phased, rather than descending all at once like "the floodgates of heaven." The "channeling" effect is thus twofold. On the one hand, it negates and limits the unbridled "floodgates of heaven"; at the same time, it causes the droplets to descend individually, so that they may be utilized in a profitable manner.

Another analogy: Smoked glass is used to protect one's eyes from the sun's rays by blocking the free passage of light that a lighter-colored glass would admit; at the same time, this same protective glass does permit some degree of light to enter, so that benefit may be derived from the sun's rays.

The same is true in the analogue, regarding the two characteristics of *tzimtzum* and *Gevurah*. On one hand, *tzimtzum* makes it possible for the created being not to become totally nullified in relation to its source — something that would be certain to occur if creation were to derive from the attribute of *Chesed* alone; on the other hand, *tzimtzum* at the very same time is a partner in creation — an act of *Chesed*, as the verse states, “For I declared that the world be built through *Chesed*.” This is what is meant by “the quality of *Gevurah* which is included in *Chesed*”; i.e., that *Gevurah* which *creates* beings.

[5.](#) An example of this, notes the Rebbe, is the rainfall as described in note 4, above. So too, as discussed there, one can look at the sun only by using a *darkened* glass, which thus serves a function of *Gevurah* as included in *Chesed*. And the same is true in the analogue: Since the world is created by virtue of the concealment effected by *Gevurah*, this attribute thereby becomes a component of the attribute of *Chesed*. [6.](#) *Devarim* 4:39. [7.](#) *Kiddushin* 6a. [8.](#) The parentheses are in the original text. [9.](#) *Tehillim* 146:2. [10.](#)

The following question was asked of the Rebbe: What does the Alter Rebbe add by saying that [“the soul and the body are actually separate from each other at their sources” inasmuch as] “the source of the body and its essence comes into being not from the soul, but from the seed of one's father and mother,” after having already stated that the soul merely animates the body but does not bring it into existence?

The Rebbe replied: As stated explicitly in the beginning of ch. 3, here, too, the intent of the Alter Rebbe is to demonstrate that the created being is naught and absolute nothingness in comparison to the “breath of His mouth” which is found within it. This is because the “breath of His mouth” derives from the Divine Name *Havayah*, while the concealment of the created being derives from the Name *Elokim*. Since *Havayah* and *Elokim* are truly One, the concealment is not a true concealment: *Elokim* does not conceal *Havayah*.

However, it has just been stated here that the life of the body — the soul — derives from the Name *Havayah*, and the body itself derives from the Name *Elokim*. This being so, why is the body considered to be secondary and subordinate to the soul; why is it not considered to be totally nullified in relation to it (since the soul — the life of the body — derives from the Name *Havayah*)?

The answer to this lies in the fact that the body and soul are separate from each other not only in their manifest existence, but also in their sources. For the creation of the body's source and the essence of its being — the level of the Name *Elokim* within the body — does not derive from the soul (and the level of *Havayah* of his soul), but from the seed of the father and mother.

These particularized levels of *Havayah* and *Elokim* (as found in soul and body) are indeed not truly one (although the general aspects of *Havayah* and *Elokim* are one), except in a “secondary” and “subordinate” manner, as it were.

The same applies to the sun’s shield, or sheath, each part of it being subordinate to the entire sun. However, the shield actually obscures only those rays that shine through each individual portion of it, and likewise, only with those particular rays is it unified.

[11. Zohar I, 134a.](#)



Chapter 7

The Alter Rebbe explained in the previous chapters that the Scriptural statement that “in the heavens above and upon the earth below there is none other,” is not intended to negate the existence of another god. Rather, it tells us that Divine Unity is such that there is no true existence other than G-d, for all created beings are completely nullified in relation to Him and are united with Him. This is not perceived by them nor manifest in them, only because of the *tzimtzum* which conceals the Divine life-force that continuously brings about their existence *ex nihilo*. Being unable to perceive this life-force, they consider themselves to be independently existing entities.

This concealment, of course, applies only to created beings but not to their Creator. From the Divine perspective there is no concealment whatever, inasmuch as *Havayah* and *Elokim* are truly one: the concealment effected by *Elokim* thus does not act as a concealment for *Havayah*.

The Alter Rebbe will now explain how the above enables us to understand the teaching of the *Zohar* that *Shema Yisrael* is “higher-level Unity” and *Baruch shem* is “lower-level Unity.”

Were Divine Unity merely to signify the existence of one G-d, it would be impossible to speak of higher and lower levels of Unity. According to the above explanation, however, that Divine Unity means the nullity of created beings and their unity with G-d, it is indeed possible to speak of two diverse levels of Unity.

In this sense, “higher-level Unity” refers to the Divine faculty of creative speech (otherwise known as *Malchut*), considered at the stage in which it is still found within its source. By way of analogy, the seminal letters of a person’s speech are first encapsulated within his thought and emotions, which will ultimately be responsible for his subsequent speech. (The Rebbe notes that “this was explained in Part I, chs. 20-21.”)

The same is true Above: When Supernal creative speech is at the stage in which it is still included within the Supernal attributes — which, being infinite, are too lofty to serve as a source of creation, for it is inherently limited to space and time — creation as it exists in its source is united with G-d at the higher level of Unity. Its manner of nullification is then similar to the nullification of the sun's rays as they are found within the sun-globe.

When, however, the Divine creative power of speech (or *Malchut*), after undergoing a process of *tzimtzumim*, descends to a level at which it is able to serve as a source for creation, then the term “lower-level Unity” applies. Created beings at this level cannot be said to be completely and utterly nullified. For inasmuch as this level becomes the actual source of created beings, they must perforce have some measure of identity in relation to it. Although this level, too, is pervaded by the *Ein Sof*-light which unites with the Divine faculty of creative speech, this unification is nevertheless one of “lower-level Unity,” wherein created beings are seen to have some measure of existence — albeit a nullified form of existence, but existence nonetheless.

ובזה יובן מה שכתוב בזהר הקדוש דפסוק שמע ישראל הוא יחודה עילאה, וברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד
הוא יחודה תתאה

With the above in mind, we may now understand the statement in the holy *Zohar*, that the verse *Shema Yisrael* is *yichuda ila'ah* (“higher-level Unity”), and that the verse *Baruch shem kvod malchuto leolam vaed* is *yichuda tata'ah* (“lower-level Unity”).

The connection between the last-mentioned verse and Divine Unity is now explained:

כי ועד הוא אחד בחילופי אתוון

For 1 *vaed* is equivalent to *echad* through the substitution of letters.2

The *alef* of *echad* interchanges with the *vav* of *vaed*, since both letters belong to the same group of letters, viz., *alef, hei, vav, yud* (which, the Rebbe notes, are known as *otiyot hahemshech*, the “connective letters”). The *chet* of *echad* interchanges with the *ayin* of *vaed*, since they share the same source (*motza*) in the organs of speech, and thus both belong to the category of “guttural letters,” viz., *alef, hei, chet, ayin*. Finally, the large *daled* of *echad* transposes into the small *daled* of *vaed*.

כי הנה סיבת וטעם הצמצום וההסתר הזה שהסתיר והעלים הקב"ה את החיות של העולם, כדי שיהיה העולם
נראה דבר נפרד בפני עצמו

The cause and reason for this *tzimtzum* and concealment with which the Holy One, blessed be He, obscured and hid the life-force of the world, making it appear as an independently existing entity, [is as follows]:

I.e., the Alter Rebbe is asking why it is indeed necessary for the world to appear as an independently existing entity. What would be lacking if the world would be perceived in

its true state — as an entity wholly nullified in relation to its source? The reason for this is as follows:

הנה הוא ידוע לכל, כי תכלית בריאת העולם הוא בשביל התגלות מלכותו יתברך

It is known to all that the purpose of the creation of the world is the revelation of [G-d's] sovereignty,

דאין מלך בלא עם

for³ “there is no king without a nation.”

פירוש עם: מלשון עוממות

The word עם (“nation”) is related etymologically to the word עוממות (“dimmed, extinguished”), as in the expression עוממות גחלים (*Rashi on Shoftim 5:14*), describing coals in which the fire is not to be seen. In terms of the relationship of a king and his subjects, the word עם thus signifies those whose relationship with the king is not readily apparent,

שהם דברים נפרדים וזרים ורחוקים ממעלת המלך

for they — the subjects who comprise a nation — are separate entities, distinct and distant from the level of the king; only upon them does the king reign, as a result of their nullifying themselves to him.

כי אילו אפילו היו לו בנים רבים מאד, לא שייך שם מלוכה עליהם

For even if he had very many children, the term “kingship” would not apply to them, inasmuch as the king’s children are part of the king himself,

וכן אפילו על שרים לבדם

nor is it possible for a king to reign even over nobles alone.

Although they — unlike a king’s children — are not part of him, nevertheless, since their position puts them in constant and close contact with him, thereby lending them some of the aspects of kingship, the king cannot reign over nobles alone.

רק ברוב עם דווקא הדרת מלך

Only⁴ “in a numerous *nation* is the glory of the king.”

Only upon strangers can sovereignty apply. The same is true Above: The ultimate intent of the revelation of Divine Kingship finds expression in His reigning over lowly created beings, who perceive themselves as existing independently of Him — so that they, too, should humble and nullify themselves before Him.

ושם המורה על מדת מלכותו יתברך הוא שם אדנות, כי הוא אדון כל הארץ

The Name that indicates the attribute of G-d's *Malchut* ("Kingship") is the Name of *Adnut* ("Lordship"), for His Kingship lies in the fact that He is L-rd of the whole universe.

ונמצא כי מדה זו ושם זה הן המהוין ומקיימין העולם להיות עולם כמות שהוא עכשיו

Thus, it is this attribute (viz., *Malchut*) and this Name (viz., the Name of *Adnut*, signifying lordship) which bring the world into existence and sustain it so that it should be as it is now —

יש גמור, ודבר נפרד בפני עצמו, ואינו בטל במציאות ממש

a completely independent and separate entity, and not absolutely nullified,

כי בהסתלקות מדה זו ושם זה, חס ושלום, היה העולם חוזר למקורו בדבר ה' ורוח פיו יתברך, ובטל שם במציאות ממש, ולא היה שם עולם עליו כלל

for with the withdrawal of this attribute and this Name from the world, G-d forbid, the world would revert to its source in the "word of G-d" and the "breath of His mouth," where it would be completely nullified, and the name "world" could not be applied to it at all.

Inherent in the name "world" is being and limitation. However, in the state in which the world finds itself within its source it would have no "being" and would not be limited.

והנה גדר ובחינת שם עולם נופל על בחינת מקום ובחינת זמן דוקא

The term "world" can be applied solely to [that which possesses] the dimensions of space and time,

בחינת מקום הוא מזרח ומערב, צפון, דרום, מעלה ומטה

"space" referring to east, west, north and south, upward and downward,

ובחינת זמן: עבר, הווה ועתיד

and "time" referring to past, present and future.

Only with regard to entities that are subject to the limitations of space and time can the term "world" be applied.

והנה כל בחינות אלו אין להם שייכות במדות הקדושות העליונות

All these dimensions of space and time have no relation to the holy supernal attributes of the World of *Atzilut*, because those attributes are infinite.

As explained earlier, the attribute of *Chesed* is infinite; so, too, are the other attributes in the World of *Atzilut*. Hence, by definition, they are not at all subject to the limitations of space and time.

כי אם במדת מלכותו יתברך לבדה שייך לומר שהוא יתברך מלך למעלה עד אין קץ ולמטה עד אין תכלית, וכן לד' סטרין

Only concerning the attribute of [G-d's] *Malchut* is it possible to say that He is King “Above without end and below without limit,” and likewise in all four directions.

This means to say that G-d is King of all creatures, from the very highest to the very lowest. Thus, when speaking of *Malchut*, it is in order to use terminology that has some relationship to space, such as “higher” and “lower”. This indicates that *Malchut* itself has some relationship to the aspects of time and space.

וכן בבחינת זמן

The same is true concerning the dimension of time, i.e., that the attribute of *Malchut* is in some small measure related to time, as it is written:[5](#)

ה' מלך, ה' מלך, ה' ימלוך

“G-d reigns, G-d has reigned, G-d will reign.”

I.e., G-d's reign is related to present, past, and future — the dimension of time.

ונמצא שחיות המקום וכן חיות הזמן, והתהוותם מאין ליש, וקיומם כל זמן קיומם, הוא ממדת מלכותו יתברך ושם אדנות ברוך הוא

Thus, the life-force of space, and likewise of time, and their coming into being from nothingness, and their existence as long as they shall exist, are from [G-d's] attribute of *Malchut*, and from the Name of *Adnut*.

ולפי שמדת מלכותו יתברך מיוחדת במהותו ועצמותו יתברך בתכלית היחוד, כמו שיתבאר

Now, since [G-d's] attribute of *Malchut* is united with His Essence and Being in an absolute union, as will be explained,

הלכך גם בחינת המקום והזמן בטילים במציאות ממש לגבי מהותו ועצמותו יתברך, כביטול אור השמש בשמש

space and time which are created from *Malchut* are therefore also completely nullified in relation to [G-d's] Essence and Being, just as sunlight whilst it is still within the orb of the sun is nullified in the sun.

This means to say: As long as *Malchut* still exists in a state of complete union with G-d's Essence and Being, space and time — the source of worlds — as found within the attribute of *Malchut* are utterly nullified relative to G-d.

This state is called “higher-level Unity.” It exists only *before* the descent of *Malchut* through various *tzimtzumim* in order to vest itself in the lower worlds, thereby creating them and providing them with life. It is then that the worlds enjoy the state of “higher-level Unity,” because from the perspective of the pristine source of *Malchut* and *Adnut* which brings about their existence, their actual creation is as yet inconceivable, inasmuch as *Malchut* and *Adnut* are still in a state of inclusion within their source. Consequently, space and time “exist” there in the same manner as the light of the sun “exists” within the sun — in a state of complete nullity.

וזהו שילוב שם אדנות בשם הוי"ה

And this is the [meaning of the] alternation of the [letters of the] Name of *Adnut* with the [letters of the] Name *Havayah*.

When the letters of one Divine Name are alternated with the letters of another, the Name whose initial letter appears first is the dominant one, the second Name being intertwined and encompassed by it. If, for example, the first letter is the initial of the Divine Name that designates *Chesed* and the second letter is the initial of the Divine Name that designates *Gevurah*, the revelation of *Chesed* will predominate.

One speaks of “the alternation of the [letters of the] Name of *Adnut* with the [letters of the] Name *Havayah*” when referring to *Malchut* and *Adnut* while they are still united with G-d's Essence and Being, which are too lofty to serve as a source for created beings.

The eventual source of the existence of created beings is *Malchut* and *Adnut*. Nevertheless, since the Divine Name *Havayah* is dominant — i.e., since *Adnut* is submerged within *Havayah* — all “existence” is completely nullified in relation of G-d's Essence and Being, just as sunlight is devoid of all identity within the sun.

כי שם הוי"ה מורה שהוא למעלה מהזמן, שהוא היה, הוה ויהיה ברגע אחד

The Name *Havayah* indicates that He transcends time, that “He was, is, and will be — all at the same instant,”

Past, present and future meld into one within the Name *Havayah*, indicating that *Havayah* transcends time,

כמו שכתוב ברעיא מהימנא, פרשת פנחס

as is stated ([6](#)in *Ra'aya Mehemna on Parshat Pinchas*);

וכן למעלה מבחינת מקום, כי הוא מהוה תמיד את כל בחינת המקום כולו, מלמעלה עד למטה ולד' סטרין

and likewise [the Name *Havayah*] transcends space, for [*Havayah*] continuously brings into existence the whole dimension of space, from the uppermost level [of space] to the lowermost level [of space], and in the four directions.

Clearly, the Divine Name *Havayah* transcends time and space. *Malchut* and *Adnut*, however, do bear some relation to time and space. Nevertheless, since the letters of the Name of *Adnut* are interspaced within the letters of the Name *Havayah*, the dimensions of time and space are completely nullified in relation to G-d. This is the state called *yichuda ila'ah*, or “higher-level Unity.”

והנה אף על פי שהוא יתברך למעלה מהמקום והזמן, אף על פי כן הוא נמצא גם למטה במקום וזמן

Now, although G-d transcends space and time, He is nevertheless also found below, within space and time — even as space and time, i.e., the dimensions that constitute the world, exist (in their own eyes) as independent entities;

דהיינו, שמתייחד במדת מלכותו, שממנה נמשך ונתהוה המקום והזמן

that is, He unites with His attribute of *Malchut*, from which space and time are derived and come into existence.

This refers to *Malchut* after its descent through the various *tzimtzumim*. However, even this level of *Malchut* is united with G-d. Thus, G-d Who *transcends* time and space is also found *within* time and space.

The reason created beings are unable to perceive Him is that *Malchut* conceals His Presence; they thus regard themselves as possessing independent existence, subject to the limitations and divisions of time and space.

וזהו יחודא תתאה

And this is *yichuda tata'ah*, or “lower-level Unity,”

In this state, created beings are not totally nullified in relation to their source, the attribute of *Malchut*, inasmuch as it allows them to be aware of their own existence.

שילוב הוי"ה באדנות ברוך הוא

([7](#)[meaning] the intertwining of [the letters of the Name] *Havayah* within [the letters of the Name of] *Adnut*).

In this instance the Divine Name *Havayah* is intertwined and vested within the Name of *Adnut*; i.e., *Havayah* is concealed and submerged, while *Adnut* is revealed and predominant, allowing for the creation of time and space.

דהיינו, שמהותו ועצמותו יתברך, הנקרא בשם אין סוף ברוך הוא, מלא את כל הארץ ממש בזמן ומקום

I.e., His Essence and Being, which is called by the Name *Ein Sof*, “the Infinite One,” completely fills the whole earth temporally and spatially.

כי בשמים ממעל ובארץ ולד' סטריין, הכל מלא מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא בשוה ממש, כי כך הוא בארץ מתחת
כמו בשמים ממעל ממש

For in the heavens above and on the earth [below] and in the four directions, everything is equally permeated with the *Ein Sof*-light, for [G-d] is to be found on the earth below exactly as in the heavens above,

כי הכל הוא בחינת מקום, הבטל במציאות באור אין סוף ברוך הוא

for everything — including both heaven and earth — is within the dimension of space, which is utterly nullified in the *Ein Sof*-light,

המתלבש בו על ידי מדת מלכותו, המיוחדת בו יתברך

which clothes itself in it through [G-d's] attribute of *Malchut* that is united with Him.

In relation to the *Ein Sof*-light which totally transcends time and space there exists no difference between heaven and earth; G-d is found equally in heaven and upon the earth. This being so, why are time and space not totally nullified?

רק שמדת מלכותו היא מדת הצמצום וההסתר, להסתיר אור אין סוף ברוך הוא

[They are not nullified] because [G-d's] attribute of *Malchut* is the attribute of *tzimtzum* and concealment, [whose function is] to hide the *Ein Sof*-light, so that it will not be perceived by created beings,

שלא יבטלו הזמן והמקום ממציאותם לגמרי, ולא יהיה שום בחינת זמן ומקום במציאות, אפילו לתחתונים

so that the existence of time and space should not be completely nullified and there will be no dimensions of time and space whatsoever, even for the lower worlds.

I.e., it is only because of the concealment effected by *Malchut* that time and space exist for created beings.

והנה במה שנתבאר, יובן מה שכתוב: אני ה' לא שנית

Now, from the foregoing exposition one will be able to understand the verse,⁸ “I, *Havayah*, have not changed.”

פירוש

This means:

Not only has there been no change in G-d's conduct, or even His will, with regard to rewarding the righteous and so on, but this verse means explicitly that there is no change, heaven forbid, in G-d: there exists nothing that can alter Him.

The only consideration that might possibly cause one to wonder about there being a change in G-d's unity is His bringing created beings into existence. Before their creation nothing whatever existed other than Him. After their creation, however, one might erroneously conclude that there now exists something in addition to Him — the various worlds and their denizens. And were this to be so, this would constitute a change in G-d's absolute unity, heaven forbid. The verse therefore anticipates this by saying, “I, *Havayah*, have not changed.”

שאין שום שינוי כלל: כמו שהיה לבדו קודם בריאת העולם, כך הוא לבדו אחר שנברא

there is no change in Him at all; just as He was alone before the creation of the world, so is He alone after it was created.

Superficially this is difficult to understand. How can we possibly say that G-d is alone after the world was created, when there now exists an additional entity — the world?

However, according to the explanation given here regarding Divine Unity, this matter is clearly understood. Since the world is truly nullified in its entirety in relation to Him and is wholly united with Him, G-d is thus just as truly alone after the world was created as He was alone prior to its creation.

וזהו שכתוב: אתה הוא עד שלא נברא העולם, אתה הוא כו'

Accordingly it is written,⁹ “You were [the same] before the world was created; You are [the same after the world was created],”

It would have been simpler to state, “You are the same before and after the world was created.” The text, however, chose to be more explicit in order to stress that the “You” that existed before the world's creation remains exactly the same “You” after its creation.

בלי שום שינוי בעצמותו, ולא בדעתו

without any change in His Being, nor even in His knowledge,¹⁰

One might have supposed that with the creation of the world G-d's knowledge underwent a change,¹¹ inasmuch as He could not have possibly known the world beforehand; once the world was created, G-d would thus know something that previously He did not. The Alter Rebbe therefore tells us that G-d's knowledge has not changed at all:

כי בידיעת עצמו, יודע כל הנבראים, שהכל ממנו ובטל במציאות אצלו

for by knowing Himself, He knows all created things, since all derive from Him and are nullified in relation to Him.

Creation thus added nothing to G-d's knowledge. This knowledge of self existed before creation, and it is with this prior knowledge that He knows of all of creation.

וכמו שכתב הרמב"ם ז"ל, שהוא היודע והוא הידוע והוא הדיעה עצמה, הכל אחד

As Maimonides, of blessed memory, stated,¹² that He is the Knower, He is the Known, and He is Knowledge itself: all are one.

This is radically different from mortal knowledge, which comprises three distinct elements: (a) the person's soul — the *knower*; (b) the subject that is *known*; and (c) the power of *knowledge* — the faculty of *Daat*, which enables the knower to know the known. In the Divine realm, however, these three elements are all one: *all* are G-d. (See ch. 2 of Part I for further elaboration of this theme.)

ודבר זה אין כח בפה לאמרו, ולא באזן לשמעו, ולא בלב האדם להכירו על בוריו

This — Maimonides goes on to say — is beyond the capacity of the mouth to express, beyond the capacity of the ear to hear, and beyond the capacity of the heart or mind of man to apprehend clearly.

כי הקב"ה, מהותו ועצמותו, ודעתו, הכל אחד ממש מכל צד ופינה, בכל דרך יחוד

For the Holy One, blessed be He, His Essence and Being, and His Knowledge — are all absolutely one, from every side and angle, and in every form of unity.

ואין דעתו דבר נוסף על מהותו ועצמותו כמו שהוא בנפש האדם, שדעתה דבר נוסף על מהותה ומורכב בה

His Knowledge is not superadded to His Essence and Being as it is in a mortal soul, whose knowledge is added to its essence and is compounded with it.

הרי כשהאדם לומד ויודע איזה דבר, כבר היתה בו נפשו המשכלת בטרם שלמד וידע, ואחר שלמד וידע
ניתוספה ידיעה זו בנפשו

For when a man studies a subject and knows it, his rational soul was already within him before he studied and knew it, and afterwards, this knowledge was added to his soul.

Man's knowledge is thus a supplement to his intrinsic being; through it he becomes aware of something he did not know before.

וכן מידי יום ביום: ימים ידברו, ורוב שנים יודיעו חכמה

And so, day after day,¹³ “Days speak, i.e., instruct a person, and a multitude of years teach wisdom.”

ואין זו אחדות פשוטה, אלא מורכבת

This is not a simple i.e., perfect unity, but a composite.

The Alter Rebbe means the following: Although man's knowledge, too, is united with him (lit., "with his soul"), for it is the person himself who knows, nevertheless this is not a perfect unity, for "simple" implies that any alternative would be inconceivable. Since a man's knowledge is acquired, not having been part of his essential being, its acquisition yields an imperfect and composite form of unity, a unity comprised of two separate entities that have coalesced.

אבל הקב"ה הוא אחדות פשוט, בלי שום הרכבה וצד ריבוי כלל

The Holy One, blessed be He, however, is a perfect unity, without any composition or element of plurality at all, inasmuch as it is impossible to speak of any aspect of Him as not having existed previously.

ואם כן

Hence, since His unity is perfect and uncompounded, one cannot say that His Knowledge is something apart from Him, for that would imply, heaven forbid, a composite — that his knowledge is superadded to His Essence, effecting a change within Him. Rather:

על כרחך מהותו ועצמותו ודעתו הכל דבר אחד ממש, בלי שום הרכבה

one must conclude that His Essence and Being and Knowledge are all absolutely one, without any composition.

ולפיכך, כשם שאי אפשר לשום נברא בעולם להשיג מהות הבורא ועצמותו, כך אי אפשר להשיג מהות דעתו

Therefore, just as it is impossible for any creature in the world to comprehend the Essence of the Creator and His Being, so it is impossible to comprehend the essence of His knowledge, which is One with G-d Himself;

רק להאמין, באמונה שהיא למעלה מהשכל ומהשגה, שהקב"ה יחיד ומיוחד

[it is possible] only to believe, with a faith that transcends intellect and comprehension, that the Holy One, blessed be He, is One and Unique.

Inasmuch as faith transcends intellect, it is able to apprehend truths that lie beyond the province of mortal intellect.

הוא ודעתו הכל אחד ממש, ובידיעת עצמו מכיר ויודע כל הנמצאים, עליונים ותחתונים

He and His knowledge are all absolutely one, and knowing Himself, He perceives and knows all the higher and lower beings, i.e., the beings in the higher and lower worlds,

עד שלשול קטן שבים, ועד יתוש קטן שיהיה בטבור הארץ

including even a small worm in the sea¹⁴ and a minute mosquito that may be found in the center of the earth;¹⁵

אין דבר נעלם ממנו

there is nothing concealed from Him.

ואין ידיעה זו מוסיפה בו ריבוי והרכבה כלל, מאחר שאינה רק ידיעת עצמו, ועצמותו ודעתו הכל אחד

This knowledge does not add multiplicity and composition to Him at all, since it is merely a knowledge of Himself; and His Being and His knowledge are all one.¹⁶

Thus, by knowing Himself, He knows all created beings that derive their existence from Him and that are utterly nullified to Him and unified with Him.

ולפי שזה קשה מאד לצייר בשכלנו, על כן אמר הנביא: כי גבהו שמים מארץ, כן גבהו דרכי מדרכיכם ומחשבותי ממהשבותיכם

Inasmuch as this form of knowledge is very difficult to envisage, the Prophet [Isaiah] therefore said,¹⁷ “For as the heavens are higher than the earth so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

וכתיב: החקר אלקה תמצא וגו', וכתיב: העיני בשר לך, אם כראות אנוש תראה

It is likewise written,¹⁸ “Can you by [intellectual] searching find G-d?...”; and so too,¹⁹ “Have You eyes of flesh, and do You see as man sees?”

שהאדם רואה ויודע כל הדברים בידיעה שחוץ ממנו

For man sees and knows everything with a knowledge that is external to himself, and hence something is added to him by his knowledge,

והקב"ה בידיעת עצמו

whereas the Holy One, blessed be He, [knows all] by knowing Himself.

עד כאן לשונו

These are the [paraphrased] words [of Maimonides].

עיין שם בהלכות יסודי התורה, והסכימו עמו חכמי הקבלה, כמבואר בפרד"ס מהרמ"ק ז"ל

(²⁰See *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah*. The Sages of the *Kabbalah* have agreed with him, as is explained in *Pardes* of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, of blessed memory.)

There are a number of Torah sages who sharply disagree with Maimonides' view. They claim that no descriptive term may be applied to G-d — not even that of knowledge, and not even of a form of knowledge so rarefied that it is completely beyond the realm of human experience. To say that G-d is the “Knower” and the “Knowledge” and so on, so the argument runs, is to give Infinite G-d a description which would serve to limit Him.

והנה מכאן

In the light of what has been said above — that G-d's knowledge is wholly one with G-d Himself, for otherwise it would imply multiplicity in One Who is perfect unity,

יש להבין שגגת מקצת חכמים בעיניהם, ה' יכפר בעדם

it is possible to understand the error of certain scholars in their own eyes (May G-d forgive them!) — for even those who have erred unwittingly are in need of atonement,

ששגו וטעו בעיונם בכתבי האריז"ל, והבינו ענין הצמצום המוזכר שם כפשוטו

who erred and misinterpreted in their study of the writings of the *AriZal*, and understood the doctrine of *tzimtzum* (which is mentioned therein) literally —

In the writings of the *AriZal* it is stated that in the “beginning”, before creation, the [infinite] light of the *Ein Sof*-light filled all “space” and there was no “room” for the creation of finite worlds. For inasmuch as worlds are by definition finite, whereas the Divine light is infinite, there is no room within the infinite for finitude. How, then, did finite worlds come into being?

The *AriZal* explains this through the doctrine of *tzimtzum*: The *Ein Sof*-light “departed” — i.e., it ceased to be revealed, so that infinity was no longer in a state of revelation, and all that remained revealed was the power of finitude. This power does allow for the creation of finite worlds.

The “scholars in their own eyes” misunderstood this mere concealment to mean a literal departure —

שהקב"ה סילק עצמו ומהותו חס ושלוש מעולם הזה

that the Holy One, blessed be He, removed Himself and His Essence (G-d forbid) from this world, i.e., that He literally removed His presence, rather than merely concealing it,

רק שמשגיח מלמעלה בהשגחה פרטית על כל היצורים כולם אשר בשמים ממעל ועל הארץ מתחת

and only guides from above, with individual Providence, all the created beings which are in the heavens above and on the earth below.

They thus envisage G-d as a king who sits in his palace; although his gaze extends beyond its confines, the king himself is not to be found there. In the same way — so they would say — G-d gazes from Above on all created beings which are found (heaven forbid!) outside His “palace”.

והנה מלבד שאי אפשר כלל לומר ענין הצמצום כפשוטו, שהוא ממקרי הגוף, על הקב"ה, הנבדל מהם ריבוי רבבות הבדלות עד אין קץ

Now, apart from the fact that it is altogether impossible to apply the doctrine of *tzimtzum* literally — for that would be an instance of corporeal phenomena — to the Holy One, blessed be He, Who is set apart from them by infinite myriads of separations,

One who is subject to the characteristics of a physical body can be said to undergo actual *tzimtzum* and to depart: previously he was here and now he is not. It goes without saying that this cannot be ascribed to G-d, Who is infinitely removed from the phenomena of corporeality. Apart from all the above:

אף גם זאת לא בדעת ידברו, מאחר שהם מאמינים בני מאמינים שהקב"ה יודע כל היצורים שבעולם הזה השפל, ומשגיח עליהם

in this thing itself they also do not speak wisely, since they are “believers, the sons of believers” that the Holy One, blessed be He, knows all the created beings in this lower world and exercises [His] Providence over them,

Thus, they themselves admit that G-d’s knowledge and Providence extend to this physical world.

ועל כרחק אין ידיעתו אותם מוסיפה בו ריבוי וחידוש, מפני שיודע הכל בידיעת עצמו

and perforce His knowledge of them does not add plurality and innovation to Him, for He knows all by knowing Himself.

Were G-d’s knowledge of created beings not to come from knowing Himself then it would be correct to say that this knowledge adds plurality and innovation to Him; previously He did not know them and now he does. However, since plurality and innovation cannot possibly apply to G-d, He must perforce know them through His knowledge of Himself.

הרי כביכול מהותו ועצמותו ודעתו הכל אחד

Thus, as it were, His Essence and Being and His Knowledge of created beings are all one.

Since G-d’s knowledge and Providence extend to this world, and since His knowledge is one with Him, it follows that G-d Himself is to be found within this physical world. Unlike the king who sits in his palace and gazes beyond its walls, the King Himself is to be found wherever His Providence and knowledge are found.

True enough, it is only through divine service that this world may be transformed into a place in which G-d is revealed. Nonetheless, G-d is present in this lowly corporeal world, which feels itself to exist independently of Him, to the same degree as He is present within the higher spiritual worlds.

וזהו שכתוב בתיקונים, תיקון נ"ז, דלית אתר פנוי מיניה, לא בעילאין ולא בתתאין

And this is what is stated in *Tikkunim*, *Tikkun 57*: “There is no place devoid of Him, neither in the upper worlds nor in the lower worlds”;

Thus we find it explicitly stated in *Tikkunei Zohar* that G-d Himself is to be found within the lower worlds, the lowest of which is this physical world.

וברעיא מהימנא, פרשת פנחס: איהו תפיס בכולא, ולית מאן דתפיס ביה כו', איהו סובב כל עלמין כו', ולית מאן דנפיק מרשותיה לבר, איהו ממלא כל עלמין כו', איהו מקשר ומיחד זינא לזיניה, עילא ותתא

and in the portion of *Zohar* called *Ra'aya Mehemna*, on *Parshat Pinchas*, we read: “He grasps all and none can grasp Him... He encompasses all worlds...and no one goes out from His domain; He fills or permeates all worlds...; He binds and unites a kind to its kind, upper with lower,

ולית קורבא בד' יסודין אלא בקודשא בריך הוא, כד איהו בינייהו

and there is no closeness in the four elements of which this corporeal world is comprised except through the Holy One, blessed be He, when He is within them.”

It is only through His power that these four inherently contradictory elements are bound together.

עד כאן לשונו

Until here are the words [of *Ra'aya Mehemna*].

ורצה לומר: לית מאן דתפיס ביה, שאין מי שיתפוס בהשגת שכלו, מכל שכלים העליונים, במהותו ועצמותו של הקב"ה

“None can grasp Him” means that there is no one, [even] amongst all the “Supernal Intelligences,” i.e., the incorporeal creatures of the higher spiritual worlds whose apprehension of Divinity is superhuman, who can grasp by means of his intellect the Essence and Being of the Holy One, blessed be He;

כמו שכתוב בתיקונים: סתימא דכל סתימין

as it is written in *Tikkunim*, “[He is] hidden from all the [spiritual worlds which are themselves] hidden from physical creatures,

and no thought can grasp You at all.“

The point being made here is that G-d cannot be grasped even by the heavenly thought processes of the “hidden worlds.” There is, however, yet another concept inherent in the word “grasp” — the ability to adhere and thereby effect a change. Thus, the fact that one cannot “grasp” G-d also means that nothing can effect a change in Him.

When a person makes something he will inevitably be “grasped” by the object of his creation: he will undergo changes in accordance with the particular demands of the object which he is producing. In the case of G-d, however, His creation of all existing beings causes no change in Him whatever: they do not hold Him (so to speak) in their “grasp”.

From this point of view, the creation of the lower worlds is even more telling, for their creation required a greater degree of *tzimtzum* and enclothing. Nevertheless, they cause absolutely no change in Him: they too do not “grasp” Him. In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

וגם בתחתונים, אף על גב דאיהו ממלא כל עלמין

And even in the lower worlds there are none that “grasp” Him, even though “He permeates all worlds” and animates them with a life-force suited to each individual created being in particular,

אינו כנשמת האדם תוך גופו, שהיא נתפסת תוך הגוף עד שמתפעלת ומקבלת שינויים משינויי הגוף וצערו, מהכאות או קרירות או חמימות האש וכיוצא

[for this vestment] is not like [that of] the soul of a man which clothes itself within his body, and is grasped within [it] to the extent that it is affected and influenced by changes involving the body and its pain, such as from blows or cold or the heat of fire and the like.

מה שאין כן בהקב"ה, שאינו מקבל שום שינוי משינויי עולם הזה, מקיץ לחורף ומיום ללילה

The Holy One, blessed be He, however, is not affected by any of the changes of this world, from summer to winter and from day to night,

כדכתיב: גם חשך לא יחשיך ממך, ולילה כיום יאיר

as it is written,²¹ “Even darkness does not obscure for You, and the night illuminates like the day,”

לפי שאינו נתפס כלל תוך העולמות, אף על גב דממלא לון

for He is not grasped within the worlds at all, even though He fills them.

וזהו גם כן ענין סובב כל עלמין

And this is also the meaning of “He encompassess all worlds.”

This does not mean to say (heaven forfend) that G-d is not found within the worlds but merely encompasses them. Rather:

פירוש, דרך משל: כשאדם מתבונן באיזה דבר חכמה בשכלו, או דבר גשמי במחשבתו

This means, by way of analogy: When a person reflects upon an intellectual subject in his mind or upon a physical object in his thoughts,

אזי שכלו ומחשבתו מקיפים על הדבר ההוא המצויר במחשבתו או בשכלו

then his intellect and thought encompass that subject whose image is formed in his thought or in his mind, inasmuch as they are found within his thought and mind,

אך אין מקיפים על הדבר ההוא ממש בפועל ממש

but they — his intellect and thought — do not encompass that subject in actual fact.

They merely encompass his image of the subject, not the actual subject. When one envisions a table, the actual physical table is of course not found within the brain; it is merely its image that is encompassed there.

אבל הקב"ה, דכתיב ביה: כי לא מחשבותי מחשבותיכם וגו'

The Holy One, blessed be He, however, of Whom it is written,²² “For My thoughts are not your thoughts...,”

מחשבתו וידיעתו, שיודע כל הנבראים, מקפת כל נברא ונברא בפועל ממש

His thought and knowledge of all created beings actually encompass each and every creature;

שהרי היא היא חיותו והתהוותו מאין ליש בפועל ממש

for [G-d's knowledge] is verily its life-force and that which brings it into existence out of nothingness, in actual reality.

G-d's thought, unlike man's, thus encompasses the actual subject of His thought — in this case, all created beings. It brings about their creation and continued existence, even though it does not descend to their level and become internalized within them, but remains in an exalted state.

וממלא כל עלמין היא בחינת החיות המתלבש תוך עצם הנברא

And “He fills all worlds” is the life-force that becomes en clothed i.e., is internalized within the essence of the created being.

שהיא מצומצמת בתוכו בצמצום רב, כפי ערך מהות הנברא, שהוא בעל גבול ותכלית בכמותו ובאיכותו, דהיינו מעלתו וחשיבותו

It is powerfully contracted within it according to the intrinsic nature of the created being which is finite and limited in quantity and quality, [“quality”] meaning its significance and importance.

Since the life-force must vest itself within the finite created being and unite with it utterly, it must necessarily be contracted and limited according to the intrinsically finite nature of the created being.

כגון השמש, שגופו יש לו גבול ותכלית, שהוא כמו קס”ז פעמים כגודל כדור הארץ

An example is the sun, whose body is finite and limited quantitatively, being approximately one hundred and sixty- seven times the size of the globe of the earth,[23](#)

ואיכותו ומעלתו, הוא אורו, גם כן יש לו גבול עד כמה יוכל להאיר

and whose quality and significance, namely, its light, is also limited as to the extent that it can emit light,

כי לא יאיר לבלתי תכלית, מאחר שהוא נברא

for it cannot illuminate indefinitely since it is a created being, and hence inherently limited. Thus, although the light of the sun illuminates at a prodigious distance, that distance is not without limit.

וכן כל הנבראים הם בעלי גבול ותכלית, כי מהארץ לרקיע מהלך ת”ק שנה כו’

Likewise, all created beings are finite and limited, for[24](#) “from the earth to heaven is a journey of five hundred years..., and so, too, from one heaven to another is a distance of five hundred years.”

ואם כן, החיות המלובשת בהם היא בבחינת צמצום רב ועצום

Hence, since created beings are limited and finite, the life-force which is invested in them is greatly and powerfully contracted,

כי צריכה תחלה להתצמצם צמצומים רבים ועצומים, עד שיתהוו מכחה ואורה עצם הנבראים כמות שהם בעלי גבול ותכלית

for it must first undergo numerous and powerful contractions until created beings, by nature finite and limited, may be brought into existence from its power and light.

Only after this process of self-limitation will the limitless life-force be able to invest itself within finite created beings and become united with them, as will soon be explained.

כי מקור החיות הוא רוח פיו של הקב"ה, המתלבש בעשרה מאמרות שבתורה

For the source of the life-force is the “breath of the mouth” of the Holy One, blessed be He; it becomes enclothed in the Ten Utterances of the Torah, from which all created beings come into existence.

ורוח פיו יתברך היה יכול להתפשט לאין קץ ותכלית, ולברוא עולמות אין קץ ותכלית לכמותם ואיכותם, ולהחיותם עדי עד

The “breath of His mouth” could have diffused without end and limit, and created worlds infinite in their quantity and quality, and given [them] life forever, unlike their present state, in which they are limited in all these respects,

ולא היה נברא עולם הזה כלל

and this corporeal world, all of whose beings are limited and finite, would not have been created at all.

It was the contraction of the life-force that made possible the creation of this physical, limited world with its finite creatures.

The reason why the “breath of His mouth” — were it not to have been contracted — would have created worlds without end, is now explained by the Alter Rebbe in the parenthesis.

שכמו שהקב"ה נקרא אין סוף, כך כל מדותיו ופעולותיו, דאיהו וגרמוהי חד

(For just as the Holy One, blessed be He, is called “Infinite”, so are all His attributes and actions [infinite], “for He and His attributes are one”;

דהיינו החיות הנמשך ממדותיו, שהן חסד ורחמים ושאר מדותיו הקדושות, על ידי התלבשותן שמתלבשות ברוח פיו

i.e., the life-force that emanates from His attributes, namely, Kindness and Mercy and His other holy attributes, [emanates from them] through their being enclothed in the “breath of His mouth,” which refers to the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*.

כי הוא אמר ויהי

For creation results from G-d’s speech and the “breath of His mouth,” as Scripture states,[25](#) “For He spoke — and it came into being.”

ועולם על ידי חסד יבנה

Moreover, creation came about through *Chesed*, as it is written,²⁶ “The world is built through *Chesed*,”

But how is it that the world is created both through *Chesed* and *Malchut* (the “word of G-d”)? This means: the attribute of *Chesed* vests itself within *Malchut*,

בדבר ה' ורוח פיו, הנעשה כלי ולבוש לחסד זה

so that creation takes place through “the word of G-d and the breath of His mouth,” which becomes a vessel and “garment” for this creative attribute of *Chesed*,²⁷

כהדין קמצא דלבושיה מיניה וביה

“like the snail, whose garment is an integral component of his body.”)

The “word of His mouth” is thus a garment and vessel that unites with the attribute of *Chesed*, from which the world was created. The life-force emanating from the “breath of His mouth” is thus capable of creating worlds which are infinite both quantitatively and qualitatively.

אלא שצמצם הקב"ה האור והחיות שיוכל להתפשט מרוח פיו

The Holy One, blessed be He, however, contracted the light and life-force that could diffuse from the “breath of His mouth,”

והלבישו תוך צירופי אותיות של עשרה מאמרות וצירופי צירופיהן

and invested it in the combinations of the letters of the Ten Utterances, and the combinations of their combinations,

בחילופי ותמורות האותיות עצמן, ובחשבונן ומספרן

by substitutions and transpositions of the letters themselves and their numerical values and equivalents.

שכל חילוף ותמורה מורה על ירידת האור והחיות ממדרגה למדרגה

For each substitution and transposition indicates the descent of the light and life-force degree by degree,

דהיינו שיוכל לברוא ולהחיות ברואים, שמדרגת איכותם ומעלתם היא פחותה ממדרגת איכות ומעלת הברואים הנבראים מאותיות ותיבות עצמן שבעשרה מאמרות

so that it will be able to create and give life to creatures whose quality and significance is lower than the quality and significance of the creatures created from the very letters and words of the Ten Utterances

שבהן מתלבש הקב"ה בכבודו ובעצמו, שהן מדותיו

within which is en clothed the Holy One, blessed be He, in His Glory and Essence — which are His attributes, since they are one with G-d Himself.

והחשבון מורה על מיעוט האור והחיות, מיעוט אחר מיעוט

The numerical value — even when it is not calculated through the substitution and transposition of letters — indicates the progressive diminution of the light and life-force,

עד שלא נשאר ממנו אלא בחינה אחרונה, שהוא בחינת החשבון ומספר כמה מיני כחות ומדרגות כלולות באור וחיות הזה, המלוכש בצירוף זה של תיבה זו

until there remains from it only the final level, which is that of the sum and number of kinds of powers and grades contained in the light and life-force invested in a particular letter-combination of a particular word.

The extent of the remaining life-force is indicated by the sum, which reflects the progressive descent and the constant diminution of the life-force.

ואחר כל הצמצומים האלה וכיוצא בהן, כאשר גזרה חכמתו יתברך

(28It is only after all these contractions and others like them, as [G-d's] Wisdom has ordained,

הוא שהיה יכול האור והחיות להתלבש גם בתחתונים, כמו אבנים ועפר הדומם

that the life-force could invest itself even in the lower created beings, such as inanimate stones and dust in which no life-force at all is revealed, inasmuch as they represent the lowest levels of the nether created beings.

כי אבן, דרך משל, שמה מורה כי שרשה משם העולה ב"ן במספרו

For example, the name אבן ("stone") indicates that its source is in the Divine Name נ"ב which numerically equals fifty-two (ב"נ) i.e., the numerical value of the Divine Name *Havayah* when spelled out phonetically in a particular way,

ועוד אלף נוספת משם אחר (לישעם) [נראה שצריך להיות: לטעם] הידוע ליצירה

with an *alef* added to it from another Name, for a reason known to its Creator.

והנה שם ב"ן בעצמו הוא בעולמות עליונים מאד

Now, the Name נ"ב, itself relates to very high worlds, and in its pristine state it can in no way serve as the source of physical stone,

רק שעל ידי צמצומים רבים ועצומים ממדרגה למדרגה, ירד ממנו חיות מועטת במאד מאד, עד שתוכל להתלבש באבן

yet through numerous and powerful contractions, degree by degree, i.e., from higher to lower levels, there descended from it a life-force so exceedingly diminished that it could clothe itself in a stone.

וזה היא נפש הדומם, המחיה ומהוה אותו מאין ליש בכל רגע, וכמו שכתוב לעיל

And this very greatly condensed life-force is the soul of the inanimate being, which gives it life and brings it into existence *ex nihilo* at every instant, as has been explained previously — in ch. 1, where it is stated that even inanimate creatures possess a soul that brings them into existence at every instant.

וזה היא בחינת ממלא כל עלמין, מה שאין כן בחינת סובב כל עלמין

This greatly condensed life-force is the level of “He fills all worlds,” as opposed to the level of “He encompasses all worlds”),²⁹ wherein the life-force is not contracted in proportion to the spiritual capacity of created beings.

In summary: The Divine life-force is capable of creating worlds that are infinite both in quantity and in quality. Finite beings are created only when this life-force garbs itself in the letters and transpositions of the letters of the Ten Utterances and in their numerical values.

וכל כח ומדרגה יכול לברוא ברואים כפי בחינת מדרגה זו, גם כן לאין קץ ותכלית בכמותם ואיכותם, להחיות עדי עד

Each power and grade [of the life-force] — after it has descended and undergone contractions, so that there remains only the numerical equivalent of the letters of the Ten Utterances — would be able to create beings according to its own level, even unlimited in quantity and quality, giving [them] everlasting life,

מאחר שהוא כח ה' המתפשט ונאצל מרוח פיו, ואין מעצור כו'

since it is the power of G-d that diffuses and emanates from the “breath of His mouth,” and there is no restraint [to His ability to create unlimited worlds].

אך שלא יהיה איכותם במעלה גדולה כל כך, כאיכות ומעלת ברואים שיוכלו להבראות מבחינת כח ומדרגת האותיות עצמן

Their quality, however, would not be on a level as high as the quality and level of the creatures which could be created from the power and degree of the letters themselves.

I.e., the created beings resulting from the transposition of letters, and surely from the numerical value of the letters, would be inferior to the beings which could be created from the letters themselves

Commentary of the Rebbe On Chapter Seven

1. Among the explanations and innovative interpretations of the Alter Rebbe in *Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah*, two major points stand out:

(a) The explanation of the “comment of the Baal Shem Tov” on the verse,³⁰ “Forever, O G-d, Your word stands firm in the heavens”; namely, that³¹ “‘Your word’ which You uttered, [viz.,³²] ‘Let there be a firmament...,’ these [very] words and letters stand firmly forever within the firmament of heaven...to give them life.... For if the letters were to depart [even] for an instant, G-d forbid, and return to their source, all the heavens would become naught and absolute nothingness, and it would be as though they had never existed at all,...exactly as before the Six Days of Creation.”

From this it will be understood³³ “that each creature and being is in reality considered to be naught and nothingness in relation to the activating force and the ‘breath of His mouth’ which is within it, continuously calling it into existence and bringing it from absolute non-being into being.”

(b) The *tzimtzum* is not to be understood³⁴ “literally — that the Holy One, blessed be He, removed Himself and His Essence, G-d forbid, from this world, and only guides from above, with individual Providence, all the created beings which are in the heavens above and on the earth below.”

It could be argued (see below) that this statement — that *tzimtzum* is not to be understood in its literal sense — proceeds from the explanation of the Baal Shem Tov’s comment by way of corollary.

2. What is novel about the comment of the Baal Shem Tov is not only that the word of G-d must constantly create all beings, but that the words “Let there be a firmament” must be³⁵ “forever *clothed within* all the heavens to give them life.”

The same is true of all other created beings: the words and letters of the Ten Utterances which create them and provide them with life must be continuously vested within them.

(Thus indeed the Alter Rebbe explains at length³⁶ how within every creature there is “a soul and spiritual life-force.” For even those beings not specifically mentioned in the Ten Utterances in the Torah also receive a spiritual life-force which descends from them by stages “by means of substitutions and transpositions of the letters, and by *gematriot...until [the life-force] can be condensed and enclothed, and a particular creature can be brought forth from it.*”)

Hence, rather than the Divine Utterance constantly creating a creature, which then becomes sundered from it, the Divine Utterance is actually vested within the particular creature itself — within its “space”, so to speak — to the point that the life-force (and soul) of every individual created being is the Divine Utterance that is clothed within it.

It may thus be understood how “every creature and being is in reality considered to be naught and nothingness in relation to the activating force and the ‘breath of His mouth’ which is within it, continuously calling it into existence and bringing it from absolute non-being into being.”

Accordingly, it would seem that the nullification of the created being is not total, for the life-force that permeates and enclothes itself within the created being is attenuated and limited (to suit each individual creature). As such, it “allows for a being’s existence.” Consequently, the nullification resulting from this life-force is also not complete.³⁷

However, according to what the Alter Rebbe goes on to explain — that *tzimtzum* is not to be understood in its literal sense, G-d forbid — this difficulty is resolved. For even in the “place” (i.e., level) in which the light and life-force contracts and enclothes itself within created beings,³⁸ “There is no place devoid of Him,” and³⁹ “His Essence and Being...completely fills the whole earth temporally and spatially.”

Thus the following two opposites coexist within each created being: Every created being possesses its own “soul and spiritual life-force” which it receives through the *tzimtzum* and vesting of the Divine Utterance within it; at the same time, every created being is bound up with the very Essence of G-d, for in the same “place” in which it is found, G-d’s “Essence and Being” is also to be found.

And the fact that G-d’s Essence utterly transcends the world makes it possible for one to perceive that the existence of the world itself is G-dliness (as in the classic phrase,⁴⁰ “The created being is True Being”) —⁴¹ “There is none else apart from Him.”

From *Likkutei Sichot*, Vol. 25 (Kehot, N.Y., 1987), p. 193 (*Parshat Vayeishev*, *Yud-Tet* Kislev, 5744)

FOOTNOTES ^{1.} “A letter of mine dealing with this substitution appears in *Kovetz Lubavitch*.” (— Note of the Rebbe). This letter has since been reprinted in *Teshuvot U’Biurim* (Kehot, N.Y., 1974; Heb.), Section 13, p. 62. ^{2.} “As stated in *Zohar* II, 135a.” (— Note of the Rebbe). ^{3.} *Emek HaMelech*, *Shaar HaMitzvot*, beginning of ch. 1; Rabbeinu Bachaye, *Parshat Vayeishev*, 38:2. Cf. *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer*, ch. 3. ^{4.} *Mishlei* 14:28. ^{5.} Liturgy, Morning Prayer. ^{6.} Parentheses are in the original text. ^{7.} Parentheses are in the original text. ^{8.} *Malachi* 3:6. ^{9.} Liturgy, Morning Prayer; *Yalkut*, *Parshat Va-etchanan*, *Remez* 835. ^{10.} Note of the Rebbe: “Knowledge being merely a descriptive term, just as (though keeping in mind a thousand and more distinctions) man’s knowledge is far inferior to the essence of his soul — with regard to its simplicity (פשיטות), being (עצמות), and so forth.” ^{11.} Note of the Rebbe: “Inasmuch as [knowledge] is only one of His descriptive terms, which surely does not cause a change in His

Essence.” [12.](#) *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 2:10, *et passim*; *Moreh Nevuchim* I, ch. 68. [13.](#) *Iyov* 32:7. [14.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “[‘The smallest of all creatures’ — *Rashi* on *Chullin* 40a] *of the sea* [according to the text of the *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh Deah*, Section 4].” [15.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “The most insignificant of all creatures; see Rambam, *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 2:9; see also *Bereishit Rabbah*, beg. of ch. 8.” [16.](#)

The following paraphrases a note of the Rebbe.

It would seem that the complete subject under discussion has now been concluded. Since it is not within the province of *Tanya* to expound Scriptural verses, why does the Alter Rebbe now proceed, “The Prophet [Isaiah] therefore said...,” and so on?

One cannot compare this passage with ch. 2, where the verses cited contribute to the explanation of the matter at hand, namely, the limits of man’s comprehension. Here, however, since these verses appear to add nothing, why does the Alter Rebbe quote and explain them?

A solution: By doing so, the Alter Rebbe answers a question which seems to contradict all that has been stated earlier. For the Alter Rebbe had written earlier that a perception of Maimonides’ concept that “He is the Knowledge...,” is the “lower-level Unity” which is applicable to *every man* (as opposed to the “higher-level Unity” which can be achieved only by select individuals who have attained a singularly exalted spiritual state).

However, Maimonides’ concluding words on this subject in this very text seem to indicate otherwise, namely, “This is beyond the capacity...of the heart of man to apprehend clearly”: *no man*, even the most spiritual, is able to comprehend this matter.

This question becomes even more acute in the light of that which Maimonides writes in *Hilchot Teshuvah*, end of ch. 5: “This is what the prophet states, ‘My thoughts are not your thoughts’”; i.e., this statement is even made by the Prophets. This seems to contradict the Alter Rebbe’s earlier statement that “lower-level Unity” may be achieved by all.

For this reason the Alter Rebbe says: “The prophet [Isaiah] therefore says...,” since this matter is indeed difficult to envisage intellectually. Nevertheless, this manner of spiritual service is indeed within the reach of all, even of those who are only at the level of “lower-level Unity.”

[17.](#) *Yeshayahu* 55:9. [18.](#) *Iyov* 11:17. [19.](#) *Ibid.* 10:4. [20.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [21.](#) *Tehillim* 139:12. [22.](#) *Yeshayahu* 55:8. [23.](#)

Note of the Rebbe: “*Rambam* in *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 5:8 states ‘about 170 times,’ and in *Hilchot Shevuot* 5:22 he writes ‘170 times.’”

“This, however, poses no difficulty with the Alter Rebbe’s statement, for in *Rambam’s* introduction to his commentary upon the *Mishnah* (s.v. *VeHineni Noseh*) he is more precise and writes ’166 and three-eighths times.”

As to the seeming contradiction between this view and that of present-day astronomy that the sun is 4 or 5 million or more times greater than the earth, the Rebbe has explained as follows:

The view of astronomy applies to the volume of the sun, and that of Maimonides to its diameter. The diameter of the sun, based on present-day astronomy, is about one hundred and ten times that of the earth [not 170], but this measurement takes into consideration only specific layers of the sun and not all of them. For the outermost layers of the sun contract and expand greatly from time to time, and not all the layers are visible to the eye (only their effects are visible). Hence, it is difficult to measure them. Likewise, the protuberance is not taken into account.

[24.](#) *Chagigah* 13a. [25.](#) *Tehillim* 33:9. [26.](#) Cf. *ibid.* 89:3. [27.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “As mentioned above, in Part I, end of ch. 21; quoted from *Bereishit Rabbah* 21:5.” [28.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [29.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [30.](#) *Tehillim* 119:89. [31.](#) See above, ch. 1. [32.](#) *Bereishit* 1:6. [33.](#) See above, ch. 3, where this is explained at length. [34.](#) See above, ch. 7 (s.v. “In the light...”). [35.](#) See above, ch. 1. [36.](#) See above, ch. 1. [37.](#) See *Hemshech Taf-Reish-Samech-Vav* (Kehot, N.Y., 1984), p. 224. [38.](#) *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 57, quoted above in ch. 7 (s.v. “In the light...”). [39.](#) See above, ch. 7. [40.](#) *Biurei HaZohar*, *Parshat Beshallach* (43c ff.); *On the Essence of Chassidus*, chs. 15-17. [41.](#) *Devarim* 4:35.



Chapter 8

Creation effected absolutely no change in the Creator, neither in His Unity nor in His knowledge. This we learn from the verse, “I, *Havayah*, have not changed,” as the Alter Rebbe explained in the preceding chapter. Though one might assume that by bringing created beings into existence G-d’s knowledge was supplemented — in that only after their creation did he become aware of them, so to speak — this in fact is not so, for G-d’s knowledge is wholly one with G-d Himself.

G-d’s knowledge is thus entirely unlike man’s. Acquired knowledge constitutes an *addition* to a mortal soul, which is a compound, not a simple and perfect unity. G-d’s Unity, by contrast, is perfect, without any superaddition. Accordingly, His unique manner of knowledge is such that by knowing Himself He knows all of creation, which derives from Him.

This knowledge of self existed before G-d brought created beings into existence. By knowing them, therefore, nothing at all was added to His previous knowledge. And such a manner of knowledge, concluded the Alter Rebbe, is beyond the comprehension of man.

In the chapter before us, the Alter Rebbe goes on to explain that Maimonides' statement that "He is the Knowledge" applies not only to G-d's knowledge, but also to all His other attributes and Names, including His *Chochmah* and will. They are all completely united with G-d Himself.

והנה מה שכתב הרמב"ם ז"ל, שהקב"ה, מהותו ועצמותו ודעתו, הכל אחד ממש, אחדות פשוטה ולא מורכבת כלל

Now, what Maimonides (of blessed memory) has said¹ — that the Holy One, blessed be He, His Essence and Being, and His knowledge are completely one, a perfect unity and not a composite at all, —

כן הענין ממש בכל מדותיו של הקב"ה, ובכל שמותיו הקדושים, והכנויים שכינו לו הנביאים וחז"ל, כגון: חנון ורחום וחסיד וכיוצא בהן

this applies equally to all the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He, and to all His holy Names, and the designations which the Prophets and Sages, of blessed memory have ascribed to Him, such as Gracious, Merciful, Beneficent, and the like.

וכן מה שנקרא חכם, דכתיב: וגם הוא חכם וגו'

This is also true with respect to His being called Wise, as it is written,² "And He is also wise,...";

וכן רצונו: כי רוצה ה' את יראיו, וחפץ חסד הוא, ורוצה בתשובתם של רשעים ואינו חפץ במיתתם וברשעתם, וטהור עינים מראות ברע

and likewise with respect to His will, [as it is written,³ "G-d desires those who fear Him," and⁴ "He wishes to do kindness," and⁵ "He desires the repentance of the wicked and does not desire their death and wickedness," — thus we have verses indicating both what He finds desirable and undesirable; [so, too,⁶ "Your eyes are too pure to behold evil" — yet another thing that He does not desire.

From the above verses, then, we see that emotions, wisdom and will are all ascribed to G-d. Nevertheless:

אין רצונו וחכמתו ומדת חסדו ורחמנותו ושאר מדותיו מוסיפים בו ריבוי והרכבה חס ושלוש במהותו ועצמותו

His will and His wisdom and His attribute of kindness and His mercy and His other attributes do not add plurality and composition (G-d forbid) to His Essence and Being,

אלא עצמותו ומהותו ורצונו וחכמתו ובינתו ודעתו, ומדת חסדו וגבורתו ורחמנותו ותפארתו הכלולה מחסדו וגבורתו

but His Being and Essence and His will and wisdom and understanding and knowledge, and His attribute of kindness and His might and mercy and beauty, [the last of] which is composed of His kindness and might,

וכן שאר מדותיו הקדושות, הכל אחדות פשוטה ממש, שהיא היא עצמותו ומהותו

and likewise His other holy attributes, — all the above, comprising his Being and Essence, and his will, and the *Sefirot* of *ChaBaD* and the *middot*, constitute an absolutely perfect unity, which is His very Being and Essence.

וכמו שכתב הרמב"ם ז"ל, שדבר זה אין כח בפה לאמרו, ולא באזן לשמעו, ולא בלב האדם להכירו על בוריו

And as Maimonides (of blessed memory) stated,⁷ “This [form of unity] wherein G-d’s knowledge and so on is one with G-d Himself is beyond the capacity of the mouth to express, beyond the capacity of the ear to hear, and beyond the capacity of the heart of man to apprehend clearly.”

כי האדם מצייר בשכלו כל המושכלות שרוצה להשכיל ולהבין, הכל כמות שהם בו

For man visualizes in his mind all the concepts which he wishes to conceive and understand — all as they are within himself.

כגון שרוצה לצייר בשכלו מהות הרצון, או מהות חכמה או בינה או דעת, או מהות מדת חסד ורחמים, וכיוצא בהן

For instance, if he wishes to envisage the essence of will, or the essence of wisdom or of understanding or of knowledge, or the essence of the attribute of kindness and mercy and the like,

הוא מצייר כולן כמות שהן בו

he visualizes them all as they are within himself.

Just as this is so with regard to envisaging one’s own intellect and emotions, so, too, regarding an individual’s desire to apprehend Divine Intellect and emotions: he endeavors to do so by envisaging intellect and emotion as they are found within himself.

אבל באמת, הקב"ה הוא רם ונשא וקדוש שמו

But in truth, the Holy One, blessed be He, is⁸ “high and exalted” and “holy is His Name”; i.e., His Name, too, is “holy” and set apart (for this is implied by the root קדש).

כלומר, שהוא קדוש ומובדל ריבוא רבבות עד אין קץ ותכלית מדרגות הבדלות למעלה מעלה מערך וסוג ומין כל התשבחות והמעלות שיוכלו הנבראים להשיג ולצייר בשכלם

That is to say, He is Holy and separated many myriads of degrees of separations *ad infinitum*, above the quality, type or kind of praises and exaltation which creatures could grasp and conceive in their minds.

It is for this reason that G-d is called the Holy One, blessed be He, for the degree to which He transcends the created universe defies mortal conception.

כי המעלה ומדרגה הראשונה אצל הנבראים היא החכמה, שלכן נקראת ראשית

For the first i.e., supreme quality and rank with regard to created beings is wisdom, for which reason it is called “the beginning,” as in the phrase,⁹ “the beginning of wisdom.”

So, too, *Targum Yonatan* interprets בראשית (in the verse, “In the beginning G-d created...”) to mean “with wisdom.” Thus, “wisdom” also connotes that which is first in quality, and the source of all other attributes.

כי באמת היא ראשית ומקור כל החיות בנבראים

For it is indeed the beginning and fountainhead of all the life-force in creatures,

כי מהחכמה נמשכות בינה ודעת

for from wisdom are derived understanding and knowledge,

ומהן נמשכות כל המדות שבנפש המשכלת, כמו אהבה וחסד ורחמים וכיוצא בהן

and from them flow all the emotive attributes of the rational soul, such as love and kindness and mercy and the like; all of these derive from the intellectual attributes.

וכנראה בחוש, שהקטן שאין בו דעת הוא כבעס תמיד ואכזרי, וגם אהבתו היא לדברים קטנים שאין ראוי לאהבם

This is seen vividly — that a child, having no wisdom, is always angry and unkind, and even his love is for trivial things which are unworthy of being loved,

מפני שאין בו דעת לאהוב דברים הראויים לאהבם, שהאהבה כפי הדעת

because he lacks the understanding to love things which are worthy of love, for love varies with [the level of one's] understanding.

Thus, the emotions are dependent on the intellect and understanding, inasmuch as they derive from them.

ומהמדות שבנפש, נמשכות בה תיבות ואותיות המחשבה

From the emotive attributes of the soul, words and letters of thought issue forth,

שהנפש מחשבת בדבר שאוהבת, או איך לפעול החסד והרחמים

for the soul thinks of that which it loves or of how to perform deeds of kindness and mercy.

וכן בשאר מדות

And so it is with the other emotive attributes: they all serve as a source for the words and letters of thought.

ובכל מחשבה שבעולם, מלובשת בה איזו מדה המביאה לחשוב מחשבה זו, ומדה זו היא חיותה של מחשבה זו

Within every thought in the world, there is clothed some emotive attribute that causes one to think that thought, and this attribute is the vivifying force of that thought.

ומאותיות המחשבה נמשכות אותיות הדבור, והן חיותן ממש

From the letters of [a man's] thought proceed the letters of [his] speech, and they — the letters of thought — are their actual vivifying force.

והדבור מביא לידי מעשה הצדקה וחסד, כגון המלך שמצווה לעבדיו ליתן

Speech [in turn] gives rise to action, [such as] of charity and kindness, as in the case of a king who orders his servants to give [charity].

I.e., his *speech* causes his charitable *thought* to result in *action*.

וגם כשהאדם עושה בעצמו איזה דבר

And even when a man himself does some deed which he had thought of doing,

In this instance no speech is involved: his thought leads directly to action. Nevertheless — the Alter Rebbe goes on to say — here, too, in order for the life-force to descend from thought to action, it must pass through an intermediary stage which resembles speech.

הרי כח הנפש וחיותה, המתלבש בעשיה זו, הוא כאין ממש לגבי כח הנפש וחיותה המתלבש בדבור האדם

the power of the soul and its life-force, which clothes itself in this deed, is as absolute nothingness in relation to the power of the soul and its life-force which clothes itself in the speech of man;

וכערך ומשל הגוף לנשמה

[they are to each other] as the relation and comparison of the body to the soul.

To the same degree is there no comparison between the power of the soul and its life-force which clothes itself in the speech of man, and the power of the soul and its life-force which clothes itself in man's actions. Therefore, when this power and life-force has descended so far that it is able to clothe itself in action, it has already undergone contractions and condensations which are far below the power of speech.

וכן ערך אותיות הדבור לאותיות המחשבה

Likewise — like the distance of body from soul — is the relation of the letters of speech to the letters of thought,

וכן ערך אותיות המחשבה למהות המדה המלוכשת בה ומחיה אותה

and likewise is the relation of the letters of thought to the essence of the emotive attribute which is clothed in it and animates it;

I.e., the thought that derives from an emotion is in no way comparable to the emotion itself.

וכן ערך מהות וחיות המדה, לגבי החכמה בינה ודעת שכללותן הוא השכל, שממנו נמשכה מדה זו

and likewise the relation of the essence and life-force of the emotive attribute in comparison with the wisdom, understanding and knowledge which together constitute the intellect from which this attribute was derived.

We thus see that in the chain of descent from level to level — beginning with wisdom and culminating with action — each level bears no comparison at all even to the level that immediately precedes it; emotions cannot be compared to intellect, thought cannot be compared to emotions, and so on. Surely, then, there can be no comparison whatsoever between the lowest degree of action and the highest degree of wisdom.

וכל זה בנפש האדם ונפש כל הברואים שבכל העולמות עליונים ותחתונים, שבכולם החכמה היא ראשית ומקור הדיות

All this applies to the soul of man and the soul of all the created beings in all the higher and lower worlds. In all of them, wisdom is the beginning and source of the life-force.

G-d, however, as will soon be concluded, is as distant from the degree of wisdom as He is from that of action; from the Divine perspective, action and wisdom are humble equals

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Yad HaChazakah, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah*, 2:10. [2.](#) *Yeshayahu* 31:2. [3.](#) *Tehillim* 147:11. [4.](#) *Michah* 7:18. [5.](#) Cf. *Yechezkel* 18:23; *Liturgy, Neilah*. [6.](#) *Chavakuk* 1:13. [7.](#) *Loc. cit.* [8.](#) *Liturgy, Morning Prayer*. [9.](#) *Tehillim* 111:10.

Chapter 9

אבל לגבי הקב"ה, מדרגת החכמה שהיא תחלת מחשבה וראשיתה, היא סוף מעשה אצלו

In regard to the Holy One, blessed be He, however, the level of wisdom — which [in all created beings] is the beginning of thought and its genesis — is to Him the final stage of action;

דהיינו שנחשבת כאילו היא בחינת ומדרגת עשייה לגבי הקב"ה

i.e., in relation to the Holy One, blessed be He, [wisdom] is considered as if it were the quality and level of action,

כדכתיב: כולם בחכמה עשית

as it is written,¹ “You have made them all with wisdom.”

At first glance, it would seem more appropriate for the verse to have said something such as “You have ‘intellected’ them all.” Why instead does it state, “You have *made*...,” when speaking of wisdom?

והיינו לומר, שכערך החיות שבעשיה גופנית וגשמיית לערך חיות החכמה

That is to say that [wisdom relative to Him] is as the quality of the life-force in physical and material action is in relation to the quality of the life-force of wisdom,

שהיא ראשית ומקור החיות באדם וכל הברואים גשמיים

[wisdom being] the beginning and source of the life-force in man and all the physical creatures.

I.e., the life-force of physicality is incomparably lower than wisdom, which is the source of all life-force.

שהוא כאין לגבי חיות שבאותיות הדבור, שהוא כאין לגבי חיות שבאותיות המחשבה

[For the life-force of physicality] is as nothing in comparison with the life-force in the letters of speech, which [in turn] is as nothing compared to the life-force in the letters of thought,

שהוא כאין לגבי חיות ומעלת המדות שמהן נמשכה מחשבה זו

which [in turn] is as nothing in comparison to the life-force and level of the emotive attributes from which this thought is derived,

For, as explained earlier, all letters of thought emanate from some emotion which brings them into being, so that the individual concerned should think these particular letters. Clearly, the life-force of these letters of thought bears no comparison to the life-force of the emotions from whence these letters emanate.

שהוא כאין לגבי חיות ומעלת ומדרגת החכמה בינה ודעת, מקור המדות

which [in turn] is as nothing in comparison to the life-force and level and degree of wisdom, understanding and knowledge, the source of the emotive attributes.

Thus, from the level of action to the lofty level of wisdom in the World of *Atzilut* there are but five levels, each of which is of no account in comparison to the level above it. Clearly, then, the lowest level of action is surely of absolutely no account in comparison to the highest level, which is the level of wisdom in the World of *Atzilut*. And just as action is infinitely distant from the wisdom of *Atzilut*, —

כן ממש ערך מדרגת ומעלת החכמה, שהיא ראשית ומקור החיות שבכל העולמות

Exactly so is the quality and level of wisdom, the beginning and source of the life-force in all the worlds,

For we are speaking here of the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah* of the World of *Atzilut*, which is the source of the entire World of *Atzilut*, the highest of all the worlds. As such it is also the source of all the worlds below it. Now this level of wisdom is as nothing —

לגבי הקב"ה בכבודו ובעצמו

in relation to the Holy One, blessed be He, in His Glory and Essence,

המרומם והמתנשא ריבוא רבבות מדרגות רוממות יותר מרוממות מדרגת החכמה על בחינת חיות שבעשיה

Who is elevated and exalted by myriads of degrees of elevation more than the quality of wisdom is elevated over the quality of the life-force in action,

שהיא רוממות חמש מדרגות לבד, שהן מדרגות בחינות עשיה ודבור ומחשבה ומדות ושכל

for this is an elevation of only five degrees, namely, the levels of action, speech, thought, the emotive attributes, and intellect.

אבל הקב"ה רם ומתנשא ממדרגת החכמה רבבות מדרגות כאלו עד אין קץ

The Holy One, blessed be He, however, is “high and exalted” above the level of wisdom by infinite myriads of such degrees.

This being so, why do we compare the distance of wisdom from G-d to the distance of action from wisdom, when in actuality wisdom is infinitely more distant from Him?

רק מפני שאין בנבראים כח להשיג רק ההשתלשלות ממדרגת החכמה, שהיא ראשיתם, למדרגת עשיה השפלה

But inasmuch as it is within the power of created beings to comprehend only the descent from the level of wisdom, which is their beginning, to the level of action, which is the lowliest of levels,

לכך אנו אומרים שלגבי הקב"ה נחשבת מדרגת החכמה כמדרגת עשיה ממש

therefore we say that in relation to the Holy One, blessed be He, the level of wisdom is considered exactly as the level of action.

We use this example simply because there is no greater descent in the realm of human experience than the descent from wisdom to action.

דהיינו לומר, שהוא רם ונשא ונעלה עילוי רב מאד מאד ממדרגת החכמה

That is to say: [G-d] is "high and exalted" and very greatly elevated above the level of wisdom,

ולא שייך כלל לייחס אצלו שום ענין המתייחס לחכמה, אפילו בדרך מעלה/מעלה ועילוי רב

and it is not at all appropriate to ascribe to Him anything that pertains to wisdom, even in a very lofty and sublime form, i.e., even if by doing so we mean to express how He transcends wisdom;

כגון לומר עליו שאי אפשר לשום נברא, עליונים ותחתונים, להשיג חכמתו או מהותו

for example, to say of Him that it is beyond the capacity of any higher or lower creature to comprehend His wisdom or His Essence.

Even this negative reference to wisdom is inappropriate, —

כי ענין ההשגה מתייחס ונופל על דבר חכמה ושכל, לומר שאפשר להשיגו או אי אפשר להשיגו מפני עומק המושג

For comprehension pertains and applies to a matter of wisdom and intellect, about which one can say that it can or cannot be understood because of the profundity of the concept.

אבל הקב"ה, שהוא למעלה מן השכל והחכמה, לא שייך כלל לומר בו שאי אפשר להשיגו מפני עומק המושג

However, concerning the Holy One, blessed be He, Who transcends intellect and wisdom, it is not at all appropriate to say that one cannot comprehend Him because of the profundity of the concept,

כי אינו בבחינת השגה כלל

for He is not within the realm of comprehension at all.

והאומר עליו שאי אפשר להשיגו, הוא כאומר על איזה חכמה רמה ועמוקה שאי אפשר למשושה בידים מפני עומק המושג

He who states that it is impossible to comprehend Him, is like one who says of some lofty and profound concept that it cannot be touched with the hands because of the depth of the concept.

שכל השומע יצחק לו, לפי שחוש המישוש אינו מתייחס ונופל אלא על עשייה גשמית, הנתפשת בידים

Whoever hears [this] will mock him, because the sense of touch refers and applies only to physical objects, which may be grasped by the hands.

וככה ממש נחשבת לגבי הקב"ה מדרגת השכל וההשגה כעשייה גשמית ממש

Exactly so, the level of intellect and comprehension in relation to the Holy One, blessed be He, is considered as actual physical action.

ואפילו השגת שכלים שבעולמות עליונים, ואפילו מדרגת חכמה עילאה, המחיה את כולם

Even the comprehension of the [superior and spiritual] Intelligences in the higher worlds, and even the level of Supernal Wisdom of the World of *Atzilut* which gives life to them all [is considered so in relation to the Holy One, blessed be He],

כדכתיב: כולם בחכמה עשית

as it is written,² “You have made them all with wisdom.”

All of creation is rooted in the wisdom of *Atzilut*. Nevertheless, even the Supernal Wisdom of *Atzilut* is considered as action in relation to G-d, for G-d transcends it infinitely. It is thus impossible to say that G-d can or cannot be apprehended through intellect, inasmuch as intellect and wisdom are not at all the means by which G-d can be grasped.

ומה שהקב"ה נקרא חכם בכתוב, וגם חז"ל כינו לו מדרגת ומעלת החכמה

As for the Holy One, blessed be He, being called “Wise” in Scripture, and our Sages, of blessed memory, have also referred to Him with epithets denoting the quality and level of wisdom,

היינו משום שהוא מקור החכמה, שממנו יתברך נמשך ונאצל מהות מדרגת חכמה עילאה, שבעולם האצילות

this is because He is the source of wisdom, for from Him issues and emanates the essence of the level of Supernal Wisdom, which is in the World of *Atzilut*.

וכן רחום וחסיד, על שם שהוא מקור הרחמים והחסדים

Likewise [He is called] Merciful and Kind, even though He utterly transcends mercy and kindness, because He is the source of mercy and kindness;

וכן שאר המדות

and likewise regarding the other emotive attributes; G-d is referred to by the names of the other attributes because He is their source,

שכולן נמשכו ונאצלו ממנו יתברך

for they all proceed and emanate from Him.

ודרך וענין ההמשכה והאצילות, איך ומה, ידוע למשכילים

The manner and nature of the flow and emanation — how and what — i.e., how the intellectual and emotive attributes emanate from the *Ein Sof* which totally transcends them, and exactly what they are, for after they have emanated from Him they are wholly united with Him, is known to the savants.³

הגהה

NOTE

The Alter Rebbe now briefly explains the various *tzimtzumim* that had to take place in order to enable the attributes of *Atzilut* to emanate from the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light.

סוד הצמצום באור אין סוף ברוך הוא

[This note will outline] the mystical principle of the *tzimtzum* of the *Ein Sof*-light,

Before the *tzimtzum*, G-d's infinite manifestation was predominant. *Tzimtzum* caused His capacity for limitation and finitude, which previously had been submerged within His infinite power, to be revealed.

וצמצום אדם קדמון

and the *tzimtzum* of *Adam Kadmon*, which is the highest state of existence after the *tzimtzum*, and the primal thought that contains and is the source of all subsequent emanations and creations,

וסוד הדיקנא

and the esoteric doctrine of [the *tzimtzum* of] *Dikna*.

The life-force that animates hair is exceedingly attenuated, to the point that cutting it causes no pain. Accordingly, the terms *Dikna* (lit., “beard”) and *se‘arot* (“hair”) are used to represent a certain form of *tzimtzum*.⁴

שסוד כל הצמצומים: לצמצם האור, שיתלבש בבחינת כלים ד' ספירות

For the underlying purpose of all the contractions is to condense the light, in order to enable it to become en clothed within the vessels of the Ten *Sefirot* [of the World of *Atzilut*].

These “vessels” assume the specific form of wisdom or kindness. By contrast, the divine light that permeates these vessels is essentially simple. When, through *tzimtzum*, the vessels come into being and the light clothes itself within them and becomes fused with them, wisdom and kindness become one with G-d.

והנה אחר שנתלבש אור אין סוף בבחינת כלים דחב"ד, אז שייך לומר מה שכתב הרמב"ם: הוא היודע והוא המדע והוא הידוע, ובידיעת עצמו וכו'

It is only after the *Ein Sof*-light becomes clothed within the vessels of *ChaBaD* that Maimonides' statement [about the Holy One, blessed be He] is in place: “He is the Knower, and He is the Knowledge, and He is the Known,...and by knowing Himself [He knows all creation].”

לפי שבחינת כלים דאצילות נעשים נשמה וחיות לבריאה יצירה עשיה ולכל אשר בהם

For the vessels of *Atzilut* become the soul and life-force of [the Worlds of] *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, and all [the creatures] therein.

By “knowing Himself” with the knowledge that is to be found in the vessels of *Atzilut*, He also knows all the Worlds and creatures of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, since they derive their life-force from these vessels.

All this, however, can only come about after the various *tzimtzumim* have brought about the contraction of the light, enabling it to be vested in the vessels of *Atzilut*.

אבל בלי צמצום והלבשה הנ"ל, לא שייך כלל לומר: הוא היודע והוא המדע וכו'

However, without the aforesaid *tzimtzum* and investiture [of the light in the vessels], it is not at all appropriate to say that “He is the Knower and He is the Knowledge...,” i.e., *the whole category of knowledge cannot be ascribed to G-d, even in so exalted a manner as in the statement that “He is the Knower.”*

כי אינו בבחינת וגדר דעת ומדע כלל, חס ושלום

for He is not within the realm and domain of knowing and knowledge at all, G-d forbid,

אלא למעלה מעלה עילוי רב עד אין קץ, אפילו מבחינת וגדר חכמה

but infinitely elevated above even the level and the bounds of wisdom,

For even the statement that “He is the Knower.” *implies restricting G-d, so to speak, to one particular faculty — viz., wisdom, as distinct from (say) the attribute of kindness or mercy. G-d, however, utterly transcends all such bounds,*

עד שבחינת חכמה נחשבת אצלו יתברך כבחינת עשיה גשמית

to the extent that in relation to Him, the level of wisdom is considered like the level of physical action.

END OF NOTE

Before the note the Alter Rebbe had said that “the manner and nature of the flow and emanation — how and what — is known to the savants.” I.e., it is they who understand how from the *Ein Sof*-light there emanated the intellectual and emotive attributes, which even after their emanation are so completely fused with G-d that it can be said that “He is the Knowledge....” The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say:

והנה אין לנו עסק בנסתרות

Now, we are not concerned with esoteric matters — how the emanations of the *Sefirot* from the *Ein Sof*-light came about, and the subsequent manner of their unity with Him,

אך הנגלות לנו: להאמין אמונה שלמה דאיהו וגרמוהי חד

but it is incumbent upon us to believe with complete faith, matters that are revealed to us — that He and His attributes, viz., the vessels and *Sefirot*, are One.

דהיינו: מדותיו של הקב"ה, ורצונו, וחכמתו ובינתו ודעתו עם מהותו ועצמותו

I.e., the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His will, and His wisdom and understanding and knowledge, [are One] with His Essence and Being,

המרומם לבדו רוממות אין קץ מבחינת חכמה ושכל והשגה

Who alone is exalted by infinite elevations above the level of wisdom and intellect and comprehension.

ולכן גם יחודו, שמתייחד עם מדותיו שהאציל מאתו יתברך, גם כן אינו בבחינת השגה

Hence, since He totally transcends intellect and comprehension, His union with the attributes which He emanated from Himself is also beyond the realm of comprehension;

להשיג איך מתייחד בהן

[i.e., it is impossible] to understand how He unites with them; rather, this may be apprehended only through faith.

ולכן נקראו מדותיו של הקב"ה, שהן הספירות, בזהר הקדוש: רזא דמהימנותא

In the holy *Zohar*, therefore, the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He, which are the *Sefirot*, are called “the secret of faith,”

שהיא האמונה שלמעלה מן השכל

which is the faith that transcends intellect, for this concept cannot be grasped intellectually, but only through faith

FOOTNOTES

[1.](#) *Tehillim* 104:24.

[2.](#) *Tehillim* 104:24.

[3.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “This is explained at greater length in many places in *Chassidut*, e.g., in *Mitzvat Haamanat Elokut* [in *Derech Mitzvotecha* of the *Tzemach Tzedek*].”

[4.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “This is explained more extensively in many places in *Chassidut*, e.g., in *Shaar HaYichud* [in *Ner Mitzvah veTorah Or* of the *Mitteler Rebbe*].”



Chapter 10

Concluding the previous chapter, the Alter Rebbe explained that since G-d is infinitely exalted above intellect, intellectual means are inadequate to grasp His absolute union with the *Sefirot* of the World of *Atzilut*. These are limited to the particular Divine attributes of wisdom, kindness, and so on. The *Zohar* thus terms these attributes “the secret of *faith*,” for their union with the Divine beggars mortal comprehension.

אך בכל מקום

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the *Sefirot* transcend intellect and comprehension,

הואיל ודברה תורה כלשון בני אדם, לשכך את האוזן מה שהיא יכולה לשמוע

since¹ “the Torah speaks as in the language of man” in order to² “modulate for the ear what it is able to hear,”

לכך ניתן רשות לחכמי האמת לדבר בספירות בדרך משל

permission has been granted to the Kabbalists (lit., “the scholars of truth”) to speak allegorically of the *Sefirot*.

Note of the Rebbe: “The use of the term משל (‘allegory’) stresses that the allegory and its object are not identical, but merely that there is a similarity between the *relationship* that subsists among the particulars of the analogy to the *relationship* that subsists among the particulars of the analogue. There is, however, no connection at all between the particular aspects of the analogy and the analogue.

“Here, for instance: the sun’s rays and the sun do not compare in any way at all to the *Sefirot* and their Source. The analogy refers only to the manner in which the sun’s rays are united (i.e., related) with the sun itself. This analogy makes it easier for us to comprehend the unity of the *Sefirot* with their Source.”

וקראו אותן אורות

[The Kabbalists] called [the *Sefirot*] “lights”, using terminology borrowed from the revelation of light,

כדי שעל ידי המשל הזה, יובן לנו קצת ענין היחוד של הקב"ה ומדותיו

so that by means of this metaphor, the nature of the unity of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His attributes, will be somewhat understood by us.

שהוא, בדרך משל, כעין יחוד אור השמש שבתוך גוף כדור השמש, עם גוף השמש שנקרא מאור

It is, by way of illustration, like the unity of the sunlight that is within the solar globe, with the solar globe [itself], which is called not only “sun” but also a “luminary,” inasmuch as it emits light,

כמו שכתוב: את המאור הגדול וגו'

as it is written,³ that G-d created “the greater luminary...,” i.e., the very source of light.

והזיו והניצו' המתפשט ומאיר ממנו נקרא אור, כמו שכתוב: ויקרא אלקים לאור יום

The radiation and the beam which spreads forth and shines from it is called “light”, as it is written,⁴ “And G-d called the light — day.”

וכשהאור הוא במקורו, בגוף השמש, הוא מיוחד עמו בתכלית היחוד

When the light is within its source in the orb of the sun, it is united with it in absolute unity,

כי אין שם רק עצם אחד, שהוא גוף המאור המאיר

for there, within the sun, there is only one entity, namely, the body of the luminary which emits light;

It would hardly be reasonable to say that within the orb of the sun there exist two things: the luminary and its light. Within the sun globe, only the sun itself exists.

כי הזיו והאור שם עצם אחד ממש עם גוף המאור המאיר, ואין לו שום מציאות כלל בפני עצמו

for there the radiation and light is absolutely one being with the body of the luminary which illuminates, and it has no existence by itself at all.

The appearance of radiation and light outside the sun would seem to indicate that light exists within the sun itself, for if it reaches out and illuminates the whole world it is surely found within its source. In fact, however, when sunlight is considered at the stage at which it is found within the luminary itself, it is so completely identified with it that it cannot be termed light at all; within the sun, the light has no existence with an independent identity.⁵

וכדברים האלה ממש ויותר מזה, הן מדותיו של הקב"ה ורצונו וחכמתו בעולם האצילות, עם מהותו ועצמותו, כביכול

Precisely in this manner, and even more so, is [the unity of] (on the one hand) the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Will and wisdom in the World of *Atzilut*, with (on the other hand) His Essence and Being, as it were,

המתלבש בתוכם ומתייחד עמהם בתכלית היחוד

Who becomes clothed in them — in the *Sefirot* of *Atzilut* — and unites with them in perfect unity,

מאחר שנמשכו ונאצלו מאתו יתברך, על דרך משל, כדרך התפשטות האור מהשמש

since they derived and emanated from Him just as (by way of analogy) light is diffused from the sun.

אך לא ממש בדרך זה, רק בדרך רחוקה ונפלאה מהשגתינו, כי גבהו דרכיו מדרכינו

However, [G-d's unity with His attributes] is not exactly in this manner, i.e., like the fusion of the sun with the light which is still within it, but in a manner which is remote and concealed from our comprehension, for⁶ His ways are higher than our ways.

ומכל מקום, לשכך האוזן

Nevertheless, despite its superior manner of unity, since one must “modulate for the ear [what it is able to hear],”

נשמע ונתבונן ממשל אור השמש המיוחד ובטל במקורו, ואינו עולה בשם בפני עצמו, רק שם המקור לבדו

we can perceive and comprehend that just as in the analogy, the light of the sun which is united with and nullified in its source has no name of its own, only the name of its source,

כך כל מדותיו של הקב"ה ורצונו וחכמתו אינן עולות ונקראות בשמות אלו כלל

so too, all the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Will and wisdom, are not designated and called by these names at all, relative to Him,

אלא לגבי הנבראים, עליונים ותחתונים

but only in relation to the creatures which are (Note of the Rebbe:) “below the World of *Atzilut*, i.e., in *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, these [creatures] being” [both] higher and lower,

שהווייתם וחיותם והנהגתם, שהקב"ה מהוה ומחיה אותם ומנהיגם

which are brought into existence and given life and guided in their conduct by the Holy One, blessed be He,

הוא ברצונו וחכמתו ובינתו ודעתו, המתלבשות במדותיו הקדושות

through His Will and wisdom and understanding and knowledge, which garb themselves in His holy emotive attributes, such as *Chesed*, *Gevurah* and *Tiferet*.

Thus, the *Sefirot* are termed *Chochmah*, *Binah*, *Daat*, *Chesed*, and so forth, *in relation to the beings* which are created and vivified by G-d through His Will and wisdom, and so forth, which clothe themselves in the emotive attributes.

כדאיתא במדרש: בעשרה דברים נברא העולם, בחכמה בתבונה ובדעת וכו'

As it is stated in the *Midrash*,⁷ “By means of ten things was the world created: by wisdom, by understanding and by knowledge,...

דכתיב: ה' בחכמה יסד ארץ, כונן שמים בתבונה, בדעתו תהומות נבקעו וגו'

as it is written,⁸ ‘G-d founded the earth with wisdom; He established the heavens with understanding; with His knowledge the depths of the abyss were burst open,’ ...“;

We thus see from the *Midrash*⁹ that the world was created by means of “ten things”, i.e., the Ten *Sefirot*.

וכמאמר אליהו: דאפיקת עשר תיקונים, וקרינן להון עשר ספירן

and as expressed by Elijah, in the passage that opens with *Patach Eliyahu*, and forms part of the introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar*, “You have brought forth ten *Tikkunim* (‘garments’), and we call them ten *Sefirot*,

לאנהגא בהון עלמין סתימין דלא אתגליין, ועלמין דאתגליין

through which to direct hidden worlds unrevealed (i.e., worlds that transcend mortal comprehension) and worlds revealed (i.e., worlds that are accessible to mortal comprehension),

ובהון אתכסיאת כו'

and through them You conceal Yourself...“ — from created beings, so that they will not be able to perceive the Divine life-force that creates and vivifies them.

The Alter Rebbe now offers an instance of how creation came about through the *Sefirot*.

על דרך משל, ביום ראשון מששת ימי בראשית נגלית מדת החסד, כלולה מכל מדותיו הקדושות, ורצונו וחכמתו ובינתו ודעתו מלובשין בה

For example, on the first of the Six Days of Creation, the attribute of kindness — comprised of all [G-d's] holy emotive attributes, with His Will and wisdom and understanding and knowledge en clothed in it — was revealed,

וברא בה את האור, במאמר: יהי אור

and with [this attribute] He created light, through the utterance, “Let there be light,”

שהיא בחינת התפשטות והמשכת האור לעולם מלמעלה, והתפשטותו בעולם מסוף העולם עד סופו, שהיא בחינת מדת חסד

which is a diffusion and flow of light into the world from above, and its diffusion in the world from one end to the other. This [creation of light] is [an expression of] the attribute of kindness, for *Chesed* is characterized by diffusion and revelation.

רק מפני שכלולה גם ממדת גבורה

Yet, because [the attribute of kindness] also includes the attribute of might (for the attributes of *Atzilut* all incorporate each other),

לכן לא היה רוחני כאור שלמעלה ממש

therefore [the light] was not as spiritual as the actual Supernal Light,

וגם נתלבש בעולם הזה, שהוא בחינת גבול ותכלית, שהוא מהלך ת"ק שנה מהארץ לרקיע וממזרח למערב

and it also became en clothed in this world, which is finite and limited, for¹⁰ “it is a journey of five hundred years from earth to heaven and from east to west.”

These limitations would not have come to pass were creation to proceed undiluted from the attribute of kindness, which diffuses without limitation. However, since the attribute of might — the source of limitation — is incorporated within this kindness, creation is finite.

At any rate, because the attribute of kindness was revealed and was dominant during the first day of creation, created beings related to *Chesed* — such as light — came into existence on that day.

וכן ביום שני נגלית מדת גבורה, כלולה משאר מדות, ורצונו וכו'

In like manner, on the second day there was revealed the attribute of might, which is composed of the other emotive attributes and His Will, and so on, i.e., *ChaBaD*,

וברא בה הרקיע, במאמר: יהי רקיע בתוך המים, ויהי מבדיל בין מים למים

and with [the attribute of might, G-d] created the firmament, through the utterance, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.”

שהיא בחינת צמצום וגבורות, להעלים מים העליונים הרוחניים ממים התחתונים

This [separation of the waters by the firmament] is an expression of *tzimtzum* and restraints (*Gevurot*), to conceal the upper spiritual waters from the lower waters.

ועל ידי זה נתגשמו התחתונים, בהבדלם מהעליונים

Through this separation from the upper waters, the lower waters became material.

This materiality was brought about through the *tzimtzum* and concealment which emanate from the attribute of might — the attribute that was revealed and dominant during the second day of creation.

ומדת חסד כלולה בה, כי: עולם חסד יבנה

The attribute of kindness is included in [this attribute], for¹¹ “the world is built with kindness,” (Note of the Rebbe: “[and the very act of building itself is] an expression of kindness”),

Thus, even where might prevails, it is tempered by the attribute of *Chesed*.

שהכל כדי שתראה היבשה ואדם עליה לעבוד את ה'

for all this — the division of the waters — is in order that dry land appear and man [live] upon it to serve G-d; thus, this too is ultimately an expression of kindness.

וכן כולן

And so with them all: each of the other emotive attributes was likewise revealed on each subsequent day, in order to bring created beings into existence.

וזהו שאמר אליהו בתיקונים שם: לאחזאה איך אתנהיג עלמא בצדק ומשפט כו'

And it is this thought that Elijah expressed in the *Tikkunim*, *loc. cit.*: “[The purpose of the emanation of the *Sefirot* was] to show how the world is conducted with...righteousness and justice;...

צדק איהו דין, משפט איהו רחמי כו', כולא לאחזאה איך אתנהיג עלמא

righteousness is...law (i.e., the attribute of *Gevurah*), justice is...mercy...; all [the revelation of the attributes] is to show how the world is conducted;

אבל לאו דאית לך צדק ידיעא, דאיהו דין

but it is not that You have a knowable righteousness, which is law,

ולאו משפט ידיעא, דאיהו רחמי

nor a knowable justice, which is mercy,

ולאו מכל אינון מדות כלל

nor any of these [other] attributes at all.“

This means to say that righteousness and justice exist as separately identifiable attributes only relative to worlds and created beings. As regards G-d Himself, “it is not that *You* have” these attributes. In relation to Him, they do not exist independently at all, being completely unified with Him, just as sunlight enjoys no independent identity when within the sun

Commentary of the Rebbe on Chapter Ten

In the course of the *frabrengen* of *Yud-Tet* Kislev, 5728, the Rebbe explained the statement in the beginning of ch. 10 regarding the unity of the Divine attributes with the

Ein Sof. The Alter Rebbe there likens their unity to “the unity of the sunlight that is within the solar globe, with the solar globe [itself].”

The Alter Rebbe goes on to say that the sun’s rays are found not only outside the solar globe but must also surely exist to an even greater degree within their source — the sun. Nevertheless, insofar as sunlight is to be found within its source, it is united with it to such a degree that “it has no existence by itself at all.” It therefore cannot be deemed “light”, for within the sun globe “there is only one entity, namely, the body of the luminary which emits light.”

Turning from the analogue to the analogy, the Alter Rebbe now says: “Precisely in this manner, and even more so,” is G-d’s unity with His attributes. So perfect, indeed, is this unity, that the attributes are not called by any names at all, whether Will, wisdom, kindness, or whatever, for they are all truly One with G-d Himself.

* * *

A number of points here call for clarification. To begin with: As soon as the Alter Rebbe proposes the analogy of the unity of the sun’s light with the sun, and before he even begins to explain it in detail, he mentions that the sun “is called a ‘luminary,’” and buttresses this point by citing a proof-text from Scripture (“the greater luminary”). He then goes on to say that “the radiation...which...shines from it is called ‘light’, as it is written, ‘And G-d called the light — day.’”

Now this is somewhat problematic. Firstly: All that is necessary to know concerning the sun’s unity with its light while this light is within it, is that the sun serves as the source of the light. (We are then able to adduce that when something is found within its source, it does not possess a personality of its own.) Why is it important to let us know that the sun is called a luminary and its radiation is called light?

Secondly: Granting that a valid reason exists for the Alter Rebbe’s need to explain that the sun is a luminary, is it necessary to seek proof for this from Scripture? If the sun radiates light, then surely it is by definition a luminary.

Thirdly: Even more perplexing is why the Alter Rebbe not only informs us (as above) of the other most elementary fact — that the radiation of the sun is called light — but finds it necessary to go on to cite Scriptural evidence for this. All this seems to be completely superfluous. Furthermore, what innovative insights are we intended to glean from the verse that tells us that “G-d called the light — day”?

These questions become even stronger when we bear in mind that the same illustration of the unity of sunlight with the sun, has already been used in ch. 3, and even earlier, in ch. 33 of the first part of *Tanya*. There the Alter Rebbe did not find it necessary to inform us that the sun is a luminary and that its rays are light, and understandably, no proof is sought from Scripture.

With regard to ch. 33, one might answer that since the Alter Rebbe himself indicates that the illustration will be treated at length elsewhere, and it is only mentioned there parenthetically, he does not go into detail at that stage. In ch. 3 of our text, however, this illustration is treated at length. If it is indeed necessary for the Alter Rebbe to spell out the above-mentioned details, why does he not do so in ch. 3?

We are thus compelled to conclude that here, in ch. 10, when repeating the illustration of the sunlight that is still in the sun, the Alter Rebbe seeks to explain something new — something that warrants the additional details that were previously unnecessary.

In order to understand the difference between what the Alter Rebbe sought to teach in each of these two cases, it is first necessary to explain the subject of each of these two analogues (which become understandable through their common analogy). And they are indeed different.

The analogy in ch. 10 seeks to explain the unity of G-d with the Supernal *Sefirot*: although they bear not the slightest comparison with G-d, they are nevertheless united with Him, to the point that “He and His attributes are One,” in perfect and uncompounded unity.

This is indeed mind-boggling. Ch. 9 made it clear that the Divine attributes are even more distant from G-d Himself than the distance that separates the lowly level of action from the lofty level of wisdom — so distant, in fact, that we cannot even negate wisdom in relation to G-d. How, then, can we possibly say that the attributes are united with Him in perfect unity?

In order to explain this, the Alter Rebbe proposes the analogy of sunlight within the sun. Light, too, while found within the sun is absolutely *united* with it. (This is a novel aspect of the concept that is not found in the preceding chapters.)

In order to explain in turn how this is the case, the Alter Rebbe first had to state that the sun is called a luminary and its rays are called light (as shall soon be explained). This is not true of ch. 3, where the Alter Rebbe seeks to explain (not the unity of the *Sefirot*, but rather) how *created beings* are nullified and of no account in relation to the Divine life-force that creates them constantly *ex nihilo*.

Since created beings are absolute nothingness in relation to the creative force that brings them into existence and provides them with life, it is thus clearly impossible to imagine, G-d forbid, that they are united with Him; it is impossible to say that “He and His *creation* are One,” heaven forbid. The reason is simple: Since all of creation is truly naught in relation to G-d, there exists no *being* which we could describe as being united with Him.

Ch. 10, by contrast, deals with the manner in which the *Sefirot* are united with G-d. Concerning this unity the Alter Rebbe provides the analogy of the sunlight that is still within the sun, at which stage “it is united with it in absolute unity.”

This aspect of unity is made more readily understandable in the analogy by explaining that the sun is called a luminary and that its rays are called light, and by citing Scripture to prove this point.

The Alter Rebbe intends to stress that only that which radiates *beyond* the sun is called light; the light as found within the sun is not deemed light at all. Since this is a novel thought, he finds support for it by citing the verse, “And G-d called light — day.” This verse tells us that the defining characteristic of light is “day”, as opposed to the darkness of “night”. This means to say that light refers, like the term “day”, to actual and visible illumination. By contrast, that which does not express itself overtly in actual illumination as light does by day is not deemed to be light. (This is true even when it exists, but its existence is assimilated in its source.)

The reason that light while found in its source is not considered to be light is self-understood: while there, it is one with its source in a state of absolute unity. Were it to be designated as light, we would then have within the orb of the sun two distinct entities — the luminary and the light. But this cannot be, for the source of light is deemed by the proof-text to be a luminary to the exclusion of all else: only one entity exists there, namely, the luminary. Saying that sunlight is united with the sun itself *in absolute unity* signifies that it is exclusively so, that even the light that is to be found in the luminary has no separate identity as light, but is itself [assimilated within the] luminary.

This detail is crucial to the analogue, namely, to the understanding that G-d’s unity with His attributes is a perfect and absolute unity (as mentioned at the beginning of ch. 8). It is therefore clear that “all the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Will and wisdom, are not designated and called by these names at all,” as the Alter Rebbe says in ch. 10. Were the attributes to be designated by the names Will, wisdom, kindness, might, and so on, then there would be, G-d forbid, a compound of G-d Himself (the infinite *Ein Sof*-light) with His attributes.

In order for this to be understood in the analogue, it is necessary for the Alter Rebbe to explain in the analogy as well, that only that which spreads forth *beyond* the sun is called “light”; while found within its source, however, it “has no name of its own at all, only the name of its source” — the luminary.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Berachot* 31b. [2.](#) *Mechilta* and *Tanchuma* on *Shmot* 19:18. [3.](#) *Bereishit* 1:16. [4.](#) *Ibid.* 1:5. [5.](#) Commenting on the above statement that the light “has no existence by itself at all,” the Rebbe notes: “It is impossible to say that in relation to the *luminary* the light is of absolutely no account, inasmuch as the luminary itself gives significance to light. (Indeed, it is on account of the light that it is termed a luminary.)” [6.](#) Cf. *Yeshayahu* 55:9. [7.](#) *Chagigah* 12a. The term “*Midrash*” also embraces the homiletical passages (i.e., the *Aggadot*) in the *Talmud*. [8.](#) *Mishlei* 3:19-20. [9.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “Seemingly the author ought to have quoted an explicit statement in the *Mishnah* [*Avot* 5:1], ‘The world was created through ten [Divine] utterances.’ But [the Alter Rebbe quotes the *Talmud* instead, for] the *Mishnah* speaks of this in relation to the level of *Malchut* and the revelation (i.e., utterance — as explained above) of every *Sefirah*, while the proof sought

here must relate to *Chochmah* and *Binah*, etc., themselves.” [10](#). Cf. *Chagigah* 13a and *Tanna Devei Eliyahu Rabbah* 2. [11](#). *Tehillim* 89:3.

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Chapter 11

The Alter Rebbe explained in the previous chapter that the *Sefirot* — the Divine attributes, and the Divine wisdom and Will — are designated by their respective names only in relation to created beings, which are granted existence and life and guidance by Him Who enclothes Himself in those attributes.

However, since these attributes are united with Him in a perfect unity, they are not identifiable by any names whatever *when considered relative to Him*. In this they correspond to the sunlight that is still within the sun: it is not deemed “light”, because at that stage it is absolutely absorbed within its source.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain that not only are the attributes and *Sefirot* called by their respective names *in relation to created beings alone*, but even the Ten Utterances — through which the attributes become manifest, thereby bringing created beings into existence and providing them with life — are also called “Utterances” only in relation to created beings. They are not called so relative to G-d, however, inasmuch as they are united with the attributes, which in turn are united in perfect unity with the Holy One, blessed be He.

והנה עשרה מאמרות גם כן נקראו בשם מאמרות לגבי הנבראים בלבד

The Ten Utterances are also designated “Utterances” only in relation to created beings, since this is a term that relates to revelation, as shall presently be explained.

כי כמו שהמדות שבנשמת האדם, כשבאות להתגלות במעשה

For just as the emotive attributes of the human soul, when they surface in order to be revealed in [a corresponding] action,

הן באות מלובשות באותיות המחשבה

appear en clothed in the letters of thought, [so do the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He].

כגון מדת החסד ורחמים שבנשמה, אי אפשר לבוא לידי התגלות בפועל ממש, כי אם על ידי שמחשב בדעתו ומהרהר מעשה הצדקה וחסד, לעשותה בפועל ממש

For example, the soul's attribute of kindness and mercy cannot be revealed (i.e., find expression) in actual deed unless one first thinks about and contemplates doing an actual act of charity and kindness,

כי אי אפשר לעשות בלי מחשבה

for one cannot act without thought.

It sometimes happens that before an emotive attribute finds expression in action, it must first become en clothed not only in thought but also in speech. This is now explained.

ואם מצוה לאחרים לעשות, כמו המלך

If a person, such as a king, commands others to perform [an act of kindness],

אזי מתלבשת מדת החסד, וגם אותיות המחשבה, באותיות הדבור

then the attribute of kindness and with it the letters of thought are garbed in the letters of speech.

וכן כשמדבר דברי חסד ורחמים לרעהו

([1](#)This is also the case when one speaks words of kindness and compassion to his friend.)

Thus, it is through letters of thought or letters of speech that the soul's faculties and attributes are revealed.

כך, על דרך משל, מדותיו של הקב"ה, כשבאות לבחינת התגלות פעולתן בתחתונים

So, figuratively speaking, when the emotive attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He, reach the level at which their activity is to be revealed in the lower [worlds],

נקרא גילוי זה והמשכת פעולה זו בשם מאמר וצירוף אותיות

this revelation and the flow of this action are called an "Utterance" and a combination of letters,

שהרי אי אפשר שתהיה שום פעולה נמשכת ממדותיו הקדושות, בלי צירופים הנקראים בשם אותיות

for there can be no action proceeding from His holy emotive attributes without [the intermediacy of] combinations which are called "letters".

Action can result (or be revealed) from G-d's emotive attributes only when a number of particular powers combine to produce this revelation.

כגון לבריא את האור ממדת החסד, נמשך ממנה המשכת פעולה וכח, לפעול ולברוא בו את האור

For instance, for the creation of light from the attribute of kindness, there issued from it a flow of action and a power with which to produce and create the light.

The attribute of kindness is capable of producing varying results and various manifestations of creation, as shall soon be explained. In order for it to create light rather than something else, the attribute of *Chesed* must produce a specific revelation and power whose makeup is such that specifically light will be created from it.

והמשכת כח זה וחיות זו נקראת בשם מאמר ואותיות: יהי אור

The flow of this power and this life-force is called by the name of the “Utterance” and the [combination of the] letters [that constitute the Biblical phrase], “Let there be light.”

כי אף שאינן כאותיות מחשבה שלנו, הם ושלום

Although they are not actual letters of thought like our letters of thought, G-d forbid,

The Alter Rebbe had previously drawn an analogy: just as a person’s soul is revealed through letters of thought, so too do the Divine attributes become manifest through letters of thought. He therefore forestalls any misunderstanding by pointing out in the above clause that whereas the soul actually contains letters, with all their inherent limitations, this is not so Above.

מכל מקום הם ענין המורה על התהוות האור מאין ליש

nevertheless, they are similar to our letters of thought in that they are a phenomenon which indicates the bringing into existence of the light from nothing; i.e., they are the particular power that creates light.

שלכן נברא האור מהמשכת כח זה, ולא נבראו ממנו דברים אחרים שנבראו גם כן ממדת החסד, כמו מים וכיוצא בהם

Hence, light was created from this flow of power, and not other things which were also created from the attribute of kindness, such as water and the like,

Thus, the combination of letters is such that this Divine power specifically creates light. It is therefore deemed to be the “Utterance” which proclaimed, “Let there be light.” This selfsame attribute of kindness creates other things, such as water,

מפני שנתלבשו בהם כחות בבחינת צירופים אחרים, המורים על התהוות המים וכיוצא

because in them were clothed powers from other combinations, which indicate the bringing into existence of water and the like.

ונמצא כי כל חיות וכחות הנמשכות ממדותיו הקדושות לתחתונים, לבראם מאין ליש ולהחיותם ולקיימם, נקראו בשם אותיות הקדושות

Accordingly, all life-forces and powers which issue from [G-d's] holy emotive attributes to the lower [worlds], to create them *ex nihilo* and to give them life and sustain them, are called "holy letters."

שהן בחינת המשכת החיות מרצונו וחכמתו ומדותיו, להתהוות עולמות ולהחיותם

These are the flow of the life-force from His Will and His wisdom and His emotive attributes, to bring worlds into being and give them life.

והם שני מיני עולמות

These worlds that are created by the letters are of two kinds:

עלמין סתמיין דלא אתגליין, הם המתהווים וחיים וקיימים מכחות והמשכות נעלמות, כמו אותיות המחשבה שבנשמת האדם על דרך משל

"hidden worlds unrevealed," which come into existence and live and are sustained by concealed powers and life-forces, like, for example, the letters of thought in the human soul;

Just as the letters of each man's thought are concealed from others, these Divine powers are similarly concealed from created beings. From them were created the "hidden worlds."

ועלמין דאתגליין נבראו וחיים מהתגלות שנתגלו כחות והמשכות הנעלמות, הנקראות בשם אותיות המחשבה

and "worlds revealed," [which] were created and live from the revelation of the hidden powers and life-forces called "letters of thought."

וכשהן בבחינת התגלות, להחיות עלמין דאתגליין

When these ["letters of thought"] are in a state of revelation, in order to give life to the revealed worlds,

נקראות בשם מאמרות ודבר ה' ורוח פיו

they are called "Utterances" and "the word of G-d" and the "breath of His mouth,"

כמו אותיות הדבור באדם, דרך משל, שהן מגלות לשומעים מה שהיה צפון וסתום בלבו

like, for example, the letters of a man's speech, which reveal to his listeners what was concealed and hidden in his heart.

Likewise, the Divine "letters of speech" are a revelation of the force that grants existence and infuses life into those created beings that are of the category of "worlds revealed."

אבל באמת, בחינת אותיות הדבור שלמעלה, היא למעלה מעלה ממדרגת ומהות חכמה ושכל הנבראים

In truth, however, the Supernal letters of speech are far higher than the level and essence of the wisdom and intellect of created beings.

In this they differ from the letters of man's thought and speech, which are "inanimate", and belong to a level far lower than intellect.

The Alter Rebbe now demonstrates that the Supernal letters of speech transcend man's intellect and wisdom:

שהרי במאמר ואותיות: נעשה אדם בצלמנו וכו', נברא האדם, בעל חכמה ושכל

For man, possessor of wisdom and intellect, was created by the "Utterance" and the letters of [the phrase],² "Let us make man in our image...;"

Since wisdom and intellect are derived from these letters, it is obvious that the letters themselves are far superior to them.

או אפילו בהבל העליון לבד, כדכתיב: ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים

or [man, possessor of wisdom and intellect, was created] even³ by the Divine breath alone, as it is written,⁴ "And He breathed into his nostrils a soul of life."

It was from this "breath" that was breathed into man, that he became a rational being.

אם כן, הדבור והבל העליון הוא מקור החכמה ושכל שבנשמת אדם הראשון

Hence, since Divine speech and breath create man, who possesses wisdom and intellect, it follows that the Divine speech and breath are the source of wisdom and intellect in the soul of Adam,

הכוללת כל נשמות הצדיקים, שהם גדולים ממלאכי השרת

which contains all the souls of the *tzaddikim*, who are superior to the ministering angels, and whose intellect too is superior to that of the angels. All this came forth from the Divine speech and breath.

והיינו, לפי שאותיות דבורו יתברך הן בחינת המשכות כחות וחיות ממדותיו יתברך

The reason [for the transcendence of the Supernal letters over the soul] is that the letters of [G-d's] speech are effluences of power and life-force from His emotive attributes,

המיוחדות במהותו ועצמותו בתכלית היחוד, שהוא למעלה מעלה לאין קץ ממדרגת חכמה שבנבראים

which are united with His Essence and Being in a perfect unity that is infinitely higher than the level of wisdom in created beings.

ולא נקראו בשם אותיות לגבי הנבראים, אלא לגבי מדותיו יתברך, בכבודן ובעצמן

They are termed “letters” not in relation to created beings, but only relative to [G-d’s] emotive attributes themselves.

The name “letters”, which signifies that they are lower than wisdom and intellect, is not applied to them in relation to created beings, for as explained earlier, they are far superior to created wisdom and intellect. Rather, this term is applied to them relative to G-d’s emotive attributes, inasmuch as they are only “letters” — revelations — of these attributes.

והנה הן כ”ב מיני המשכות חיות וכחות שונים זה מזה

Now they — the Supernal letters — are twenty-two kinds of effluences of life-force and power, differing from one another,

שבהן נבראו כל העולמות, עליונים ותחתונים, וכל הברואים שבתוכם

by which all the higher and lower worlds and all the creatures in them were created.

שכך עלה ברצונו וחכמתו יתברך, לברוא העולם בכ”ב מיני המשכות שונות דוקא, לא פחות ולא יותר

For so it arose in [G-d’s] Will and wisdom, that He create the world with exactly twenty-two different kinds of effluence, neither fewer nor more,

והן הן כ”ב אותיות הקבועות בפה ולשון, כדתנן בספר יצירה

and these⁵ are the twenty-two letters which are fixed in the mouth and tongue, as we have learned in *Sefer Yetzirah*.

ותמונתן בכתב היא מורה על ציור ההמשכה, כמו שיתבאר לקמן

(⁶Their written shape — i.e., the shape of the letters of these Utterance as written in the Torah — indicates the form of the flow, as will be explained later.)

שגם אותיות הדבור והמחשבה שבנפש האדם הן המשכות מהשכל והמדות שבנפש, ממהותן ועצמותן, כמו שמבואר במקום אחר

For the letters of speech and thought in the human soul are also outflows from the essence and being of the intellect and the emotive attributes, as is explained elsewhere

Commentary of the Rebbe on Chapter Eleven

Having explained towards the end of ch. 11 that the Supernal letters are twenty-two different kinds of effluences of life-force and power by which G-d created the world, the Alter Rebbe goes on to say that “these are the twenty-two letters which are fixed in the mouth and tongue, as we have learned in *Sefer Yetzirah*.” The Alter Rebbe then goes on to say that the shape of the written letters “indicates the form of the flow.” He concludes: “For the letters of speech and thought in the human soul are also outflows from the essence and being of the intellect and emotive attributes [of the soul].”

The Rebbe asks a number of questions: First of all, what is the Alter Rebbe’s intent in saying all of the above; how does all this relate to our text? Furthermore, what is novel about the concept that the twenty-two letters “are fixed in the mouth and tongue”? Why, moreover, must proof be adduced from *Sefer Yetzirah*, when this is something which is readily apparent to all? And why does the Alter Rebbe not state all this in ch. 2, where he explains that the Divine life-force which creates all creatures is composed of the Supernal Letters, and so forth?

In addition, the Alter Rebbe’s statement that “their written shape indicates the form of the flow,” emphatically belongs at the end of ch. 12, where he discusses the differences between the letters at length.

The crux of the matter, explains the Rebbe, is as follows:

The general content of this chapter and the one preceding it is that (a) the Ten Utterances, the Supernal letters, are also united with G-d; (b) the manner of their union is wondrous. Nonetheless they are called “light” and “Utterance” inasmuch as “the Torah speaks as in the language of man”; i.e., there is at least the degree of similarity that obtains between an analogy and its analogue. The *Sefirot* may thus be likened to light, and their effluences — the Ten Utterances — may be likened to mortal utterances and letters.

Accordingly, the following questions arise:

(a) Man’s speech and letters are formed by the larynx, palate, tongue, etc., as well as by his breath. Thus, the letters of man’s speech do not derive from his intellect and emotive attributes. How, then, are these letters analogous to the Ten Utterances, which flow from the intellect and emotive attributes of G-d and remain connected with him?

(b) In point of fact, it is true even Above that speech and letters derive from the Supernal “five organs of verbal articulation” (as discussed in ch. 2). How does this accord with the statement that the letters emanate from the Divine intellect and emotive attributes?

(c) The terminology in the analogue is that the power for the creation of light emanates (and not that light is “created”) from the attribute of *Chesed* through the Utterance, “Let there be light.” The same is true with regard to the power by which water is created; it, too, emanates from the attribute of *Chesed*. All this clearly implies that the powers and the letters are already found within this attribute. However, this is not the case with regard to the mortal breath that forms letters. The breath itself has assumed no form at all:

it is only formed into the shape of letters in the course of its passage through the organs of verbal articulation. Thus, the letters formed in the mouth are unlike the powers and letters, which are already found within the emotive attributes.

All these questions are answered by the Alter Rebbe when he states that the effluence of the powers and life-forces which emanate from the *Sefirot* to bring about creation is — both Above and below - - “the twenty-two letters.” These letters are merely “fixed” (i.e., implanted) “in the mouth and tongue.” Essentially, however, they are already to be found in the intellect and emotive attributes, whence they are drawn down into speech. And since this concept is novel, the Alter Rebbe cites support from *Sefer Yetzirah* — that the twenty-two letters are indeed merely “fixed in the mouth and tongue,” and not created by them.

According to the above teaching — that the letters derive from the essential core of the intellect and the emotions — we understand that the union of the letters with their essence is far greater than what it would be if they were to derive from the organs of articulation. Indeed, they are united with the essence in a manner similar to the manner in which the intellect itself (from which the letters derive) is in turn united with its essence. Moreover, this is so not only regarding the letters of thought and speech, but also in regard to the letters of action: they, too, are united with their source in a similar manner. For the shape of the written letters (which denote action) indicates the form of their flow; i.e., their shape reflects the manner in which they flow from the quintessential substance of intellect and emotions.

In light of the above, concludes the Rebbe, another most difficult problem will be resolved.

The Alter Rebbe said earlier that man is created as a rational being by the Divine Utterance and letters, because the Supernal letters are far superior to man’s intellect. Now this reason is puzzling. The distance between letters and intellect is not measured in degrees of higher and lower, for speech and intellect are qualitatively different entities. Why, then, does the Alter Rebbe state that the Supernal Letters are “far higher” than the wisdom of created beings?

According to the above explanation, however, this is eminently understandable: Since the letters of speech in fact derive from wisdom — moreover, from the very essence of wisdom — they are able to give rise to wisdom and intelligence within man.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [2.](#) *Bereishit* 1:26. [3.](#)

The Rebbe notes that by writing “or *even* by the Divine breath” the Alter Rebbe seems to imply that “breath” is lower than “Utterance” or “letters”. In the first part of *Tanya*, however, at the beginning of ch. 2, the Alter Rebbe indicates that just as mortal breath derives from one’s “innermost vitality,” so too is Divine “breath” indicative of “G-d’s thought and wisdom” — and these *transcend* His “Utterance” or the “letters”.

The Rebbe resolves this anomaly by reference to *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, ch. 4, where the Alter Rebbe states that man's soul "derives initially from the innermost dimension of the life-force," and then, in order that it could eventually be invested in a body, it descended through the stages of speech and breath.

Thus the "breath" of "He breathed into his nostrils" indeed transcends the level of "Utterances" and "letters"; the "breath of speech," however, is lower than "letters".

[4. Bereishit 2:7.](#) [5.](#) See commentary of the Rebbe which follows this chapter. [6.](#) Parentheses are in the original text.



Chapter 12

The letters that constitute the Ten Utterances, as the Alter Rebbe has just explained, are effluences of the Divine attributes which are wholly united with G-d Himself. Therefore, though they are termed mere "letters", they are able to serve as vehicles for creating the wisdom and intellect of created beings, to which they are thus far superior; they are termed "letters" only in relation to the supernal attributes from which they emanate.

These letters are the specifically twenty-two manners of manifestation through which G-d chose to create the world. Accordingly, as the Rebbe notes, the forthcoming chapter underscores the fact that all created beings, in all their vastly differentiated multiplicity, are in fact no more than twenty-two distinct forms of Divine manifestation. Moreover, continues the Rebbe, we can understand why the Alter Rebbe explains this concept at such length further on in this chapter. Such an explanation would seem to be at home in tracts such as *Sefer Yetzirah*, that deal with the respective stages of the creative process, not in a treatise dedicated to an explanation of Divine *Unity*. The Alter Rebbe explains this here, nevertheless, thereby actually highlighting the concept of Divine Unity — not only insofar as it exists in its Source, but as it exists in practice. For all the multifarious components of creation are in reality no more than twenty-two different forms of Divine manifestation.

רק שהברואים מתחלקים למיניהם בכללות ובפרטות

[Although there are only twenty-two letters, they are able to create a vast multitude of creatures,] for the creatures are divided into categories both general (e.g., whether human or animal) and particular (e.g., the animal world in turn comprises numerous species of beasts, birds, fish, etc.). This multitudinous division comes about:

על ידי שינויי הצירופים וחילופים ותמורות כנ"ל

by changes in the combinations, substitutions and transpositions [of the letters], as was explained above,

When the letters are combined in one way, one kind of creature is created; a different combination gives rise to a different kind of creature. For as explained in ch. 1, certain letters may sometimes be substituted or transposed with others. Those creatures whose names are not mentioned in the Ten Utterances derive their vitality by means of the combinations, substitutions and transpositions of the letters that do appear in the Ten Utterances.

כי כל אות היא המשכת חיות וכח מיוחד פרטי

for every letter is a flow from an individual, particular life-force and power.

Note of the Rebbe Since the letters are separate from each other, what combines them, and how is this accomplished? The Alter Rebbe goes on to answer this by saying:

וכשנצטרפו אותיות הרבה להיות תיבה

And when many letters — i.e., many particular powers and life-forces — are combined to form a word,

אזי מלבד ריבוי מיני כחות וחיות הנמשכים כפי מספר האותיות שבתיבה

then in addition to the numerous kinds of powers and life-forces which issue forth according to the number of letters in the word,

עוד זאת, העולה על כולנה

there is, in addition, transcending all [the particular powers],

המשכת כח עליון וחיות כללי, הכוללת ושקולה כנגד כל מיני הכחות והחיות פרטיות של האותיות, ועולה על גביהן

the flow of a higher power and general life-force which contains and is equivalent to all the various individual powers and life-forces of the letters and transcends them all;

והיא מחברתן ומצרפתן יחד, להשפיע כח וחיות לעולם הנברא בתיבה זו לכלליו ולפרטיו

it unites them and combines them,¹ in order to grant power and life-force to the world which was created in both its general and particular aspects, i.e., with its individual created beings, through this word.

הגהה

ולפי שכל אות ואות מכ"ב אותיות התורה היא המשכת חיות וכח מיוחד פרטי, שאינו נמשך באות אחרת

NOTE

Inasmuch as every single one of the twenty-two letters of the Torah is a flow of an individual, particular life-force and power, which does not flow through any other letter,

לכך גם תמונתן בכתב כל אות היא בתמונה מיוחדת פרטית

therefore the written shape of each letter is likewise specific and distinctive,

המורה על ציור ההמשכה והתגלות האור והחיות והכח הנגלה ונמשך באות זו

which indicates the pattern of the flow and manifestation of the light and life-force and power which is revealed and flows through this letter,

איך הוא נמשך ונתגלה ממדותיו של הקב"ה ורצונו וחכמתו וכו'

[i.e.,] how it flows and is revealed from the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Will and His wisdom, and so on.

END OF NOTE

Returning to the body of the text, the Alter Rebbe now goes on to illustrate how one utterance ("Let there be a firmament") created the extensive components of the worlds as well as their specific creatures.

Note of the Rebbe This also helps us understand the degree to which Divine Unity may be perceived in relation to the created beings of this world too, in that the seven heavens and all their celestial hosts were created and live and exist from the solitary Utterance, "Let there be a firmament."

כגון, דרך משל, בתיבות שבמאמר: יהי רקיע וגו', שנבראו בהן ז' רקיעים וכל צבא השמים אשר בהם

As, for example, through the words of the Utterance, "Let there be a firmament...",² the seven heavens and all their component celestial hosts were created.

כמאמר רז"ל: שחקים, שבו רחיים עומדות וטוחנות מן לצדיקים וכו'

Thus our Sages, of blessed memory, speak of³ "[the firmament called] *Shechakim*, in which stand millstones that grind manna for the *tzaddikim*.,

זבול, שבו ירושלים ובית המקדש ומזבח וכו'

[the firmament called] *Zvul*, in which stand [the heavenly] Jerusalem and the Holy Temple and the Altar...,

מכון, שבו אוצרות שלג ואוצרות ברד

[and the firmament called] *Machon*, in which there are stores of snow and stores of hail....“

Each of the seven firmaments thus has its general nature — the fact that it is a firmament — as well as its individual aspect, as exemplified above.

שכללות הרקיעים נבראו וחיים וקיימים בכללות תיבות אלו שבמאמר: יהי רקיע וכו'

The heavens as a whole were created and live and exist through the aggregate words of the utterance, “Let there be a firmament....”

In general terms,⁴ their existence as heavens results from the comprehensive illumination contained within the words, “Let there be a firmament....”

ופרטי הברואים שבו' רקיעים, נברא כל פרט מהן והי' וקיים מאיזה צירוףאותיות מתיבות אלו, או חילופיהן ותמורותיהן

and each individual created being in the seven heavens⁵ was created and lives and exists by virtue of some combination of the letters of these words, or their substitutions and transpositions,

שהן כפי בחינת חיות הנברא הפרטי ההיא

[these combinations, substitutions and transpositions being] according to the quality of the life-force of that particular creature.

כי כל שינוי צירוף הוא הרכבת ואריגת הכחות והחיות בשינוי

For every change in a combination is an intermixing and interweaving of the powers and life-forces in a different form,

For example: the three Hebrew letters --אבן in that particular order comprise the word אבן, which is the name and life-force of a stone. When, however, these selfsame letters are transposed, a different form of creative power and life-force — and consequently a different creature — comes into being.

שכל אות הקודמת בצירוף, היא הגוברת והיא העיקר בבריאה זו

since each letter antecedent in the combination dominates and it is the essential [force] in this created being,

Since, for example, *alef* is the first letter of the word אבן, it is the dominant force in the created being that bears this name. If it is a letter stemming from the attribute of *Chesed* (“kindness”), then that attribute will predominate; if it is a letter of *Gevurah* (“severity”), a different attribute will prevail.

והשאר טפילות אליה ונכללות באורה

while the others i.e., the other letters and forces contained within the word are subordinate to it and are included in its light,⁶

ועל ידי זה נבראת בריאה חדשה

and thereby — through the different combinations of the same letters — a new being is created.

וכן בחילופי אותיות או תמורותיהן

Likewise, through the substitution of letters or their transpositions,

When, for example, not only is the order of the letters changed but an *alef* (say) is substituted for an *ayin*,

נבראות בריאות חדשות פחותי המעלה בערך הנבראים מהאותיות עצמן

new creatures are created that are of lower levels than the beings created from the [original] letters themselves.

כי הן, דרך משל, דוגמת אור המאיר בלילה באר' מן הירח, ואור הירח הוא מהשמש

For they (the substituted letters), by way of illustration, resemble the light that shines upon the earth at night from the moon — and the moonlight is from the sun,

ונמצא אור שעל האר' הוא אור האור של השמש

hence, the light which is on the earth is a light [reflected] from the light of the sun.

וככה ממש, דרך משל, האותיות שבמאמרות הן כוללות המשכת החיות והאור והכח ממדותיו של הקב"ה

Exactly so, allegorically speaking, the letters comprising the Utterances are the aggregate flow of the life-force and the light and the power [that issue] from the attributes of the Holy one, blessed be He,

לברוא העולמות מאין ליש, ולהחיותן ולקיימן כל זמן משך רצונו יתברך

to create the worlds from nothingness and to give them life and sustain them as long as such shall be His blessed Will.

The general life-force thus emanates from the Utterances themselves.

ומכללות המשכה והארה גדולה זו

From this aggregate flow and mighty radiation of the Utterances themselves,

הָאֵיךְ ה' וְהַמְשִׁיךְ מִמֶּנָּה תוֹלְדוּתִיהָ כִּיּוֹצֵא בָּהּ וְעִנְפֶיהָ

G-d caused its similar derivations and its offshoots to shine and issue forth,

שֶׁהֵן תוֹלְדוֹת וְהַמְשַׁכֶּת הָאוֹר מֵהָאוֹתִיּוֹת

these being derivations and effluences of the light from the letters.

וְהֵן הֵן חִלּוּפֵי אוֹתִיּוֹת וְתַמּוּרוֹתֵיהֶן, וְכֵּן בָּהֶן בְּרוּאִים פְּרָטִים שֶׁבְּכָל עוֹלָם

And these derivations and offshoots are the substitutions of letters and their transpositions, with which He created the particular creatures of each world.

וְכֵן הָאֵיךְ ה' עוֹד וְהַמְשִׁיךְ וְהוֹרִיד הָאֶרֶץ דֶּהָאֶרֶץ דֶּהָאֶרֶץ מֵהָאֶרֶץ הָאוֹתִיּוֹת

Likewise, G-d projected the light from the letters in another manner, and caused a radiation of a radiation of a radiation to issue forth and descend from the diffusions of light from the letters;

In the earlier analogy, the moon's reflected light was a radiation of the sun's radiation. The Alter Rebbe now speaks of a descent one generation further removed — merely a radiation of a radiation of a radiation.

וְכֵן הַמְשִׁיךְ עוֹד וְהוֹרִיד עַד לְמִטָּה מִטָּה בְּבַחֲיַנַּת הַשְּׁתַּלְשּׁלוֹת

and likewise He further caused [the radiation of the radiation etc.] to issue forth and descend to the lowest level in the chain of descents,

עַד שֶׁנִּבְרָא הַדּוֹמָם מִמֶּשׁ, כְּאֲבָנִים וְעֶפֶר

until completely inanimate beings, such as stones and earth, were created.

וְשִׁמּוֹתֵיהֶן אֲבָן וְעֶפֶר הֵם חִלּוּפִים דְּחִלּוּפִים כו' וְתַמּוּרוֹת דְּתַמּוּרוֹת כו' כִּנ"ל

And their names אבן and עפר — the names being each object's life- force, as mentioned in ch. 1 — are substitutions of substitutions, etc., and transpositions of transpositions, etc., as mentioned above.

Thus, the life-force and existence of every created being are the letters of a particular Divine Utterance, and to this the created being is utterly nullified. In this manner, all of creation is nullified to G-d and united with Him.

CONCLUSION OF THE SECOND PART, WITH THE HELP OF G-D, MAY HE BE BLESSED AND EXALTED.

Commentary of the Rebbe on Chapter Twelve

The Rebbe notes that the Alter Rebbe omitted many details when quoting the Sages⁷ concerning the characteristics of each of the seven heavens. (Indeed, the *Gemara* begins with the heaven called *Vilon*, proceeds to *Rakia*, and only then speaks of *Shechakim*, the heaven with which the Alter Rebbe begins.)

Briefly, the explanation is as follows: The Alter Rebbe desires to show how a multitude of created beings — these seven heavens with all their hosts — are essentially united insofar as they all proceed from *a single Divine Utterance*. For this reason, once the Alter Rebbe has said that the Utterance, “Let there be a firmament,” *brought about the creation of the seven heavens, there is no need for him to repeat them again by name, as detailed below.*

The Alter Rebbe omitted the heaven called *Vilon* for “it serves no particular purpose,” i.e. (as the *Gemara* states there), it does not contain created beings. Even according to the opinion of *Tosafos* that light emanates from *Vilon*, light was created and continues to exist by virtue of a different Divine fiat, namely, “Let there be light.” (For all light — not only that created during the first day and then concealed — owes its creation and existence to the Utterance, “Let there be light.”⁸)

The Alter Rebbe also omitted *Rakia*, in which are found the sun, moon, stars and constellations (as the *Gemara* states), for they were all created by the Utterance, “Let there be luminaries in the firmament of the heaven....”

With regard to *Shechakim*, the Alter Rebbe quotes the *Gemara* at length to the effect that this is the heaven “in which stand millstones that grind manna for the *tzaddikim*,” for since its function is an ongoing one, this heaven illustrates his point that the heavens all “live and exist” — in the present, too, and not only in the time of the Jews in the wilderness — “through the aggregate words of the Utterance, ‘Let there be a firmament....’”

Concerning *Zvul*, the Alter Rebbe omits the detail that the Angel Michael brings an offering upon its heavenly altar, because there is an opinion⁹ that angels were created during the fifth day of creation. According to this view, the creation and existence of Michael derive not from the Utterance that ordained, “Let there be a firmament,” *but from the words, “and birds shall fly.”*

For the same reason the Alter Rebbe makes no mention of *Maon*, where flights of angels sing by night the praises of their Maker.

Concerning *Machon* the Alter Rebbe does not speak of the “rising of dew,” the “storms and tempests” and “fire”, for these were all created during the first day and thus are not connected to the Utterance, “Let there be a firmament....”¹⁰

Also omitted is *Aravos*, the abode of “righteousness and justice” (as the *Gemara* states there), for these are Divine attributes. The souls of the *tzaddikim* which are also found in this heaven are likewise not mentioned, for they were created by the Utterance, “Let us make man...” So too the Throne of Glory, which had existed before G-d had decreed “Let there be a firmament.”; *indeed, before Creation had begun.*[11](#)

Yet once more, concludes the Rebbe, we are able to see how meticulous is the wording of *Tanya*, encumbered by no superfluous word and lacking no necessary word, for, as we see here, each phrase omitted from the Talmudic citation has its specific reason. Accordingly, to follow the counsel of the *Mishnah* concerning the study of the Torah:[12](#) “Delve in it over and over again, for everything is in it.”.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) The Rebbe notes that the root here translated “unites” (חבר) is etymologically related to the Hebrew word for “friend”; i.e., previously separate powers are joined in (as it were) friendly kinship. By contrast, the root here translated “combined” (צרף) means that these powers fuse into one created being and one word. In *Chagigah* 20b, *Rashi* likewise explains this verb to mean that a number of separate items “become one entity,” and not merely similar to one entity. This widespread understanding of the verb also finds practical, legal application. [2.](#) *Gen.* 1:6. [3.](#) *Chagigah* 12b. See Commentary of the Rebbe at the conclusion of this chapter. [4.](#) The Rebbe explains that the Alter Rebbe writes here that “the heavens *as a whole* were created...through the...words...‘Let there be a firmament,’” because each individual heaven was created by the name it is known by in the Holy Tongue (e.g., *Shechakim*), as stated above at the end of ch. 1. [5.](#) Note of the Rebbe “This includes the firmament itself, as explained above.” [6.](#) Note of the Rebbe This dominance of the initial letter of a word underlies the significance of *rashei teivot*, the pattern of abbreviation wherein a whole word is telescoped within its first letter. Indeed, the *Gemara* states (in *Shabbat* 105a) that such abbreviations are of Torah origin. [7.](#) *Chagigah* 12b. [8.](#) See ch. 11, above. [9.](#) *Bereishit Rabbah* 3:8. [10.](#) *Chagigah* 12a, and elsewhere; cf. *Rambam, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah*, beg. of ch. 4. [11.](#) *Pesachim* 54a. [12.](#) *Avot* 5:21.

