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Ha’azinu

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Ha’azinu

“HaShamayim hearkens as I speak; HaAretz hears my mouth’s sayings” (D’varim 32:1)

“V’Lamah Hei’eed BaHem Shamayim V’Aretz?” (Rashi)

1. On the day of his Petirah, Moshe Rabeinu admonishes the B’nai Yisrael in the presence of two witnesses: the Heavens and the Earth. Was Yehoshua and Calev, two Shomer Shabbos witnesses, not available? Why would Moshe Rabeinu call upon witnesses whose testimony isn’t acceptable in Bais Din?1

2. G-d is referred to as Ein Sof, but this phrase is only an attempt to communicate by the finite.2,3 The Ein Sof becomes known, as it were, via Names4,5 and Attributes. The former are closer to the source, just as, for example, it is with the name of any entity as compared with its characteristics. The seven6 Names7,8,9 are HaShem10 (Tetragrammaton), Kel, Elokah, Elokim, Eloki, Shagai,11 and Tz’baos.12 HaShem refers to G-d comprising all Attributes; whereas the other six Names refer to specific Attributes. Taken collectively, the Attributes are referred to as Elokus (G-dliness).

The perception of Elokus to the finite may be conceptualized via the metaphor of Ohr.13,14 Ohr Pashut is an emanation not differentiable from the Ein Sof, and hence it is called Ohr Ein Sof. Subsequently,15 there appears the characteristic Ohr Sh’Aino Shai’ach L’Tzimtzum, only because discernable from it is Ohr Sh’Shai’ach L’Tzimtzum. The latter has a Divine Uftu to propagate. Infinite descent effects no change, because Divine always remains Divine.16 The Uftu, however, necessarily leads to a Dilug17 or K’fitzah called Tzimtzum HaRishon,18 which is a contraction and concealment,19 leaving a Chalal and Makom Panui.20

Drawn through this void is a ray of Ohr called the Kav V’Chut which irradiates the void. Its terminus is called the Reshumu. Multitudinous Tzimtzumim occur, accompanied by infinite causal chains of Ila V’Alul.21 The Ohr Ein Sof is of itself neither contracted nor concealed through this downward22,23 chain of Histalshalus, but relative to existence24 it has this appearance. The Chalal gives place25 for Zulos, which eventually will be called existence.

The Tzimtzumim effect five spiritual Olamos26 which are Levushim27 to the Ohr Ein Sof. In descending levels of spirituality, they are Adam Kadmon, Atzilus,28 B’riah,29 Yetzirah,30 and Asiah.31 The lower four are addressed separately as the first and following three: Atzilus vs. B’riah, Yetzirah, and Asiah. Atzilus, the World of Emanation, is Atzel or adjacent to and hence not differentiable by the finite from the Ohr Ein Sof.32 B’riah is the beginning of Metzius,33 albeit still completely spiritual. The lower three Worlds represent successively greater degrees of spiritual concealment.

The radiation of Ohr from supernal to less refined within each Olam are called S’pheros,34 Divine emanations of which there are ten35: Keser,36 Chochmah, Binah, Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferes, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, and Malchus.37 The subliminal nature of Keser, being dimmed emanations wound about the terminus of the Kav and thus extending and spiraling ‘down,’ is called T’mira D’Chol T’mirin.38 It is of such an elevated39 spiritual nature as compared with the lower nine that it is less associated with them than it is connected to that which is above, and is considered to be removed from them. As a practical matter, therefore, it is
better conceived as configuring the S’pheros beginning with Chochmah, preserving the Minyan by articulating the quasi-S’phere of Da’as after Binah and before Chessed.

The ten are möbius albeit without a twist; concentric circles within each other, each in turn extending the Kav downward in a spiritual sense. They are interrelating and interacting compound emanations, given the spiritual addresses of Chochmah D’Chochmah, Binah D’Chochmah, Da’as D’Chochmah, etc., for all permutations ad infinitum. The ten are characterized as World faculties or powers. The first three are ChaBaD or Sechet. The remaining seven are Midos, which are further divided into primary (i.e., the first three) ChaGaS and secondary (i.e., the second three) N’HY, with Malchus having no inherent contribution except serving as the conduit or intermediary in Histalshalus.

The S’pheros of the primordial Adam Kadmon, also called Keser Elyon, are pristine, but contracted and concealed in Atzilus. The continued diminution in B’riah is such that the notion of finite and creature first come into existence (Ex Nihilo), with further degradation in Yetzirah, and ultimately in the lowest, Asiyah. Attached to the lowest are the seven Rakias and the coarse drossiness of Olam HaZeh HaGashmi, the latter which is comprised of the form and substance of the mental and physical universe where the Ohr Ein Sof is contracted and concealed no further.

Throughout Histalshalus, Ohr is both Sovev and M’mali, surrounding and permeating. The characteristics of the S’pheros are both P’nimius and Chitzonious, meaning both they and their impact are inward and outward. The screening of Ohr via Tzimtzumim, or from another perspective the collision between direct and reflected Ohr, produce Keilim which in return attempt to contain the Ohr. Apparent differentiation of Ohr is a function of the vessel in which it is contained. The Keilim mirror the contraction and concealment of Histalshalus. Keilim of Adam Kadmon are ultimately refined and translucent in comparison with the Keilim of lower Worlds, which are successively obtuse, dense, and further conceal the Ohr.

As the Ohr is garbed within the Keilim associated with Keser it is fully contained because the Keili is virtually indistinguishable with the Ohr Ein Sof. However, as the Ohr flows into the Keili of Chochmah it somewhat taxes the vessel, but nevertheless flows downward into Binah. The strain of the process continues, until the Keilim of Da’as are overwhelmed by the radiance of Ohr. By Divine Plan they shatter, an event known as Sh’veras HaKeilim. The Ohr continues in this fashion down through the S’pheros, shattering the vessels that are the Keilim of each S’phere.

The fragments further splinter and cascade in a spiritually downward avalanche through Atzilus, containing dimmed and concealed sparks of Ohr within them. This is repeated in the lower three Worlds. The descent continues into the Heavens and their hosts by the Word and Breath of G-d, ultimately resulting in the finite constraints of time and space during the six days of Creation when the earthly domain is made physically manifest. Creation is then endowed with the inanimate, vegetative, and animate, all solely as a preparation for the creature who will be made in G-d’s image.

Because it is not assimilated in Kedushah, the shards that fell into Creation are called Tumei and Ra. Collectively, they are the Sitre Achara, the opposite side of Kedushah. They consist of four types: K’lipah Nogah (translucent and neutral shell, representing the skin as it were to Kedushah) which is Mutor, and the Shalosh K’lipos Ha’T’mei’os (three completely unclean shells) which are Assur.

The Nefesh Eloki with its Soul faculties or powers mirroring the aforementioned ten World S’pheros, called a “Chelek Elokah M’Ma’al” Mamash, arises in G-d’s Thought. Indeed, G-d chose to confer with the N’fashos of Tzadikim, Mu’Sh’rashos B’Atzmu’so (because
they are rooted above all Divine manifestations) in the Creationary process, both spiritual and material. The *Neshamah*, the “lamp of *HaShem,*”\(^72\) descending via the *P'nimius* of *Adam Kadmon*\(^73\) and its birth *B'IKar* from the attribute of *Malchus*,\(^74\) traverses down though *Seder Histalshalus*, emerging from one of the Worlds\(^75\) to be thrust into the physical body gathered together from the dust of the earth.\(^76\) Then, with the breath of life blown into his nostrils,\(^77\) G-d made man\(^78\) …

3. … who gets up off the ground, wags his finger at the sky, and with *Chutzpah* shouts *B'Kol Rahm:*

“The Nile is mine! I made it myself!”\(^79\) I am alone, an independent agent, completely separated, the master of my destiny, there was nothing prior to me, and there certainly is no connection between me and G-d who can’t be proven by the scientific method to exit.\(^80\)

4. To which laughter, presumably, is heard rolling above.

5. This is why *Moshe Rabeinu* instead chose the Heavens and the Earth as witnesses.

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1. Mishnah to Talmud Shavuos 35a states “*BaShamayim U'Va'Aretz Ha'rei Aelu P'turin,*” meaning an oath sworn in the name of the Heavens and the Earth is invalid.

2. There are various views in Kabalah on the degree to which the phrase *Ein Sof* refers to *Atzmus U'M'hus* (Essence and Being) of G-d, with the general resolution that it is more than *Ratzon HaElyon* but less than *Atzmus U'M'hus.* Nevertheless, it is the most sublime phrase referencing G-d in the human lexicon. See, e.g., Pardes Rimonim III.

3. Hence, it is referred to as *Reisha D'Lo Isyada* (*Radla*), the Unknowable Beginning.

4. Regarding the complete unity of Divine Names despite their apparent differences in characteristics (e.g., *Chesed*, *G'vurah*), see the Tzemach Tzedek in Derech Mitzvosecha Sharash Mitzvos HaTefilah 4. Thus, Hakdamah of the Zohar and Rabi Yosi in the Zohar to Parshas Yisro state *Hu U'Sh'mei Chad Hu,* based on *T'hilim* 83:19.

5. Just as names do not properly describe G-d, neither do appellations such as First Cause (*Moreh Nevuchim* 1:69), or other philosophical portraiture. *Koheles* 4:8 states “There is One, He has no second,” and it is not humanly possible to produce a more precise exposition.

6. *Zohar* III:272b

7. Rambam Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 6:2. In 6:1, the ruling, based on *D'varim* 12:3-4, is given where it is not permitted to erase or destroy the letters of the Names, and the Rambam provides the list of Names that fall under that category. In order to avoid violating this rule, “*HaShem*” (“The Name;” or in Chassidic circles “*HaVaye*”) is used to refer to *Y-H-V-H*. The 2\(^{nd}\) Name is preceded with the letter “*K,*” the 3\(^{rd}\) – 5\(^{th}\) Names have the letter “*K*” substituted for the letter “*H,*” the 6\(^{th}\) substitutes “*G*” for “*D*” (others substitute “*K*” for “*D*”), and the 7\(^{th}\) “*B*” for “*V.*” In mundane languages, it is also common to hyphenate instead of substituting letters, such as “G-d,” Talmud *B'rachos* 9:5.

8. Rabi Amorai states there are, in other configurations, 72 names, Sefer HaBahir 1:94. This is derived from a combination of *Sh'mos* 28:10 (six names per stone) with *Yehoshua* 4:9 (12 stones): 6 × 12 = 72. See further the derivation of 72 names in Sefer HaBahir 1:107, 112; II:70 on how the 72 variations in which the Tetragrammaton’s four letters are spelled; and II:78 on the association of the Names with the *S'pheros.*

9. Yeshayahu 26:4 states “*Kah HaShem,*” (where “*K*” is a euphemism for ‘*Y*’). The Midrash B’rashis Rabbah 12:9 discusses the quasi-Divine status of ‘*Kah.*’ See also Rashi to B’rashis 2:4, Sh’mos 17:16, *T'hilim* 94:7; Ramban to B’rashis 43:20; Radak to Yeshayahu 26:4; and Talmud Eruvin 18b.

10. *Y-H-V-H.* According to the Ari Zal (Likutei Torah to Parashos B’rashis), originally the Name was *Y-H-H-V,* but due to the first sin, the 2\(^{nd}\) *H* fell below the *V.*

11. The Ari Zal, in Sefer HaLikutim and Likutei Torah to Parashos VaYeira, states Shagai refers to *Zahn U'M'Farnes* (sustainer and provider).
33 See, e.g., the letter of 15 Mar Cheshbon 5698 of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schnerefsen, the 6th Lubavitcher Rebbe, written in Atvatzk (Otwock, Poland). B’riah is described as a creation without form, Yetzirah is dominated by form over spiritual substance, and Asiah is dominated by spiritual substance over form. Atzilus is described as the absence of non-Metzius.

34 The term “S’pheros” is derived from T’hilim 19:2: “The Heavens M’Saprim the glory of Kel,” Sefer HaBahir 1:125.

35 Sefer HaBahir 1:179
36 Pardes Rimonim 3:1
37 Zohar III:70a; Sefer Yetzirah 1:4,7
38 Zohar 1:147a, Pardes Rimonim 5:4

39 Nevertheless, it is differentiated into Atik, the inner level of Will, and Arich Anpin, the external level of Will.

40 Etz Chaiyim 23:1, 2, 5, 8; 25:6; 42:1. The view in this essay follows the opinion of the Ari Z”L, where Keser is below the Ohr Ein Sof but above the S’pheros, and yet a part of both. For an overview, see Torah Ohr VaYechi 105a and Likutei Torah V:8a, II:53b.

41 Tikunei Zohar 47:8a, 69:116b; Zohar II:185b

42 There are 100 first level compounds (e.g., Chochmah D’Chochmah) based on the permutation formula n’. There are 1,000 second level compounds (e.g., Chochmah D’Chochmah D’Chochman), 10,000 third level compounds, ad infinitum.

43 Derech Mitzvosecha Sharash Mitzvos HaTefila 3 notes that despite the S’pheros being perceived as ten different characteristics, they are nevertheless united with a complete unity in the Ohr Ein Sof. Although Chesed may be received differently from Gevrarah, both exist per se only for the unity of purpose which is the Creation of Yesh M’Ayin. The apparent differentiation in characteristics is only from the frame of reference of the recipients, because there is no change in the Ohr Ein Sof regardless of the S’phere through which it is apprehended.

44 Sefer Yetzirah 1:10, Likutei Amarim 3


46 Ibid


48 Etz Chaiyim 6:5; Zohar 1:249b

49 From the perspective of the recipient.

50 This is according to Reish Lakish (Talmud Chagigah 12b), which are: Vilon, Rakiya, Sh’chakim, Z’vul, Ma’on, Machon, Aravos. According to Rabi Yehudah, there are two Heavens, based on D’varim 10:14: “HaShamayim U’Sh’male HaShamayim,” the higher of which comprises the upper six levels (i.e., Rakiya contains Sh’chakim, Z’vul, Ma’on, Machon, and Aravos.) Chassidus normally refers to all seven (e.g., Ma’amor Basa L’Gani by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, 5710), and hence Reish Lakish’s nomenclature is invoked in the body of the text.

51 See, e.g., Igeres HaKodesh 4, 19.

52 Loc cit.

53 See, e.g., Pardes Rimonim 4:1, Etz Chaiyim 1:3.

54 Etz Chayim Sh’ar Atik 4.

55 Nevertheless, Keilim are not separate, Ch’V’Sh, from Ohr. This is understood from the Zohar (cited above in footnote <4>). “He and His Name are one” associates “He” with Ohr and “His Name” with Keilim.

56 Although the D’var HaVaye (T’hilim 33:6) is continual (to maintain Creation via Yesh M’Ayin), it seems to me that Sh’veras HaKeilim must have been an event, not an on-going process. It occurred only when Ohr was first introduced into Da’as. Otherwise, it would not be possible to be Misaken the state of Tohu via Torah and Mitzvos, because each day the Creation would reset to chaos. (This follows the view of Shmuel Bar Nachmani in the Talmud Chaggigah 14a on the role of the D’var HaVaye. It does not follow the view of Rav, as related by Shmuel to Rav’s son Chia, who maintains the renewal of Creation comes from the Nahar Dinar, i.e., the fiery river of D’neil 7:10.)

57 This essay is based on the view of the Ari Z”L, Etz Chaiyim Hechal HaN’kudim 8. Also see Zohar II:176b, III:128a, Torah Ohr VaYeshve 27c, Likutei Torah II:37c, Pardes Rimonim 5:4.

58 Etz Chayim Sh’ar HaKeilim 1.

59 T’hilim 33:6

60 B’raishis 1:26,28,29

61 Ibid

62 Ibid
from it, be they a challenge to the absolute and perfect unity of G-d (“I am G-d; there is no change in Me” – or Divine Flow or Effluence.)

Mal’achi

diffuse reflection through a large window only ‘up’ to the cognitive connection to G-d as we study metaphor of at that which is above with no clear concept in human understanding. Our holy Prophets provide a fleeting glimpse through squinted eyes metaphor in the opening section is based on G-dliness is known to us only by these analogies and metaphors, and the details contained therein. (Although the Sages provide analogies and metaphors to understand Divinity. Of the Essence and Being of G-d we know nothing; otherwise mankind could neither recognize Divine language nor comprehend its meaning. The language of mankind.”

Chovos HaLevavos

32 From the theoretical frame of reference of otherwise mankind could neither recognize Divine language nor comprehend its meaning. The language of mankind.”

10 Chovos HaLevavos

31 ibid

30 ibid

29

28

27

25 Albeit only in gradation, but not in physical space which does not yet exist.

24 Which is still only in potential.

23 There is also the all-important (counter-intuitive notion of) upward which rises above, discussed throughout Chassidus refers to an awakening below which rises above, discussed throughout Chassidus (Aramaic reference to the mundane), in lieu of depth. In either case, there is no literal downward per se because there is as of yet no space or direction.

22 There is also the all-important (counter-intuitive notion of) upward Histalshalus (Sefer HaBahir II:171), which refers to an awakening below which rises above, discussed throughout Chassidus (Isarusa D’L’ Tata Isarusa D’L’ Eila) regarding the service of mankind. This concept is also captured in the concept of Ohr Yashar (straight light) that descends and Ohr Chozer (returning light) that ascends.

21 See, e.g., Sha’ar HaYichud V’Emunah 7. See, e.g., Likutei Amarim 49.

20 Zohar I:15a, Zohar Chadash Vaeschanan 57a. This essay follows the view of the Ari Z”L (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria (1534 C. E. – 1572 C. E.) on the meaning of Tzimtzum. The leading Kabbalists of his day, such as the Ramak (Rabbi Moshe ben Yaakov Cordovero, 1522 C. E. – 1570 C. E., author of Pardes Rimonim), postulate the concealment and contraction are “to the side.” The Ari Z”L, however, explains Tzimtzum based on the principle “there is no place void of Him” (Tikunei Zohar 57:9b, 70:11b; Mechilta D’Rashbi), which means the concealments and contractions are “inward.” See, e.g., Sha’ar HaYichud V’Emunah 46c; ibid Shir HaShirim 20d.

17 Likutei Torah D’varim 46c; ibid Shir HaShirim 20d.

16 Likutei Torah D’varim 46c; ibid Shir HaShirim 20d.

15 Albeit only in gradation, but not in time which does not yet exist.

14 The Talmud Brachos 31b (see also Midrash Tanchuma to Sh’mos 15:7) states that perfors “the Torah speaks in the language of mankind.”Chovos HaLevavos (Rabbi Bachya Ibn Pakuda, Sha’ar HaYichud 10) muses that otherwise mankind could neither recognize Divine language nor comprehend its meaning. The Rambam (Mishnah 10 to Sanhedrin, see also Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 2:10) reducts this notion as the 3rd of the 13 principles of faith, that “there is nothing that resembles G-d.” Thus, it is written “HaCheker Elokah Timtza?” Didukh of Lashon HaKodesh makes the prefix “HaCheker” rhetorical, an interpellate to the Heavenly Court for which the answer is unequivocally dismissive: “Can G-d be found by searching?”

Nevertheless, G-d did indeed give the Torah in the language of mankind, and our holy Prophets and learned Sages provide analogies and metaphors to understand Divinity. Of the Essence and Being of G-d we know nothing; G-dliness is known to us only by these analogies and metaphors, and the details contained therein. (Although the metaphor in the opening section is based on Ohr, Kabbalistic literature is replete with a parallel metaphor of Shefa, or Divine Flow or Effluence.)

Moreover, the metaphor of Ohr has limitations. There are no valid corporeal implications that may drawn from it, be they a challenge to the absolute and perfect unity of G-d (“I am G-d; there is no change in Me” – Mal’achi 3:6), postulations of the existence or passage of time, or demarcation of breadth, width, and length of space (including orientation of up or down). Even ‘gradations’ is decidedly specious. Our learned Sages provide a diffuse reflection through a large window only ‘up’ to Olam HaBriah, above which we have only spiritual addresses with no clear concept in human understanding. Our holy Prophets provide a fleeting glimpse through squinted eyes at that which is above Briah. Our Kabbalistic scholars and Chassidic masters strive to transmit the concepts of the metaphor of Ohr, not for speculation, waxing poetic, or cosmologia generalis, but rather to encourage and strengthen the cognitive connection to G-d as we study Torah and perform Mitzvos.

13 ibid

12 In the Talmud Brachos 31b “Rabbi Elazar said from the day HaKodesh Baruch Hu Created His universe there was no person who called HaKodesh Baruch Hu ‘Te’baos’ until Chanah.” Although this Name has the same origin as the other six, the Gemara’s intent is explain it was never publically articulated until Chanah did so.

11 From the theoretical frame of reference of Zulos, which do not “yet” exist.
63 B’raishis 1:26
65 The four types of K’lipah are enumerated in Yechezkiel 1:14, and are discussed at length in the Zohar II:203a-b.
66 Although it is one, it is comprised of the five interwoven aspects: Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, Chayyah, and Yechidah (Midrash Rabbah B’raishis 14:9, Midrash Rabbah D’varim 2:37). This specific order is given by the Ari Zal (Etz Chaim 42, Sha’ar HaGilgulim). Typically Chasidus makes reference only to the first three levels (e.g., Likutei Amarim 2) because the higher two levels generally have no impact on the human mind or intellect, which is the seat of the Divine Soul. (Regarding their general state of Makif, see, e.g., Etz Chayim Sha’ar Akudim 5, Sha’ar V’Chiztonius 10, 12). However, with proper preparation and on the most auspicious of occasions, a person is able to draw down the higher two levels into the mind and intellect, even in a revealed fashion. For a discussion on the correspondence of the five aspects of the soul to the S’pheros and Olamos, see Sefer HaBahir 2:53.
67 Iyov 31:2
68 Likutei Amarim 2
69 Arises, but not descends, for G-d’s Thought is without end (meaning it does not terminate with vision, speech, etc.), and hence, there is no spiritual descent, Sefer HaBahir 1:88.
70 Midrash B’rashis Rabbah 1:4
71 Midrash Rus Rabbah 2:3. This concept is developed in Sefer HaMa’amorim (5703) of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the 6th Rebbe of Lubavitch; and in the Ma’amor Mayim Rabim (5738) by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the 7th Rebbe of Lubavitch.
72 Mishlei 20:27. As to why the Neshamah is called “lamp of G-d,” see Ma’amor Ki Atah Nairi in Sefer Sha’rei Orah (5582) by Rabbi Dovber, the 2nd Rebbe of Lubavitch.
73 Ma’amor Ye’Chaiyenu Mi’Yomayim (5659) by the Rashab, Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, the 5th Rebbe of Lubavitch.
74 Ibid
75 According to the Ari Zal (Sefer HaLikutim to Parashos Mishpatim) “every person has a Nefesh from Asiyah” that it is fully functioning. “Ruach is from Yetzirah” and “Neshamah is from Bri’ah,” although they may be functioning to a lesser degree than the Nefesh.
76 B’raishis 1:7
77 B’raishis 2:7
78 B’raishis 1:27. The previous verse states “Let us make man in our image.” The Ramak commences Sefer Tomer D’vorah with the statement “it is proper for man to imitate his Creator,” to resemble G-d both in likeness and image. This refers, however, to mirroring the ten Sefiros of the Soul to the ten Sefiros of the Worlds (and hence the plural “us” and “our”); it does not refer to being Chutzpahdik. See also M’chilta to Sh’mos 14:39, Midrash B’raishis Rabbah 21:5, Midrash Rabbah Shir HaShirim 1:46, Rambam Hilchos Teshuvah 5:1, Sefer Nefesh HaChayyim 1:1.
79 Based on Yechezkiel 29:3
80 And even if [you claim that] G-d exists, [what] would we need of Him other than His light (i.e., the sun)? [And we don’t even need that because] we have [so much] Parvayim gold [whose brilliance will provide whatever light we need], Talmud Sanhedrin 103b.