



Selected Parts of Yom Tov Shel Rosh Hashanah 5666

Session 1: The Purpose of Creation

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Yom Tov Shel Rosh Hashanah

Why did G-d create the world?

Was there something He was missing that made Him bring humanity into existence? Was it an act of pure kindness? Was it a mere whim?

This question is not only important as a theoretical theological exercise, but as a set of practical guidelines for divine service. If we can determine G-d's goal in creating humanity, we can guide our actions to fulfill His wish. This is the reason that Jewish theologians from every school of thought have wrestled with this topic. Their answers would determine their adherents way of life.

In this discourse, the Rebbe Rashab teaches us the Chassidic solution to this question, but his answer is far more than an academic exercise. He provides the ideological backing for the entire Chassidic movement.

He does so by presenting the solutions that the Arizal and Zohar offered, and then arguing that they are not comprehensive. This allows him to introduce the Chassidic view, which he demonstrates is the most comprehensive.

The Arizal says that G-d wished to be known. The Rebbe argues that G-d is far easier to know in the spiritual worlds than He is in the physical world, in which case He should have ceased creating once He had brought the spiritual realms into being.

The Zohar says that G-d wished to demonstrate and fulfill divine potential. Again, the Rebbe argues that G-d's abilities were fully exhibited in the spiritual worlds, and there is once again no justification for the creation of the physical world.

The Rebbe concludes that G-d must have had a goal in creating the physical world, and he draws from the Midrash to determine that G-d made the material world because He wanted to see Torah and Mitzvot performed by completely independent beings.

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The Purpose of Creation: Introduction

Like almost every Chassidic discourse, Yom Tov Shel Rosh Hashanah begins with a series of questions that do not appear to directly relate to the central themes of the discourse.

After the opening questions, the central question of this discourse can be addressed:

What was the purpose of creation?

וְלִהְיוֹת כָּל זֶה צָרִיךְ לְהַקְדִּים תְּחִלָּה, דִּהְנֵה יָדוּעַ דְּתַכְלִית בְּרִיאַת וְהַתְהַוּת הָעוֹלָמוֹת וְתַכְלִית הַכְּפֻנָּה בִּירִידַת הַנְּשֻׁמָּה בְּגוֹף הוּא בְּכַדִּי לְהַמְשִׁיךְ גְּלוּי אֹר אֵין סוֹף בְּעוֹלָמוֹת עַל יְדֵי תוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת, וְהוּא עֲנִין יְחִוד אֹר אֵין סוֹף הַסּוֹבֵב כָּל עֲלָמִין בְּמַמְלָא כָּל עֲלָמִין. וְכֵמו שְׂאוּמְרִים קִדָּם כָּל מִצְוָה לְשֵׁם יְחִוד קוּדְשָׁא בְּרַךְ הוּא וְשִׁכְיִנְתָּה, בְּחִינַת יְחִוד סּוֹבֵב כָּל עֲלָמִין בְּמַמְלָא כָּל עֲלָמִין, שְׁזָהוּ עֲנִין הַמְשַׁכֵּת גְּלוּי עֲצֻמוֹת אֹר אֵין סוֹף, שְׁזָהוּ תַכְלִית הַכְּפֻנָּה בְּהַתְהַוּת הָעוֹלָמוֹת וּבִירִידַת הַנְּשֻׁמָּה כּו'.
וְלִהְיוֹת כָּל זֶה צָרִיךְ לְהַקְדִּים תְּחִלָּה, דִּהְנֵה יָדוּעַ דְּתַכְלִית בְּרִיאַת וְהַתְהַוּת הָעוֹלָמוֹת וְתַכְלִית הַכְּפֻנָּה בִּירִידַת הַנְּשֻׁמָּה בְּגוֹף הוּא בְּכַדִּי לְהַמְשִׁיךְ גְּלוּי אֹר אֵין סוֹף בְּעוֹלָמוֹת עַל יְדֵי תוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת, וְהוּא עֲנִין יְחִוד אֹר אֵין סוֹף הַסּוֹבֵב כָּל עֲלָמִין בְּמַמְלָא כָּל עֲלָמִין. וְכֵמו שְׂאוּמְרִים קִדָּם כָּל מִצְוָה לְשֵׁם יְחִוד קוּדְשָׁא בְּרַךְ הוּא וְשִׁכְיִנְתָּה, בְּחִינַת יְחִוד סּוֹבֵב כָּל עֲלָמִין בְּמַמְלָא כָּל עֲלָמִין, שְׁזָהוּ עֲנִין הַמְשַׁכֵּת גְּלוּי עֲצֻמוֹת אֹר אֵין סוֹף, שְׁזָהוּ תַכְלִית הַכְּפֻנָּה בְּהַתְהַוּת הָעוֹלָמוֹת וּבִירִידַת הַנְּשֻׁמָּה כּו'.

To understand these questions, we must first preface with the well-known fact that the purpose of creation, the existence of the worlds, and the ultimate intent behind the descent of the soul into the body is to draw down a revelation of ***Ohr Ein Sof*** into the worlds through Torah and Mitzvot. This is the notion of uniting ***Sovev kol almin with Memalei kol almin***. We say "***L'Shem Yichud Kudsha Brich'Hu U'Shechintei***" before every Mitzvah in reference to the unity of *Sovev kol almin* with *Memaleh kol almin*. This unity is the archetype for the drawing and revelation of *Atzmus Ohr Ein Sof* which is the reason for the existence of the world and the descent of the soul within it.

It is said that G-d desires to have a dwelling place below. Just as in a man's dwelling, by way of example, he dwells as he is himself, so it is On High. G-d wishes *Atzmus Ohr Ein Sof* to exist in a revealed form down here.

The Process of Creation

In order to understand the significance of the "revelation of Ohr Ein Sof" the general structure of creation must be explored.

וְכֵמו שְׁכֻתוֹב בְּעֵמֶק הַמְּלָךְ בְּתַחֲלָתוֹ, דְּבְרִיאַת הָעוֹלָמוֹת הִיָּה עַל יְדֵי הַצְּמֻצוֹם הָרֵאשׁוֹן שְׁהִיָּה בְּאוֹר אֵין סוֹף, וְנִשְׁאָר חָלָל וּמְקוֹם פְּנוּי, וּמִזֶּה הוּא שֶׁרֶשׁ הַתְהַוּת הַכְּלִים וּמִצְיָאוֹת הָעוֹלָמוֹת כְּלָם כּו', וְאַחַר הַצְּמֻצוֹם נִמְשָׁךְ מִזֶּה גְּלוּי הַקּוֹ, שֶׁהוּא בְּחִינַת גְּלוּי הָאוֹר לְהָאִיר הַכְּלִים וְהָעוֹלָמוֹת כּו'.

(ועל ידי זה היה ההתהוות בפעל וכידוע דהתהוות הפלים וכן התהוות העולמות בכלל הוא על ידי הקו בכח הרשימה כו', וכמו ההיולי שנותן כוח כו', וכמו שכתוב במקום אחר). וכללות העולמות בבחינת אורות וכלים הרי הם בתוך החלל ומקום פנוי שנשאר אחרי הצמצום כו'.

It says in the beginning of the *Emek Hamelech* that the creation of the worlds occurred through the effect of **Tzimtzum Harishon** on *Ohr Ein Sof*.¹ A void and empty space remained, and this served as the source of the creation of *Keilim* and the existence of all of the worlds. After the *Tzimtzum*, the **Kav** was revealed. This was the revelation of a light which shone into the *Keilim* and the worlds.

(As is known, [the reintroduction of the *Kav* into the *Reshimah*] brought about actual existence, because the creation of the *Keilim* and of the worlds occurred through the light of the *Kav* that was affected by the **Reshimah**. This is just like the rule that the potential provides the energy for actualization, as is explained elsewhere.)² The worlds in general, and the **Oros and Keilim**, were within the void and empty space that remained after the *Tzimtzum*.

The Addition of Torah and *Mitzvot*

אמנם מה שכתוב "וינחהו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה", דלעבדה זו רמ"ח מצות עשה ולשמרה שס"ה לא תעשה,

היינו להמשיך תוספת אורות על ידי הקו מאור אין סוף שלפני הצמצום, עד שלעתיד יהיה גלי אור אין סוף במקום החלל כמו שהיה קדם הצמצום כו'.

However, it says "And [G-d] settled him [*Adam*] in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to guard it".³ The *Midrash* explains that "to cultivate it" refers to the 248 positive commandments and "to guard it" refers to the 365 negative commandments.⁴

This means that man was placed on Earth to draw down an additional light through the *Kav* from *Ohr Ein Sof* that precedes the *Tzimtzum*. This process will continue until the times of Moshiach when there will be a complete revelation of *Ohr Ein Sof* in this empty space, just as it was before the *Tzimtzum*.

¹ *Shaar Shaashuei Hamelech*, ch. 1.

² R. Dovber of Lubavitch, *Shaar Hayichud* 13a.

³ Genesis 2:15

⁴ *Yalkut Reuveini (Bereishis 2:15)* quoting the *Midrash*

Definitions

Ohr Ein Sof: Lit., The Infinite Light

Ohr Ein Sof is the energy that emits from G-d by dint of His identity as an Emanator. It exists as a perfect reflection of G-d and reflects all of Him. Its existence is so perfectly united with G-d that a revelation of *Ohr Ein Sof* can be seen as a revelation of G-d Himself. Therefore, it can be referred to as the source of creation.

The early Kabbalists called it light because it shares many characteristics with physical light, such as the link it must maintain with its source in order to exist.

Sovev and Memaleh: Lit., Transcendent and Filling

There are two types of G-dliness that affect the world. One invests itself into creation, and is affected (to a degree) by creation (*Memaleh*), while the other transcends creation, and merely lends the divine energy required to allow the miracle of creation to occur (*Sovev*). The two are necessary because there are elements of creation that happen naturally and others that require divine intervention to occur.

For example, the process by which matter coalesces and forms the physical universe is natural and quantifiable, and by observing immutable rules can be determined. Although the order of the universe is caused by the energy of *Memaleh*, its simplicity and order make it unobservable, allowing for the logical conclusion that it does not exist. The matter itself, on the other hand, was brought into existence *Ex Nihilo*, in direct contradiction to the rules of the universe. The divine energy that creates matter does not conform to these rules because it transcends the universe. This is the energy of *Sovev*.

Being infinite, the energy of *Sovev* must be concealed so as not to overwhelm creation. Were *Sovev* to be revealed, the revelation of G-d would be so intense that the independent existence of creation would instantly cease. (This can be seen in our previous example. If there was clear proof of matter being brought into existence through the light of *Sovev*, humanity would have no choice but to accept the existence of G-d, and consequently, to serve Him.) Therefore, the energy of *Sovev* is primarily concealed, revealed only when creation transcends the laws of nature. *Memaleh*, on the other hand is contracted and limited based on the needs of creation. It progresses from stage to stage, become less palpably spiritual, until it is able to make independent creations.

L'Shem Yichud Kudsha Brich'Hu U'Shchintai: Lit., For the sake of the unity of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His *Shechina*.

This complex and multi-faceted phrase was originally added to the *Siddur* by *Kabbalah* (see *Pri Eitz Chaim, Sha'ar Ha'Zmiros*, end of chap. 5). In general, this phrase evokes the unity between G-d and His creations (referred to as *Shechina*), although the precise scenario of divine unity to which it refers is unique to each usage. It is recited prior to the performance of *Mitzvos*, recalling the fact that each individual *Mitzvah* contributes to the universal task of making this world a place of G-dliness.