

Shaar HaYichud The Gate of Unity

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Chapter Nine

At first glance, the verse, “I HaShem have not changed”, is not understood. Now, [this verse] is speaking in regard to *Malchut* of *Ein Sof* (The Infinite) Himself. However, if in *Malchut* of *Asiyah* (Actualization) there is a change between judgment and kindness, which is [only] an aspect of a reaction, then it must be that in *Malchut* of *Ein Sof* (The Infinite) this change also takes place¹. After all, it states, “See now that I, I am He”. It likewise states, “Your kingdom is the kingdom of all worlds”, literally equally,² as explained previously. In other words, when the desire for kindness arises in His simple essential desire, this very same essential desire for kindness descends until the very end, to the desire for kindness of *Malchut* of *Asiyah*, literally³. According to all the above mentioned, it is likewise understood that the opposite is true as well⁴.

Furthermore, we recite [daily],⁵ “He renews every day...the act of creation” here below [in our physical world]. In other words, [“he renews”] in “*Kadmin* – Desire” and “*Chochmeta* – Wisdom”, [which are the translations] of “In the beginning He created”. [These are “renewed”] all the way until the highest heights, literally in His Essential Self. This being the case, then [it seems] that there is a renewal even in the Essence of the Infinite Light (*Atzmoot Ohr Ein Sof*).

¹ In the previous chapter we explained how the entire chaining down from beginning to end is literally an act of G-d, and that he is the perpetrator of everything that occurs. This was the explanation of the verse, “See now that I, I am He”. If this is the case, then certainly if there is any change at the end action, there must also be a change in the beginning, in His essence. How then can we understand the aforementioned verse, “I HaShem have not changed?”

² As explained in the previous chapter, a King is as much King in his capital as he is in the farthest reaches of his Kingdom. This is to say that he rules there as much as he does in his capital. Likewise, from *Malchut* of the Infinite to *Malchut* of Actualization (*Asiyah*), G-d is equally King. This is analogous to how a person’s innermost thoughts and end actions are all equally him, as previously explained.

³ For example, when a very wise person takes a pen and writes down his wisdom, we do not say “If I could get my hands on such a pen I too would be wise”. Likewise, we do not say, “It is not the wisdom of the pen. Rather it is the wisdom of the hand, because it is the hand which moved the pen in such a wise way.” Rather, we immediately recognize that *the person himself* is wise, and that this is a revelation of *his* wisdom, not the pen’s wisdom and not the hand’s wisdom.

⁴ This is to say that this is not true only with the desire for kindness, but, it’s opposite desire also reaches to the very essence. The opposite of Kindness (*Chessed*), is Sternness (*Gevurah*). Additionally, this may be understood differently. In other words, that the opposite is true as well. Not only is the beginning bound up with the end, but from the end action we may deduce the initial desire, which is at the beginning.

⁵ See the blessings before the *Shema* recital.

How then can it state, “I HaShem have not changed”, [implying that there is no change] whatsoever? Similarly, we say⁶, “You are He before the creation of the world; You are He after the creation of the world”. This [principle] likewise applies “before He emanated⁷”, as is known. Moreover, in the analogy of man below, there is change from a desire for judgment to a desire for kindness, even in the essential desire, as is known. Likewise, how can we [pray and] request, “May it be desirable before You”, [requesting of G-d to have] a new desire; that a desire for judgment should be overturned into a desire for kindness? [This question is further strengthened by the fact that] we see multitudes of changes every day, and every hour, in “everything that G-d desires” and constantly does in the heavens and the earth⁸.

Now, the resolution for all this is the matter of *Tzimtzum*⁹, as is known. For, if the influence was in a manner of cause and effect, then the matter of change and reaction would fall upon it. However, since the aspect of the drawing down [of influence] is only in an aspect of a light and ray, and this too is by means of *Tzimtzum*, there is therefore no change at all in the Essence of G-dliness, even in *Malchut* of *Malchut* of *Asiyah*.¹⁰ Such is the case, all the way to the highest level. After *Tzimtzum* [however] there is an aspect of change, but only from the perspective of the recipients, as is known¹¹.

⁶ See the morning prayers.

⁷ See Avodat HaKodesh (R' Meir ben Gabay) Chelek HaYichud, chapter 2.

⁸ The question is quite clear. We previously explained that the very end action is bound with the essence, literally. Since we see changes down here in the final reaction, certainly in the original action there must be a change. How, then, can the verse state, “I HaShem have not changed” and other such verses? Furthermore, how is it possible for us to pray, asking G-d to overturn one desire for another desire, to bring about a different end action?

⁹ This will be explained momentarily.

¹⁰ In order to understand this paragraph, we must first understand the difference between a “light and ray” and an “influence” of cause and effect. An example of an influence of light is when a teacher expresses an intellectual thought into speech. Here, there is no change in his intellect at all, and it remains completely whole, as it was before he spoke. His intellect did not diminish whatsoever. Likewise, his speech itself did not diminish, in that he does not run out of words. Furthermore, the recipient of this “light” did not receive the actual light of the intellect itself, but only a glimmer of it in the speech. The intellect remains where it was the entire time, in the mind of the teacher. This is an example of a “light and ray”. In contrast, an example of the “influence of cause and effect” is when one lifts a heavy object. Here, his strength will diminish slowly, and he will not be able to hold it indefinitely. There is a diminishment from the time he picked it up to later, and, therefore, there is a change. Furthermore, there is cause and effect here. Therefore if there is a difference in the effect it is because there is a difference in the cause. However, the chaining down of the worlds (*Seder Hishtalshelut*) is in the way of a “light and ray”.

¹¹ This is to say that there is no diminishment or change whatsoever in the Essence. The appearance of change only comes about through the aspect of *Tzimtzum*, and **then too** it is only from the perspective of the recipients. This may be understood from the example of a slide projector. The slide projector emanates light. When, one puts a slide of film over the projector the image on the screen changes. However, clearly, no change has taken place in the light itself and certainly not in the projector. Rather, the slide of film conceals some of the light to the recipients, so they only see the image of the slide. As explained above, the chaining down of the worlds is in a way of a “light and ray”. The allegory is therefore understood as follows: The light source is analogous to the Essence of G-d, while the light emanating from the projector is analogous to the Infinite Light. The slide is analogous to the aspect of *Tzimtzum*, which conceals the light, but only from the perspective of the recipients. From the perspective of the light source no change has taken place. Therefore, since to begin with, the influence is entirely in the way of “light”, rather than “influence”, and furthermore, it is brought about through the aspect of *Tzimtzum*, in which there is no change, even to the light, it is quite clear that the Essence of G-d, Himself, has not changed at all.

The explanation of the difference between “*Or* (Light) and *Shefa* (Influence) is known to all¹². However, even in the aspect of the light it was necessary for [its revelation] to be by means of *Tzimtzum*. It is therefore incumbent upon every individual to know the matter of *Tzimtzum* and to contemplate it [relative] to each world according its value. This is because it is the main principle in the general matter of the unity of G-d, and [in understanding] how there is no change relative to the Essential Self [of G-d]. [This is to say] that before Him, “the darkness and the light are equal”,¹³ the spiritual and the physical are equivalent, so much so that the world of *Atzilut* and the world of *Asiyah* are equal [before Him], as is known.

Now, the [above] is only in relation to the encompassing light, which is called *Sovev Kol Almin* (The light that encompasses or transcends all worlds) both generally and particularly. This [light] is higher than the level of light which is in an aspect of *Memale Kol Almin* (Permeating all worlds), as is known.

However, even in the aspect of the pervading inner light of *Memale*, both generally and particularly, there is no change. [Here too] its upper and lower [levels] are equivalent. This is as stated, “I HaShem have not changed”, and “I – *Ani*” refers to the aspect of *Memale* [the pervading light], as is known. Likewise it states¹⁴, “Do I not fill the heaven and the earth?” He, specifically, fills them equally. This too [refers to] the aspect of the inner pervading light, as in the dictum¹⁵, “There is no place devoid of Him”, as is known. The reason for this is because even in the aspect of [the pervading light of] *Memale*, the light and influence descends specifically by means of *Tzimtzumim*.¹⁶

As is known even the aspect of the line and thread (*Kav V’Chut*) which is drawn from the Essence of the Infinite Light and is generally called the pervading light¹⁷ of the worlds of *ABY”A*¹⁸, is, likewise, initially drawn by means of *Tzimtzum* in the Essence. This is the first *Tzimtzum* which is called the “empty place” and the “empty void”, as stated in *Etz Chayim*¹⁹. This is likewise the case in the descent of the *Kav*²⁰ down, into the aspects of *Igullim* and *Yosher*²¹, until it becomes the aspect of *Keter* of *Adam Kadmon*, [this too] is by means of *Tzimtzum*. The same [principle] applies [in the descent] from *Adam Kadmon* to *Atik Yomin* and *Arich Anpin*. [It too is by way of *Tzimtzum*]. Even in the world of *Atzilut* itself, generally, there is a *Masach*²² (screen) between *Keter* and *Chochmah*. This is the meaning of the verse²³,

¹² See footnote 10.

¹³ Psalms 139:12

¹⁴ Jeremiah 23:24

¹⁵ See Tikkunei Zohar, 457 (91b) and 470 (122b) and other sources.

¹⁶ This is the plural of *Tzimtzum*.

¹⁷ *Memale Kol Almin*.

¹⁸ This is an acronym for the four worlds, *Atzilut*, *Briyah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.

¹⁹ See *Etz Chayim*, Shaar 1, Anaf 2 (*Drush Igullim V’Yosher*)

²⁰ The *Kav* is the thin band of limited revelation.

²¹ This will all be explained later. The main point here is that since the revelation is only by way of a “light and ray”, and this revelation is by means of *Tzimtzum*, there is no change at all. There is no change in the Essence of G-d Himself. Furthermore, since the light is also restricted by means of *Tzimtzum*, there is no change even in the light. In order to truly appreciate and comprehend this, one must truly understand the manner of *Tzimtzum*, and how it is applied throughout the chaining down. This will be explained later.

²² This may be understood as follows. The world of *Atzilut* corresponds to the general *sefirah* of

“The curtain shall be for you as a division between the holy and the holy of holies”, as explained in the *Zohar*. Similarly, [there is a screen] between *Abba* and *Imma* to *Zeir Anpin*, and between *Zeir Anpin* and *Nukva*, as is known. [Furthermore], between *Malchut* of *Atzilut* and *Briyah*, there is a *Masach* (screen) and *Malchut* penetrates the screen and becomes *Keter* of *Briyah*. In this manner, there is a *Masach* (screen) between *Briyah* and *Yetzirah*, and *Malchut* of *Briyah* penetrates the screen and becomes *Keter* of *Yetzirah*. Similarly, *Malchut* of *Yetzirah* penetrates the screen and becomes *Keter* of *Asiyah*. [This continues] until *Malchut* of *Asiyah*, which is called “The King who is exalted and alone”. This is also like the statement of the Sages²⁴, “Like the creation of the world: At first there was darkness, and then the light returned”²⁵. Similarly, the Sages stated²⁶, “Initially it arose in His thought to create with the attribute of Judgment”. This [attribute of Judgment] is the aspect of *Tzimtzum*, [which is] the name *Elokim* of *Malchut* of *Asiyah*. This is as stated, “*Bereshit Bara Elokim* – In the beginning G-d (*Elokim*) created etc”²⁷. [“*Bereshit* – In the beginning” is translated as] “*Bechochmeta* – With Wisdom”, and “*BeKadmin* – With Desire”, which is the desire and wisdom of *Malchut* of *Asiyah*. This will suffice for those of understanding.

According [to all of the above] everything is resolved [in regard to] the verse, “I HaShem have not changed”. [This is to say that there is no change] between a desire for kindness or for judgment in all of the worlds of *ABY”A*. In other words, [this refers to] how He is before the *Tzimtzum* or *Masach* (screen) through which [the light] penetrates and becomes the *Keter* of the lower world. It is, specifically, to this aspect, [i.e. the Essence of G-d, that we

Chochmah. However, it is only from the last level of *Chochmah* that a flash of intuition comes into *Binah*. Furthermore, it is only through the intermediary medium of letters of description, that the light of the concept can be understood in *Binah* (Comprehension and grasp). The actual light of the *Chochmah* itself is altogether beyond the grasp of *Binah*. When a person has an intuitive flash, he does not perceive the light of *Chochmah* directly. The “light” which he “sees” is actually only the letters, which contain the light of intuition. Nonetheless, through the secondary “light” of the letters of the *Chochmah* as they come into *Binah*, the primary “essential light” of *Chochmah* is recognized. It is only viewed through the screen and partition of the letters, which is called a *Masach*.

This may be understood by how a television works. Behind the television screen there is a “ray gun” which emits a ray onto the back of the screen. When the ray hits the phosphorus points on the screen, they light up. What the viewer sees on the television screen is not the original light of the “ray gun”, but the secondary light of the phosphorus. There is no change at all in the original light emanating from the ray gun. Furthermore, the secondary light is only an induced light. Similarly, in the world of *Atzilut* itself, there is no change. It is only in the *Masach* and *Tzimtzum* where there is change. Likewise, in the Essence of the Infinite Light, and even in the Infinite Light before *Tzimtzum*, there is no change. It is only after *Tzimtzum*, to the recipients, where there is change. This should suffice for now, as this will all be explained later at great length.

²³ Terumah 26:33

²⁴ See Tractate Shabbat 77b

²⁵ The explanation of this is that first there was the concealment of the *Tzimtzum* and then afterwards there was the secondary induced light of the screen (*Masach*). In other words, in the original Infinite Light, and in the Essence of G-d Himself, there is no change. This is like the aforementioned allegory of the television.

²⁶ See Rashi on Bereshit 1:1

²⁷ In other words, the creation of the world is specifically through the aspect of *Tzimtzum*. This is signified by the Torah’s usage of the name *Elokim* in verses pertaining to creation. The name *Elokim* signifies the concealment of the name *Havayah*, which signifies revelation. This is understood from the verse, “A sun and a shield is *Havayah Elokim*.” In other words, the *Tzimtzum* of the name *Elokim* is like a “shield” or “screen” that covers over the revelation of the name *Havaya*.

pray and] say, “May it be desirable, specifically, before **You**”. [Relative to the Essence of G-d] all aspects of “higher” and “lower” in the world, are literally equivalent. However, **after** the *Tzimtzum*, the desire is drawn into the intellect and emotions with changes, until the aspect of *Malchut* of *Asiyah* [about which] we say, “May it be desirable before You”, [meaning that G-d should cause] a change in actual action, from judgment to kindness and the like. This will suffice those of understanding²⁸.

²⁸ An allegory used to explain this is a husband’s desire to please his wife. Because of this desire, he purchases a beautiful diamond ring. However, when he presents it to his wife, she does not like this particular ring, and is unhappy with it. Her husband returns to the store, exchanges the ring for a different one which is even more splendid and opulent than the first one. Again, his wife is displeased with it. Again he returns to the store. This time he purchases a sapphire necklace. He brings it home and now his wife is pleased. Now, throughout, there was never a change, whatsoever, in the essential desire of the husband. It was only in the expression of this desire to the recipient (his wife) where change occurred. Here too, in regard to G-d, in the **Inner** essential light, which is analogous to the inner desire of the husband to please his wife, no change occurs at all. It is only in the restriction of revealing this desire, i.e. in selecting a specific emanation to express this desire, where change occurs. Similarly, this is why we are capable of praying to G-d, and requesting of Him to change a revelation of judgment to a revelation of kindness. In G-d’s essential desire there is no change. It is only in the specific expression of this desire where there is the appearance of change. However, even in this constricted expression of the Essence, it is still G-d Himself who is absolutely in control, as explained in the previous chapter. This may be understood from the story of Esther. When the wicked Haman, may his name and memory be blotted out, came to antagonize and attack the Jewish people, Mordechai did not bow down or appeal either to Haman or King Achashverosh. Rather, he immediately recognized that G-d is the source of everything, including Haman. He therefore gathered all the Jewish people to repent and appeal to G-d Himself to avert the evil decree. It is for this same reason that when we read the story of Esther on the festival of Purim, the written names of Mordechai and Haman are literally equal to each other. When the Megillah is read, just as if the reader were to miss the word “Mordechai” we would not have fulfilled our obligation, so too, if he were to miss the word “Haman” we, equally, would not have fulfilled our obligation. This is because the inner light of both Mordechai and Haman, is G-d Himself. He is the active cause of them both. This principle is true of everything in all of existence.

Now, these three chapters, seven, eight and nine, cannot not be fully understood to the beginner. However, from chapters 10 to 54 the entire explanations of the entire chaining down (*Seder Hishtalshelut*) will be given. Afterwards, one should return to these chapters and study them over again.