

חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

Arvei Nachal

NADVORNA · ARVEI NACHAL, BERESHIT

The shift from din (judgment) to rachamim (mercy) in creation reflects not a change of mind in God, who is beyond time and limitation, but a difference in spiritual rank: the higher, more primordial levels drawn from divine thought operate through din, while the final, actualized world requires rachamim to endure, since evil exists there and nothing could survive din alone. This same principle explains why the tzaddikim (righteous ones) are judged by Heaven "to a hairsbreadth" - the higher a soul's level, the more it can and must bear the rigor of din, whereas lower levels are sustained by rachamim because they cannot yet withstand strict judgment. AI SUMMARY

"Elohim created..." etc. Rashi, of blessed memory, wrote: At first it arose in [God's] thought to create the world with the attribute of din (judgment), but He saw that the world could not endure, so He gave precedence to the attribute of rachamim (mercy) and joined it with the attribute of din. This is [the meaning of] what is written: "on the day that the Lord Elohim made earth and heaven" [Genesis 2:4] - end of citation.

This is astonishing. For a person who begins to do something in one manner, and in the end changes his mind and does it in a different manner, does so for one of two reasons: either the matter was too heavy for him in the first manner, and he grew weary and tired and saw that he would not be able to accomplish it that way, and therefore he does it in the other manner; or he saw that it was not good for the matter to be that way, whereas at first, due to the limitation of his understanding, he had not grasped this. But the Holy One, blessed be He, does not grow weary and does not grow tired, and there is no limit to His understanding, and He declares from the beginning the end [Isaiah 46:10] - so how could there be, in His case, a reversal, Heaven forbid, that He should go back from His original thought?

Now the true meaning of the matter, as it appears to my limited understanding, is this: what Rashi z"l (of blessed memory) wrote, that "it preceded," does

not mean that it preceded in time — for the Blessed One is above time entirely — but rather that it preceded in rank and level.

And the matter is as follows: just as by the word of Hashem (God) the thing spoken came into being — for by His saying "let there be a firmament," the firmament was created, and by ten utterances the world was created (Avot 5:1) — so too, by His thought, as it were, blessed be His Name, the very thing that arose in His thought likewise came into being.

Only that this existence (havayah) is exceedingly fine and spiritual, and it is the highest level, from which all the worlds were drawn down in succession until the navel of the earth (for speech too is drawn down from thought). And this initial drawing-forth of thought is the very beginning of the entire chain of succession (hishtalshelut).

It follows that in the upper worlds, which came into being from His thought, [the mode of governance] is through the attribute of din (judgment); but at the end of the chain, at the conclusion of the act of creation, the attribute of rachamim (mercy) preceded, for there evil exists, and things cannot endure through the attribute of din alone.

Therefore here it is written "Bereishit" (In the beginning) — which is the beginning of thought, the beginning of chochmah (wisdom) — as Yonatan translated, "b'chochmata" (with wisdom), which is the secret of thought — "created Elohim," that is, the attribute of din (as in Zohar III, 30b). But there it is written, "on the day that Hashem Elohim made earth and heaven" (Genesis 2:4) — that is, when it went forth into actual making, which is the end of the act — there it is written "Hashem Elohim."

This is the reason the Sages, of blessed memory, said (Yevamot 121b) that the Holy One, blessed be He, is exacting with the tzaddikim (righteous ones) to a hairsbreadth: for the higher one rises to a greater level, the more middat hadin (the attribute of

judgment) is present there. This is the matter known from the verses in every place where our Sages said "the verse accounts it against him" — the intent being that although that particular thing is not yet considered so great a sin in itself, nevertheless, when the Holy One, blessed be He, wishes to raise his soul from one level to a yet greater level, then the matter is reckoned as a great sin.

And this is the purpose for which the Holy One, blessed be He, created things in this manner: for as long as a person is on a lower level, he cannot survive under middat hadin. Therefore, at that level, precedence is given to middat harachamim (the attribute of mercy); but when he rises to a greater level, he becomes able to withstand middat hadin.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5)