

חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

Bat Ayin

AVRITCH · BAT AYIN, BERESHIT

The deeper tzimtzum (contraction) that produced this physical world, hinted at by the letter hei with its open passageway, is precisely what allows for bechirah (free will) and teshuvah (repentance), since greater concealment brings greater rachamim (mercy); the higher, holier worlds, being closer to the source of light, are governed more by middat hadin (attribute of judgment), exacting strict accountability even from tzaddikim (righteous ones) and angels, with no room for teshuvah. Thus Hashem's precedence of rachamim before din in creating this world is not a dilution of holiness but a necessary kindness, making this lowly, concealed world—precisely because of its distance from the light—the unique realm where return and repair are possible. AI SUMMARY

In the beginning G-d created, etc. (Bereshit 1:1). Rashi explains that at first it arose in the Divine thought to create it with the middah of judgment (attribute of justice), and He saw that the world could not endure, so He preceded it with the middah of rachamim (attribute of mercy), etc. And this is what is written, "On the day that Hashem Elohim made," etc. (combining the Name of mercy with the Name of judgment).

An explanation by way of mussar (moral instruction): it is known that the Holy One, blessed be He, contracted His light and created the worlds. At first He contracted His light, blessed be He, and created the upper world by means of the letter yud; afterward He contracted it still further, until He created this physical world by means of the letter hei. And He hinted, by means of the letter hei, that it has an opening through which to go out, alluding to the fact that there is bechirah (free will) within it—that whoever wishes to leave may leave—and when he wishes to return in teshuvah (repentance) and enter into the realm of kedushah (holiness), it has an opening through which to enter, and the Holy One, blessed be He, will receive him in teshuvah, as our Rabbis said (Menachot 29b).

But the higher world, which contains holiness to a greater degree, has no teshuvah (repentance) within it, for the Holy One, blessed be He, is exacting with

the tzaddikim (righteous ones) and with the angels to the thickness of a hair, so that they are punished even for an unwitting [sin], as the verse states, "and round about Him it storms exceedingly" (Tehillim 50:3; see Yevamot 121b) — meaning that wherever there is greater holiness, there is greater exactitude [in judgment], and wherever the holiness is not so great, due to the greatness of the tzimtzum (contraction/constriction), there is in it more of an aspect of rachamim (mercy) and acceptance of teshuvah. Therefore the Olam HaBa (World to Come) has no aspect of teshuvah with respect to the angels, for it is more a dimension of din (judgment); whereas this physical Olam HaZeh (this world) has more of an aspect of rachamim, and therefore it contains the aspect of teshuvah.

This is [the meaning of]: "At first it arose in [His] thought to create the world with the attribute of Din (Judgment)" — meaning that at the beginning of the tzimtzum (contraction), He created the upper world with the attribute of Din, that is, in the aspect of great kedushah (holiness), and there is more Din there, as mentioned above. And afterward, when He wished to create this world, which is in a more intense tzimtzum of the light and a great concealment, and it could not endure without the

aspect of rachamim (mercy), therefore He preceded it with the attribute of rachamim, that is, the aspect of teshuvah (repentance), as mentioned above.

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