

The Rebbe's Discourses

Summaries of points from the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
פרשת בראשית תשכ"ה ד"ה ויכולו בלתי מוגה
Published for Shabbat Sedra Bereishit
29 Tishrei 5784, 14 October 2023¹

PARTNER IN CREATION

THE TALMUD² STATES THAT ONE WHO RECITES 'VAYECHULU HASHAMAYIM³' in the Friday evening prayers becomes a partner with G-d in Creation. What an amazing idea! How can a mere human being imagine himself a partner with G-d in the vast work of Creation? Especially since an equal 'partner' to a project is a partner to *all* aspects of the project. So, what does this mean?

Another question one might ask: many Jews round the world say 'Vayechulu'. Doesn't that mean they are *all* partners together with G-d and also with each other? In that case, why doesn't the Talmud phrase this in the plural?

We can understand these points in terms of a discourse⁴ by the Tzemach Tzedek, which cites the Midrash commenting on our verse, Vayechulu, 'and the heavens and earth and all their host were completed'. The Midrash⁵ cites a verse from Psalms which can be translated as follows: 'all that is finite has an end, but Your Mitzvot are unlimited.'⁶ The word translated 'finite' *tichlah* relates to the word Vayechulu, which has a similar connotation: the work of Creation was 'finished', and hence finite.

The physical universe is finite, but, by contrast, the Torah and Mitzvot are infinite. Now, one might object that the Mitzvot have a specific number, 613,

¹ Maamar Vayechulu 5725 (1965). Printed in Dvar Malchut of Bereishit 5776. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

² Shabbat 119b.

³ 'And the heavens and the earth and all their host were complete..' (Gen.2:1.) This text is in the evening prayer for Shabbat and also in Kiddush.

⁴ Or HaTorah, Bereishit, vol.3 p.505 ff.

⁵ Genesis Rabbah, beginning of ch.10.

⁶ Ps. 119:96.

and are closely defined. So there is a sense in which they are not infinite. This is true, but Torah, contrasting with Mitzvot, is ‘greater than the earth and broader than the sea’⁷. Yet even here, one might suggest that this expresses a limit to Torah, since it is being compared to physical entities. Further, the Talmud mentions people who claimed to know the entire Torah⁸. The Maamar suggests that this means only the Revealed Torah, nigleh; but the esoteric dimension of Torah is truly infinite, as it is written ‘open my eyes and I will gaze at wonders from Your Torah’⁹ which is interpreted as meaning the inner dimension of Torah study.

In fact, we learn that the Revealed Dimension of Torah also has infinite possibilities, for when a person leaves this world he discovers all the esoteric meanings in the revealed Torah and the Mitzvot which he or she studied and kept in this world.

[We might say that each aspect of Torah and Mitzvot has an infinite quality, yet there are different orders of infinity, higher and higher..]

So, we have a finite world, and, generally speaking, infinite Torah and Mitzvot. But the Divine intention is not to leave these as two separate realms, but to draw them together. This is the task of the Jew: to draw the infinite into the finite. We live in a finite world, but our observance of Mitzvot and study of Torah draw the infinite into the world.

Now we can understand the Talmudic statement about Vayechulu. This word can be seen as relating to *kilayon*, expiring, selflessness. We reveal the infinite possibilities in the finite world, and in this way it attains *bitul*, selflessness. This means that G-d creates Something from Nothing but we reverse the process: we make Something, the physical and finite world, become infinite, beyond the limitations of materiality.

We achieve this by combining the finite and infinite together, reminiscent of the way the Talmud tells us that the Ark was ‘beyond measure’¹⁰. For example, in practical life, a person is trying to make a living. So, the more his shop is open, better. But when it comes to the eve of Shabbat, he closes his shop. One would expect him to do worse, financially, but in fact he does better...

⁷ Job 11:9.

⁸ Menachot 99b

⁹ Ps.119:18.

¹⁰ Yoma 21a. The sacred golden Ark in the middle of the Holy of Holies had a specific size – two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide (Ex. 25:10). The Holy of Holies was 10 cubits square. But the distance from the wall of the Holy of Holies to the Ark, from any direction, was just 5 cubits, meaning the Ark did not take up any space.

The power to elevate existence and connect it with the infinite is our ‘partnership’ with G-d in the project of Creation. We are achieving the goal of Creation, together with G-d. This power to elevate the finite and connect it with the infinite extends to all aspects of the universe, just as an equal partner is involved with all aspects of the project.

Finally we consider the question why the Talmud speaks in the singular, about each individual Jew. There is a famous passage in the Mishnah¹¹ which states that since Adam was created as one individual, we see the significance of every single individual. It goes on to say ‘therefore each person should say “for my sake the world was created”’.

Each one of us is that singular individual, in a unique partnership with the Divine, bringing the project of Creation to fulfilment...

[Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care](#)

¹¹ Sanhedrin 37a, Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5.