

The Rebbe's Discourses

Free Summaries of Points from the Rebbe's
Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל

ד"ה המגיד מראשית אחרית תשה"י (התוועדות א') בלתי מוגה

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THE ESSENCE AT THE BEGINNING

THE PROPHET ISAIAH² SAYS 'G-D TELLS THE END FROM THE BEGINNING'. Rabbi Shneur Zalman links these words with the first statement of the Torah 'In the beginning G-d created Heaven and Earth', saying that whenever the Scriptures use the word 'the beginning' this term relates back to the word *Bereishit* ('In the beginning') the first word of the Torah³.

The Rebbe explains that *Bereishit*, 'the beginning' is so intensely the beginning of everything, that in relation to it, everything else is 'the end'. This is the force of the verse from Isaiah, in the light of Rabbi Shneur Zalman's comment. Isaiah could have said 'G-d tells the beginning - any beginning - from the Beginning - from Bereishit'. Instead the verse reads 'G-d tells the end from the beginning', because in relation to Bereishit, every other 'beginning' has the quality of an 'end'.

Now the verse 'In the beginning G-d created Heaven and Earth' has many levels of interpretation. The simple meaning is that this is the first of the Ten Utterances with which the world was created⁴. On an esoteric level, the Zohar

¹ HaMagid Mereishit Aharit -Bereishit5718 (First Hitva'adut). Dvormalchus Bereishis 5778.
The discourse was not edited by the Rebbe.

² Is. 46:10.

³ According to Rashi, the word *Bereishit*, the first word of the Torah, is in the construct form (and it therefore means 'in the beginning of...'). Nachmanides disagrees, and cites the verse from Isaiah as an example of this word being used in the absolute form. Rabbi Shneur Zalman discusses both opinions and links the two verses together

⁴ Talmud Rosh Hashanah 32a.

says that this verse includes all the Ten Sefirot: 'the beginning' signifies Wisdom, 'Heaven' represents the chain of Sefirot and 'Earthe' denotes the tenth Sefirah, Kingship. According to this, the verse is about the World of Atzilut, the realm of the Sefirot.

In line with the Zohar's interpretation is the Targum Yonatan, which translates 'Bereishit' as meaning 'With Wisdom'. But Targum Onkelos translates this word as *bekadmin*, which is understood to mean 'before', hinting at the Sefirah Keter which is higher than Atzilut. On even a higher level of interpretation, Bereishit is understood to mean the beginning of the Line of Light (*kav*) which, the Kabbalah explains, is the commencement of the downchaining of the Sefirot and worlds, after the Tzimtzum⁵.

There are even higher levels of interpretation of 'Bereishit', going beyond the initial Tzimtzum, to the 'radiance which is included in the Divine Essence', and even further, to the ultimate Divine Essence, whose existence is from itself. This is the source of all other existence, from the highest levels to the lowest.

This most exalted interpretation of 'In the beginning G-d created..' links with the most simple interpretation, that it refers to the Divine Utterance which created the physical universe. For as Rabbi Shneur Zalman explains, it is only the Divine Essence which is able to create physical matter⁶.

On the one hand this means that we can understand that in relation to the Divine Essence, every other level is 'the end', infinitely lower. But at the same time, the Divine Essence is within every lower level, even the lowest. For the Creation of all the worlds, from the highest to the lowest, came about because 'G-d desired to have a dwelling in the lower world', which means in our lowest, material world of concealment. As our Rebbeim have put it: 'we do not know why G-d desired this, but we do know this was His desire.'

The Midrash says that G-d 'consulted the souls of the Tzaddikim' before creating the world. This is explained to mean that G-d saw the delight He would have from the service of the Tzaddikim - 'and your whole people are Tzaddikim'. The delight comes about because each individual Jew can fulfill the desire to make a dwelling for the Divine in the lower world.

This is why the Divine Essence is present at the lowest level, within every detail of existence. For each detail expresses the Divine desire to have a dwelling in the lower world, and also the delight of the Divine in that dwelling. Since the

⁵ Tzimtzum literally means 'contraction' and is the veiling of the infinite Divine radiance so as to metaphorically 'give room' for the creation of finite worlds.

⁶ Physical matter, contrasting with spiritual substance, hides the Divine, and only the Divine Essence can create a kind of substance which conceals G-d.

Divine Essence is one with its Will and, even more so, with its Delight, the Divine Essence is in everything.

This is the meaning of the verse “G-d tells the end from the beginning”. The word ‘tells’, *maggid* in Hebrew, also means ‘flow’⁷. G-dliness flows from the Divine Essence, the Beginning, *Bereishit*, to all other levels of existence. At every level, even, and particularly, the lowest, the Divine Essence is expressed. Thus we can understand Rabbi Shneur Zalman’s comment, that everything else is ‘the end’ in relation to *Bereishit*, the ultimate beginning. Because the Divine Essence of *Bereishit* connects with every particle of existence, however remote.

Thus too we can understand the saying of Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak, the sixth Rebbe, that ‘the way one behaves on Shabbat Bereishit, so it goes the whole year’. This can be interpreted in simple terms, but also more spiritually: the ‘whole year’ means the whole realm of the downchaining of worlds. On Shabbat Bereishit we read the Sedra Bereishit, and the verse ‘In the beginning G-d created Heaven and Earth’, with all its differing levels of interpretation. Through this we reveal the Divine Essence, which acts on all levels of existence.

If our approach on this Shabbat Bereishit is in a broad and expansive way, unlimited, this expansiveness spreads though all levels of existence, from the highest to the lowest.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care

⁷ Relating to the Aramaic word *nagid* meaning ‘flow’.