

**Tree of Life - The Study of the Ten Sephirot /  
Rav Yehudah Ashlag**

**Volume One**

**The *Tsimtsum* and the *Kav***

**Chapter 1**

Explains the issue of *Tsimtsum One (Aleph)*, when *Ohr Ein Sof – The Endless Light* became contracted in order to emanate the *Ne'etsalim – Emanated Beings* and create the *Nivraim - creatures*; containing five topics:

1. Before the *Tsimtsum Ein Sof* filled the entire reality. 2. The Creation was in order to reveal His Names and Appellations. 3. The *Tsimtsum* of the *Ohr* around the middle point. 4. The *Halal* that remained after the *Tsimtsum* was *Agol*. 5. Because *Ohr Ein Sof* was even, the *Tsimtsum* was also even. This is the secret of the *Igul*.

Before the *Tsimtsum Ein Sof* filled the entire reality

**1) Know, that before (1) the *Ne'etsalim* were emanated and the creatures created, an Upper Expanding/Simple Light (*Ohr*) (2) had filled the entire reality (3). There was no vacant place (4), such as an empty *Avir* (5) and a *Halal* (6), but everything was filled with that expanding, boundless *Ohr* (7).**

**It did not have *Rosh (head)*, or *Sof (End)* (8), but it was all one, Simple *Ohr* (9), all even (10), called *Ohr Ein Sof* (11).**

*Ohr Penimi*

**Bear in mind**, that the entire wisdom of Kabbalah is founded on spiritual matters that do not refer to time or space. They are not subject to change or nonexistence and all the changes that are spoken of in this wisdom do not imply that one form stops to exist and is replaced by another form. The above change rather implies to the appearance of an additional form, while the first does not move from its place, as absence and change are Physical conducts.

This is difficulty for beginners, for they perceive matters by means of boundaries of time, space, change and exchange. However, the Kabbalist scholars only used those as symbols to point to their Upper Roots.

For that reason I will do my best to translate and explain spiritual meaning of every word, detached of space, time and transformation. It is upon the readers to memorize the meaning of these words thoroughly, for it is impossible to repeat them every time.

1. The issue of spiritual time is explained thoroughly in *Histaklut Penimit* Chapter 9,

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item 33.

2. It refers to the Light (*Ohr*) that expands from the Essence (*Atsmut*) of the Creator. Know that all the names and appellations that appear in the wisdom of Kabbalah are not at all in the *Atsmut* of the Creator, but only in the *Ohr* that expands from His *Atsmut*. However, we cannot utter or use even a single word regarding His *Atsmut*, for the rule is that whatever we can not grasp or perceive in our minds, we can not know by a name. Remember that and you will not fail.

3. This is seemingly perplexing; the discussion is about the time before the *Olamot* (Worlds/Concealments) were created. Thus, which reality exists here, that the *Ohr Elyon* should fill? The issue is that all the *Olamot* and the *Neshamot* (souls) that exist and that are destined to be created with all their incidents until the completion of their correction; all are included in *Ein Sof* in their full completion and glory.

Thus, there are two principles we should define in the reality presented in front of us:

1. The way everything is established and exists in *Ein Sof* with their full completion and glory.
2. The way they are arranged and evolve before us after *Tsimtsum Aleph* in the five *Olamot* named: *Adam Kadmon*, *Atsilut*, *Beri'a*, *Yetsira*, *Asiya*.

This is what The Rav means when he says that the *Ohr Elyon* that extends from His *Atsmut* (*Essence*)“... **filled the entire reality**,” meaning the entire reality of the first principle, relating to their existence in *Ein Sof* before the *Tsimtsum*. He tells us that the *Ohr Elyon* filled them entirely, until they had no vacant place left where correction and perfection could be added whatsoever.

4. It means that before the *Olamot* were created there was only *Ein Sof*. There was not a “vacant place,” meaning a place of incompleteness that would qualify for corrections because the *Ohr Elyon* filled that place. It left no room for the *Tahtonim* (*lower beings*) to distinguish themselves and add something to His completeness.

Only because of the *Tsimtsum* came about a space for corrections. However, do not be mistaken to think that the book speaks of a Physical place or space.

5. This does not refer to Physical air whatsoever; but there is a spiritual *Ohr* that is called by that name. There are two *Behinot* (features) of *Ohr* in each complete *Partzuf*: *Ohr of Hokhma* and *Ohr of Hasadim*.

*Ohr of Hokhma* is the *Atsmut* (*Essence*) of the *Partzuf*, meaning its vitality. *Ohr of Hasadim* only operates as a Malbish (enveloping/wrapping) *Ohr* over the *Ohr of Hokhma* in the *Partzuf* since *Ohr of Hokhma* cannot permeate the *Partzuf* if it is not wrapped by the *Ohr of Hasadim* first.

However, sometimes, when the *Partzufim* are in *Katnut*, they do not have more than *Ohr Hasadim*. You should know that that *Ohr Hasadim* is called *Avir* (Air) or *Ruah* (*Spirit*). When it is by itself, without *Ohr de Hokhma*, it is called “empty *Avir* (Air),” meaning empty of *Ohr Hokhma*. Then it waits for *Ohr Hokhma* to expand into it and to fill it up.

The Rav tells us that before the *Olamot* were created, meaning in *Ein Sof*, such empty

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*Avir* did not exist in reality at all, because there was not any lack in there.

6. To understand that word, you must first know the essence of a spiritual *Keli-Vessel*. Since the *Ne'etsal* – *Emanated Being* receives its sustenance from the *Ma'atsil-The Emanator*, it necessarily implies that it has a *Ratson* (desire) and yearning to receive that *Shefa* - *Bliss* from Him.

Know, that the amount of that *Ratson* and cravings is the entire substance that exists in the *Ne'etsal*. Thus, every thing that exists in the *Ne'etsal* that is not of that substance, no longer relates to its substance, but to the *Shefa* that it receives from the *Ma'atsil*.

Furthermore, this substance determines the *Gadlut* and the level of each *Ne'etsal*, each *Partzuf*, and each *Sefira*. The *Hitpashtut* of the *Ohr Elyon* from the *Ma'atsil* is certainly unlimited, but it is the *Ne'etsal* that limits the *Shefa*, for it receives no more and no less than its measure of desire to receive. This is the criterion in spirituality, because there is no coercion there; it depends entirely on the *Ratson*.

For that reason we call this will to receive the “Desire to Receive” of the *Ne'etsal*. It is regarded as its substance and the reason that it stopped being regarded as a *Ma'atsil* and was denominated as a *Ne'etsal*. The *Ne'etsal* is defined by a substance that does not exist in the *Ma'atsil* whatsoever, for there is absolutely no desire to receive in the *Ma'atsil*, since whom would He receive from?

Now we will explain how there are four degrees in this substance, from *Katnut* to *Gadlut* (of reception). The fourth degree, being the *Gadlut* of the reception, is complete only in *Ein Sof*, before the *Olamot* were created. It is the only one that was subject to the *Tsimtsum*, and we will clarify henceforth that it was emptied of every *Shefa* that she had from *Ein Sof* and remained a vacant *Halal*. This is what the Rav means when he says that before the *Olam* – *Our Universe* was created, meaning in *Ein Sof*, this vacant *Halal* did not exist.

7. This means that there is nothing that the lower ones can add to it by means of their actions.

8. The terms *Rosh* and *Sof* will be explained below.

9. Meaning without discriminating small and great, everything is even, equal and equally full.

10. Where there is no *Zakut* and *Av'iyut* by which the degrees are set. These discriminations were established only with the renewal of the *Tsimtsum*.

11. We should ask: since we have no perception of the *Ein Sof* - *Endless*, how then do we know Him by name? After all, each name designates our perception of Him, according to the definition of that name. We cannot excuse ourselves by saying that the name merely points to the opposite of perception, for then we should have named Him “imperceptible.”

The thing is that that name indicates the entire difference between *Ein Sof* and all the *Olamot* beneath it. The *Tsimtsum* took place after the *Ein Sof*. Thus, in every place the force of the *Tsimtsum* awakens, it restricts the *Ohr* and that ends the *He'ara* – flow of

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Lightin that place.

Hence, any *Sof* and *Siyum* in any *He'ara* in any *Partzuf* come solely from the *Tsimtsum*. Moreover, all the beings and their various fillings in the *Olamot* come about and are innovated because of that *Sof* and *Siyum*.

It is called *Ein Sof* because the *Tsimtsum* does not apply there, indicating that there isn't any ending there whatsoever. With that we can deduce that this *Ohr* is *Pashut* and completely even, for one depends on the other.

The reason for creation was the revelation of His Names and Appellations

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**When it rose upon His Simple Ratson (30) to create the Olamot and emanate the Ne'etsalim to bring the perfection of His deeds, His names and appellations to light, which was the reason of the creation of the Olamot,**

*Ohr Penimi*

30. We need not wonder how there is a Ratson in Ein Sof, who is higher than any notion, to which we can say, "rose upon His Simple Ratson." You should comprehend what has been said above that in every Ne'etsal there is by necessity a will to receive the Shefa from the Ma'atsil.

However, in Ein Sof it is a "Simple Ratson" because He is One and His Name One. The Ohr in Ein Sof is called He and the will to receive is called His Name, and they are simple unity without any form of separation.

However, we should not resemble the unity and separation discussed here with Physical unity and separation that are distinguished by motion, nearness and distance. That is because the spiritual essence does not take up any space.

Having said that, you should know that separation in spirituality occurs only by means of Shinui Tsurah. Thus, if one spiritual thing acquires an additional Tsurah that is unlike its current Tsurah, it stops being one and becomes two separate entities. Their distance from each other is measured by the oppositeness of their forms.

Just as Physical entities connect and separate through proximity and remoteness, so spiritual entities connect and separate according to their difference and equivalence of form. The Shinui Tsurah separates them from one another, and the Hishtavut Tsurah brings them together. Remember that for it is the key element to this wisdom.

Now you will understand the meaning of the aforementioned words "He is One and His Name One," and the simple unity we are so meticulous about in Ein Sof. Indeed this unity is of the wonders of His almightiness.

We have witnessed the difference between the Ma'atsil and the Ne'etsal that was formed by Tsurah of that will to receive that exists in the Ne'etsal and not in the Ma'atsil. Because of that Shinui Tsurah the Ne'etsal became separated from the Ma'atsil and acquired its own separate name, meaning Ne'etsal, and not Ma'atsil.

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The above explanation might mislead us into thinking that Ohr Ein Sof, called “He,” is not entirely adherent with Ein Sof, called “His Name,” meaning the will to receive the Ohr and the Shefa, called “He.” That is because the Ohr Elyon that extends from his Atsmut, called “He” has but one attribute – to bestow - and none of the Tsura of the will to receive.

However, Ein Sof, called “His Name,” which does have a will to receive, is therefore different from the Ohr Elyon, which has no will to receive whatsoever, as has been explained, and we know that Shinui Tsura separates. However, the Midrash and the Rav tell us that it is not so. Instead, He is One and His Name One in Simple Unity, means that there is no difference between them.

Although there is necessarily a difference of form between “He” and “His Name,” it is nevertheless completely inactive there. We do not understand it, but it is undoubtedly so. It is said about that, that there is no perception or thought in Ein Sof whatsoever, since this matter is above our mind (will be discussed further in the next item).