

Zera Shimshon

by Rabbi Shimshon Chaim Nachmani zt"l

Published Mantua 1778*

Chapter I: Bereisheet (Gen. 1:1-6:8)

Essay 11. The initial concealment of heaven and earth

יְלִקוּט משלי על פסוק "הגו סיגים מפסוק ויצא לצרף כלי", אמר ר' אליעזר בן יעקב משל לאמבטי שהיתה מלאה מים ולא היתה מלאכת דיסקוסין נראית, כיון שפסקה וניער המים מתוכה נראית מלאכת דיסקוסין, כך כל זמן שהיה תהו ובוהו בעולם לא נראית מלאכת שמים וארץ כיון שנגער תהו ובוהו מן העולם נראית מלאכת שמים וארץ "ויצא לצרף כלי" שנעשו כלים עכ"ל. המדרש הזה על דרך הפשט הוא תמוה וכל הפירושים שנקתבו עליו דחוקים ואינם מספיקים, לכן נראה לפרשו על דרך הסוד, שאפילו שיהיה קלה של חכמים צריכה תלמוד.

There is a **Yalkut Shimoni on Proverbs on the verse:**

“Take away the dross from the silver, and there will come forth a vessel for the silversmith.”¹ Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov said: This may be compared to a bath that was filled with water, so that the workmanship of the decorated disks within the bath could not be seen. When the water was drained and removed, the workmanship of the decorated disks became visible.

So too, as long as there was “chaos and void”² in the world, the workmanship of the heavens and the earth was not visible. But once the chaos and void were removed from the world, the workmanship of the heavens and the earth became visible, “and there will come forth a vessel for the silversmith,” that [the heavens and earth] became vessels.

- Yalkut Shimoni on Nach, 961:10

This Midrash, taken in its simple sense, is puzzling, and all the explanations written on it are forced and insufficient. Therefore, it seems appropriate to explain it according to the mystical path, for even the conversation of Torah scholars require analysis.³

* English translation: Copyright © 2025 by Charles S. Stein. Additional essays are available at <https://zstorah.com>

¹ Prov. 25:4.

² Gen. 1:2.

³ Sukkah 21b.

והנה כבר נודע כי שמים וארץ הם פנויים לזו"ן אשר בהם הנה כל שממות ומיתת המלכים קודם שבא התיקון, כנודע בסוד "ואלה המלכים אשר מלכו בארץ אדום" וכו' שמתו והתקרבו ונעשו תהו ובוהו ונפלו בעמקי הקליפות והחשוך הנה מכסה עליהם בסוד "ורוח אלהים מרחפת" וכו'.

Now, it is already known that “heaven” and “earth” are names for *Ze’ir Anpin* and *Nukva* [זעיר אנפין ונוקבא],⁴ the male and female aspects of the Divine in the lower part of the world of *Atzilut* (Emanation), in which existed all the desolation and the “death of the kings” before the rectification came. This is known from the esoteric secret of the verse, “These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the Israelites,”⁵ who died and were destroyed, and became “chaos and void,” and fell into the depths of the *kelipot*, and darkness covered them, in the esoteric secret of the words, “and the spirit of G-d hovered over the water.”⁶

That is, Kabbalah refers to a primordial cosmic catastrophe: the shattering of earlier spiritual worlds before the creation of our rectified universe. We currently have a “world,” a configuration of Divine energy, known as *Olam haTikkun*, the World of Rectification. Before that, there was *Olam haTohu*, the World of Chaos, in which each Sefirah acted independently, with no harmony or interrelationship. The lights (*orot*) were intense, but the vessels (*kelim*) weak, and they could not contain the energy and shattered. The Edomite kings named in Gen. 36:32–39 are interpreted by the Arizal as each corresponding to one of the primordial Sefirot of *Tohu*, and the “death” of the king signifies that the vessel of that Sefirah broke, causing the *nitzotzot*, the sparks of holiness, to fall into the lower realms among the *kelipot*. Prior to the rectification, *Ze’ir Anpin* and *Nukva* were also in a state of chaos.

והו אלה דברי המדרש כל זמן שהיה תהו ובוהו בעולם שהיו אלו המלכים מתים ובלי תיקון לא היתה נראית מלאכת שמים וארץ, שאף על פי שהיו בעולם לא היו נראים מפני שהיו כמו מתים. כיון שנעקר תהו ובוהו מן העולם, ונדקא נעקר פי בעלות הבירור שלקחם במחשבה העליונה לא היתה יכולת לסיגים המערבים עמם להשאר שם, ונפרדו ויצאו משם בסוד גיחוץ דנקי כד אכתש אומנא דפרזלא הנזכר בפרשת פקודי, וזהו "הגו סיגים מכסף" שהופרשו הסיגים מכסף שהם האורות העליונים, אז "ויצא לצרף קלי".

These are the words of the Midrash: “as long as there was chaos and void in the world,” meaning, while those primordial kings were dead and unrectified, “the workmanship of the heavens and the earth was not visible,” for although they existed in potential, they could not be seen, for they were as if dead.

When the chaos and void was removed from the world, and specifically “removed,” for when their refinement rose into the supernal thought, the dross mingled with them could not remain there, and they separated and went out from there. This is according to the esoteric secret of “sparks that fly out when the smith strikes the iron” mentioned in *parashat*

⁴ Zohar, Bereisheet (I:31b).

⁵ Gen. 36:31.

⁶ Gen. 1:2.

Pekudei [II:254b].⁷ This is the meaning of “take away the dross from the silver,” meaning the dross was separated from the silver, which represents the supernal lights, then “there will come forth a vessel for the silversmith.”

וְסִימֵי הַמְדָּרֶשׁ "וְנִעְשׂוּ כְּלִים" שֶׁעָקַר הַתִּיקוּן הִנֵּה לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם כְּלִים חֲדָשִׁים יוֹתֵר גְּדוּלִים וּמְתוּקָנִים. וְאִם נִשְׁכֵּל בְּמַלְת לְצוּר"ף שֶׁהוּא בְּגִימְטְרִיָּא ת"ו הוּא רְמֵז אֶל הַחֲכָמָה שֶׁהוּא אֲבָא שֶׁהוּא שֵׁם ע"ב דְּמִילּוּי יוֹדִי"ן אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ י' אוֹתִיּוֹת, וְד' מֵהֶם הֵם ד' יוֹדִי"ן אֲשֶׁר בְּהִיּוֹת "כֹּל אֶחָת מֵהֶם כְּלוּלָה מִי' הֵם ת', וְעַם ו' אוֹתִיּוֹת אֲחֵרוֹת הֵם ת"ו" כְּנֹדַע בְּסוּד הַמְצוּרָע, לְרִמּוֹז שֶׁכֵּל הַתִּיקוּן בָּא מִמְחֻשְׁבָּה דְּאֲבָא, וְנִהוּ "וְנִצָּא לְצִרְף כְּלִי".

The Midrash concludes, “and vessels were made,” for the main rectification was to make for them new vessels, larger and more perfected. If we contemplate the word לצורף [la tzoref] [“for the silversmith”],⁸ its Gematria is 406 (ת"ו). As will be explained, this Gematria of 406 alludes to *Chokhmah* [“wisdom”], which is *Abba* [“father”].

Chokhmah is the second *Sefirah* on the Tree of Life, representing pure, undifferentiated Divine wisdom, often described as the initial flash of creative insight. *Abba* is the specific *partzuf* or Divine “countenance” that is formed from and corresponds to the *sefirah* of *Chokhmah*. *Abba* represents the seed of intellect, the active and generative aspects of Divine inspiration.

Abba is associated with the Divine Name of 72, i.e., the letters of the Tetragrammaton, spelled in full with *yods*, i.e., יוד הי ויו הי, which has ten letters, four of which are the four *yods*. This ten-lettered rendering of the Tetragrammaton has a Gematria of 72. The Zohar explains that the Divine Name of 72 corresponds to the emanation of light from *Chokhmah*.⁹

“When each of these [four *yods* of the ten-lettered Divine Name of 72] is included of ten, [i.e., the Gematria value of the *yod* being 10, multiplied by each of the ten *Sephiroth*,] they [total] 400, and together with the other six letters [of the ten-lettered Divine Name of 72], they [total] 406,” as is known from the esoteric secret of the *metzora*.¹⁰ Thus, we can see an association from *Chochmah* and *Abba* to the Divine Name of 72, and from there to a sum of 406, the Gematria of לצורף"ף.

This hints that all the rectification comes from the thought of *Abba*, i.e., the rectification emanates from the thought or intellect within the level of *Chochmah* itself. This is the meaning of “there will come forth a vessel for the silversmith.”

* * *

⁷ See also Zohar, Haazinu (III: 292b) (Idra Zuta 24:114): “Before the world was created, they did not face and look at each other face to face, and because of that, the earlier worlds were destroyed, by being broken and dying. The first worlds were formed but not fixed, and that king that was not established was called “glowing sparks.” That is, his kingdom and reign were like the light of a spark that is immediately extinguished and disappears. It is like a craftsman who strikes on an iron tool with a hammer, and produces sparks in every direction. These sparks come out glowing and shining but are extinguished at once. These are called the first worlds. For this reason, they were destroyed and did not survive, until Atika Kadisha manifested and the craftsman began His work.” See also Recanati on the Torah, Vayishlach 34.

⁸ If the word is spelled fully, and not absent the *vav*, as it is spelled in Scripture.

⁹ Zohar I:31b.

¹⁰ Chaim Vital, *Etz Chayim*, Sha’ar 38, ch. 7.