

Discourse 7

“Vayechulu HaShamayim v’HaAretz - The heavens and the earth were completed”

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Bereishit,
Shabbat Mevarchim Marcheshvan, 5725
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,⁴⁴⁷ “The heavens and the earth and all their hosts were completed etc.” Now, it states in the Talmud,⁴⁴⁸ “Whosoever prays on Shabbat evening and recites [the passage] ‘and they were completed’ (*Vayechulu*-ויכלו) etc., becomes a partner with the Holy One, blessed is He, in the act of creation.”

Now, this must be better understood. For, at first glance, how can it apply to say a matter of “partnership” in the act of creation? This is especially so considering that the true matter of partnership is not just that each partner has a share in it, but is rather that particulars [of it as whole thing] relates to both.⁴⁴⁹ That is, in every point of the act of creation, a Jew (who recites [the passage], “and they were completed-*Vayechulu*-ויכלו”) becomes an equal partner with the Holy One, blessed is He.

⁴⁴⁷ Genesis 2:1

⁴⁴⁸ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 119b

⁴⁴⁹ See Hitva’aduyot 5752 Vol. 1, p. 458

There also is another matter that we must understand. Namely, being that whosoever recites “and they were completed-*Vayechulu*-ויכלו” becomes a partner, it is understood that all Jews who recite “and they were completed-*Vayechulu*-ויכלו” become partners (being that we are not dealing here with fools).⁴⁵⁰ This being so, this partnership of all of Jews is not just [a partnership] with the Holy One, blessed is He, but also is [a partnership] with all six-hundred thousand Jews.

However, the words of our sages, of blessed memory, indicate that the partnership of one who recites “and they were completed-*Vayechulu*-ויכלו” is only with the Holy One, blessed is He. That is, if the partnership was also with all Jews, [the sages] should have stated this in the plural, “**All** who say (*Kol HaOmreem*-כל האומרים) ‘and they were completed-*Vayechulu*-ויכלו’ become partners (*Na’aseem Shutafim*-נעשים שותפים) etc.,” rather than in the singular, “Whosoever says (*Kol HaOmer*-כל האומר) becomes a partner (*Na’aseh Shutaf*-נעשה שותף) etc.”

2.

This may be understood by prefacing with the explanation in a discourse of the Tzemach Tzedek (in one of the booklets of manuscripts⁴⁵¹ that recently was released “from constraint to expansiveness”).⁴⁵² In it, he brings the teaching of Midrash Rabbah⁴⁵³ on the verse, “and the heavens and the earth and all their hosts were completed.”

⁴⁵⁰ Talmud Bavli, Bava Kamma 85a and elsewhere

⁴⁵¹ Subsequently printed in Ohr HaTorah, Bereishit Vol. 3, p. 505b and on.

⁴⁵² See Psalms 118:5

⁴⁵³ Midrash Bereishit Rabba 10:1

[It states there], “It is written,⁴⁵⁴ ‘To every beginning I have seen an end’ (for as explained by the commentators of this Psalm,⁴⁵⁵ the words “*L’Khol Tichlah*-תכלה” mean “that which has a beginning,” and therefore has a conclusion and end) ‘but Your *mitzvah* is exceedingly broad’ (in that the *mitzvot* have no end or limit). Now everything has boundaries. The heavens and earth have boundaries. (This is the meaning of the word “and they were completed-*Vayechulu*-ויכלו” which is of the same root as “has a beginning-*Tichlah*-תכלה” in that they have a beginning and an end.) There only is one matter that has no boundaries. Which is what? This is the Torah, as it states,⁴⁵⁶ “Its measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea.”

The explanation is that when it states, “Your *mitzvah* is exceedingly broad,” in that the *mitzvot* are without limit, this is not just in relation to the limitations of the world (“To everything that has a beginning I have seen an end”), but it truly is without limit, which is the meaning of the word “exceedingly-*Me’od*-מאד.”

Moreover, this is unlike the verse,⁴⁵⁷ “You shall love *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God... with all your more-*Bechol Me’odecha*-בכל מאדך,” meaning with all “**your** more-*Me’od Shelcha*-שלך.”⁴⁵⁸ For, since here this is “**Your** *mitzvah*,” (that is, the *mitzvah* of the Holy One, blessed is He), it therefore is truly without limit – it is “exceedingly-*Me’od*-מאד [broad].”

⁴⁵⁴ Psalms 119:96

⁴⁵⁵ Avraham Ibn Ezra to Psalms 119:96

⁴⁵⁶ Job 11:9

⁴⁵⁷ Deuteronomy 6:5

⁴⁵⁸ See Torah Ohr, Mikeitz 39c and on; Likkutei Torah, Shlach 42c

Now, all this is so of the *mitzvot*, and how much more so of the Torah, which does not even have the limitations of the *mitzvot*, as known about the difference between Torah and *mitzvot*, in that the *mitzvot* are limited. For example, the *mitzvah* of Tefillin is that it must have four specific Torah portions and no more (and whoever adds a Torah portion [to the Tefillin] transgresses the prohibition against adding (*Bal Tosif*)).⁴⁵⁹

Moreover, Tefillin must have a minimum measure⁴⁶⁰ of two fingers by two fingers etc.⁴⁶¹ The same is so of all the *mitzvot* (being that the entire Torah (meaning the *mitzvot* of the Torah) are equated to the Tefillin),⁴⁶² and are limited, besides the general limitation of [being confined to] time and space.⁴⁶³ In contrast, this is not so of the Torah, which is limitless.

More specifically, in Torah itself, there is a difference between the revealed aspects of Torah and the inner aspects (*Pnimiyut*) of Torah.⁴⁶⁴ That is, the revealed aspects of Torah are limited, as indicated by the verse, “Its measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea,” meaning that it indeed has measure, except that “its measure is longer than the earth etc.”

This is as stated in Talmud⁴⁶⁵ on the verse,⁴⁶⁶ “I see a flying scroll, its length is twenty cubits and its width is ten cubits.” That after the particular calculation there, it states, “We

⁴⁵⁹ Deuteronomy 4:2 and Rashi there.

⁴⁶⁰ Also see Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh, Epistle 10; Likkutei Torah Naso 27c

⁴⁶¹ See Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 32:41 and the commentators to Shulchan Aruch there; Shulchan Aruch of the Alter Rebbe, Orach Chayim 32:63

⁴⁶² Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 35a

⁴⁶³ Also see Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 13a

⁴⁶⁴ Ohr HaTorah, Bereishit ibid. Vol. 3, p. 506a

⁴⁶⁵ Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 21a

⁴⁶⁶ Zachariah 5:2

find that [according to the calculation] the entire world is one part in three-thousand and two-hundred of the Torah.” We thus find that even the Torah is limited, meaning, the revealed parts of the Torah. This is why we find various Tana'im and Amora'im who learned the Torah in its entirety,⁴⁶⁷ being that it is limited.⁴⁶⁸

Rather, the true matter of actual limitlessness is in the inner aspects (*Pnimiyut*) of the Torah. About this the verse states,⁴⁶⁹ “Unveil my eyes that I may perceive wonders from Your Torah,” as explained before.⁴⁷⁰ This will be revealed by Moshiach in the coming future, who will teach Torah to the entire nation, including our forefathers and our teacher Moshe,⁴⁷¹ who already learned Torah in its entirety. This is because he will reveal the inner aspects (*Pnimiyut*) of the Torah which altogether have no measure.

However, in regard to the verse, “To everything that has a beginning I have seen an end, but Your *mitzvah* is exceedingly broad,” the novelty in this (as understood from the explanation in the above-mentioned discourse) is that even in the limitations of the world we draw the limitlessness of Torah and *mitzvot* forth. In other words, the intent of the verse is not just to tell us that the world is limited, but that Torah and *mitzvot* are limitless, since this is obvious. That is, since the world has a

⁴⁶⁷ See Talmud Bavli, Menachot 99b

⁴⁶⁸ In regard to this matter is recalled that there was mention of the teaching of the Midrash (Bereishit Rabba 17:5) “The Torah is the excess overflow of the Supernal wisdom-*Chochmah*.”

⁴⁶⁹ Psalms 119:18

⁴⁷⁰ In the first discourse said at this gathering, the discourse entitled “*Bereishit Bara* – In the beginning God created,” Discourse 6 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5725 p. 49 and on).

⁴⁷¹ See Likkutei Torah Tzav 17a; Shaar HaEmunah, Ch. 56 (89b)

beginning, in that it was created in the six days of creation, it necessarily has an end.

In contrast, Torah and *mitzvot* are the will and wisdom of the Holy One, blessed is He, and thus are certainly limitless. It therefore must be said that the novelty of this verse is in the bond between “To everything that has a beginning I have seen an end,” and “Your *mitzvah* is exceedingly broad.” That is, the limitlessness of “Your *mitzvah* is exceedingly broad” is drawn even within the limitation of “To everything that has a beginning I have seen an end.”

This is similar to how it is in Torah itself, that even though its true limitlessness is in the inner aspects (*Pnimiyut*) of Torah, whereas the revealed aspects of Torah only have a “measure [that] is longer than the earth etc.,” nonetheless, even in the revealed parts of the Torah, the limitlessness of the inner aspect (*Pnimiyut*) of the Torah is found.

This is as known⁴⁷² about the explanation of the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,⁴⁷³ “Praiseworthy is he who arrives here with his studies (*Talmudo*) in his hand,” that specifically through “his studies (*Talmudo*) in his hand,” referring to the study of the revealed parts of Torah below in this world, that Above (“[arrives] here”) he will have its inner aspect. The same is so of the limitations of the world, that even in the world, there is a drawing down of the limitlessness of Torah and *mitzvot*.

⁴⁷² See Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 24 p. 570, note 19 & p. 580, note 5.

⁴⁷³ Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 50a

3.

The explanation of (the bond between “to everything that has a beginning I have seen an end,” and, “Your *mitzvah* is exceedingly broad”) is that this is brought about through the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה of the Jewish people. This is because the general matter of toil in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is to affect a drawing down of the Limitless into the limitations of the world.

About this our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁴⁷⁴ “The handiwork of the righteous (*Tzaddikim*) is great, more so than the creation of the heavens and the earth.” As explained about this,⁴⁷⁵ the creation of the heavens and the earth is [the coming into being of] something from nothing (*Yesh MeAyin*), in that the limited world was brought into being etc. In contrast, “the handiwork of the righteous (*Tzaddikim*)” is the nullification (*Bittul*) of the “somethingness” (*Yesh*) to the [Godly] “nothingness” (*Ayin*), this being the matter of drawing the Limitless forth.

This is the meaning of, “The handiwork of the righteous (*Tzaddikim*) is great,” simply stating “great-*Gedolim*-גדולים,” meaning that this is true greatness that is immeasurable. In other words, not only are they greater than the creation of the heavens and the earth, several times over, but they are greater in a way that is beyond all relative comparison.

This is because, the creation of the heavens and the earth is limited, whereas the deeds of the righteous (*Tzaddikim*) are

⁴⁷⁴ Talmud Bavli, Ketubot 5a

⁴⁷⁵ See Torah Ohr, Beshalach 66b and on; See Ohr HaTorah ibid. p. 507.

limitless, and the greatness of the limitless over the limited, is greatness that is beyond all relative comparison. This is as explained in Tanya,⁴⁷⁶ that “relative to something that altogether transcends limitation and numeration, no number [no matter how great] can compare to it. That is, even a billion or a trillion [when compared to the Unlimited] do not even have the value of one in comparison to a billion or a trillion etc.”

Beyond this, the novelty of the “handiwork of the righteous (*Tzaddikim*) is great,” is not just in regard to drawing down the Unlimited, but also in regard to the bond between the Unlimited and the limited. For, the greatness of the works of the righteous (*Tzaddikim*) in nullifying the “somethingness” (*Yesh*) to the “nothingness” (*Ayin*), is not just that it becomes nothing, as it was before its creation. For, if this was so, the entire matter of the creation and existence of the worlds would be unnecessary.

Rather, it must be said that the “nothingness” (*Ayin*) brought about through the toil of the righteous (*Tzaddikim*) is much loftier than the “nothingness” (*Ayin*) that preceded creation. This is because the “nothingness” (*Ayin-יין*) that preceded the creation is the aspect of limitlessness (*Bli Gvul*), and relative to that aspect, the coming into being of the worlds is through a radiance of Godliness that is comparable to the worlds, this being a matter of descent.

However, the ultimate purpose of the descent is for the sake of ascent, and that the ascent should be much loftier than

⁴⁷⁶ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 48

how it was before the descent.⁴⁷⁷ This comes about through the deeds of the righteous (*Tzaddikim*) who affect that the world itself, as it is in its state of existence and limitation, should be in a state of “nothingness” (*Ayin*) and limitlessness (*Bli Gvul*).

(This is similar to the superiority of those who return to *HaShem*-יהו"ה in repentance (*Baalei Teshuvah*) over and above the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*). This is because the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*) have no involvement with evil, whereas the repentant (*Baalei Teshuvah*) even have an effect on the evil, such that their willful transgressions are transformed into merits.)⁴⁷⁸ This then, is the bond of the limited (*Gvul*) with the Unlimited (*Bli Gvul*) (as discussed above in explanation of the verse, “To everything that has a beginning I have seen an end, but Your *mitzvah* is exceedingly broad”).

This is also the meaning of the statement in Talmud,⁴⁷⁹ that “about the handiwork of the righteous (*Tzaddikim*) it is written,⁴⁸⁰ “The Sanctuary, my Lord-*Adona*’*g*”-אֲדֹנָיִי, that Your hands have established.” For, in the Holy Ark in the Holy Temple, (which is the primary Supernal desire etc., as the Ramban writes),⁴⁸¹ there also was the bond between the limited and the Unlimited. That is, the Holy Ark had the measure of “two and a half cubits [in] its length etc.,” but even so, “the place of the Holy Ark was not according to measure.”⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁷ See Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *HaShem Is One*, Vol. 2 (The Letters of Creation, Part 1), section entitled “The twelve letters ט”י ל”ג correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel.”

⁴⁷⁸ Talmud Bavli, Yoma 86b; Tanya, Likkuei Amarim, Ch. 7

⁴⁷⁹ Talmud Bavli, Ketubot 5a

⁴⁸⁰ Exodus 15:17

⁴⁸¹ Ramban to Exodus 25:1

⁴⁸² Talmud Bavli, Yoma 21a; Also see the Opening Gateway (Petach HaShaar) to Imrei Binah, translated as *The Gateway to Understanding*, Ch. 6.

The explanation is that even though the creation of the heavens and the earth is limited, and this is *HaShem's* יהו"ה Supernal intent and will in regard to the matter of the creation of the world, that it should be limited, for “when the heavens and the earth were expanding... the Holy One, blessed is He, rebuked them and said ‘enough-*Dai*’ to His world,”⁴⁸³ (meaning that even though the limitation only stems from the will of the Creator, nonetheless, the will of the Creator is for this limitation to be), nevertheless, all this is only in regard to the coming into being and existence itself.

However, *HaShem's* יהו"ה ultimate Supernal intent is for the descent to be for the sake of ascent (as explained before), brought about through the toil of the Jewish people in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and affecting a drawing down of the Unlimited (*Bli Gvul*) into the limitations of the world (“He said ‘enough-*Dai*’ to His world”).

An example of this, as it relates to our practical service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is that even though from the natural perspective of the world, fulfilling Torah and *mitzvot* could cause a loss in one's livelihood, that if not for the strictures of keeping Shabbat and the Torah prohibitions against usury and theft etc., he could make much greater profit, nonetheless, through the Jewish people serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, [by observing His *mitzvot*] they affect a drawing down that transcends the natural order within the natural order, so that not only is no loss in livelihood incurred through fulfilling Torah and *mitzvot*, but the opposite etc. In other words, within the limitations of the world (“I said ‘enough-*Dai*”

⁴⁸³ Talmud Bavli, Chagigaah 12a

ד' to My world") we draw down the Unlimited (*Bli Gvul*), as the verse states,⁴⁸⁴ "I will pour blessings upon you without end-
Ad Bli Dai עד בלי די."

4.

With the above in mind, we can understand what our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁴⁸⁵ "Whosoever prays on Shabbat evening and recites [this passage], 'and they were completed' (*Vayechulu* ויכלו) etc., becomes a partner with the Holy One, blessed is He, in the act of creation."

This is because,⁴⁸⁶ the recitation of "and they were completed-*Vayechulu* ויכלו," which is a term of "cessation-*Kilayon* כליין,"⁴⁸⁷ is the matter of affecting the cessation (*Kilayon* כליין) of the creation, this being the matter of sublimating and nullifying the "somethingness" (*Yesh*) to the [Godly] "nothingness" (*Ayin*). It therefore is no wonder that through doing so, he becomes a partner with the Holy One, blessed is He, in the act of creation - an equal partner etc., about which they said, "Great is the handiwork of the righteous (*Tzaddikim*) etc.," as explained before.

On the contrary, what needs explanation is why he only becomes a partner of the Holy One, blessed is He, [that is, only] an equal partner, even though "the handiwork of the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*) is **greater** than the creation of the heavens and the

⁴⁸⁴ Malachi 3:10

⁴⁸⁵ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 119b

⁴⁸⁶ Also see Ohr HaTorah ibid. p. 506b

⁴⁸⁷ See Ohr HaTorah, Bereishit Vol. 1 p. 42b and on; Vol. 3, p. 508a and on; Also see Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as HaShem Is One, Vol. 1, The Gate of His Title (*Shaar HaKinuy*).

earth.” In other words, the Holy One’s portion in the act of creation is limited, whereas the portion of one who recites “and they were completed-*Vayechulu*-וַיֵּכֻלוּ” is limitless.

However, the explanation is that this is because the power to bring novel existence into being [solely] is from the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, (as explained in *Iggeret HaKodesh*),⁴⁸⁸ and relative to His Essential Self, blessed is He, both the limited (*Gvul*) and the limitless (*Bli Gvul*) are equal, meaning that the difference between the limited (*Gvul*) and the limitless (*Bli Gvul*) is only as both are in the category of novel existence, whereas relative to He who is not [in the category of] novel existence, it all is equal.⁴⁸⁹

For example, with a physical thing that one can feel with his hand, there is a difference between a small object being placed in his hand, and a large object which is beyond the limitation of his hand to hold. In contrast, in regard to something spiritual, such an intellectual concept, it altogether is not in the category of being felt [with the hand], such that relative to it, there is no difference between a limited [capacity to] feel [with the hand] or a limitless [capacity to] feel [with the hand] etc.⁴⁹⁰

With the above in mind, it also is understood why it states that “he becomes a partner,” in which the matter of partnership is in every specific point. This is because the ascent that must be brought about through toil in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה

⁴⁸⁸ See Tanya, *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 20

⁴⁸⁹ See Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *HaShem Is One*, Vol. 1, *The Gate of Intrinsic Being (Shaar HaHavayah)*.

⁴⁹⁰ There is a small portion of the discourse missing here.

in the world, is in every point within it. That is, since the descent was in all matters, therefore the ascent must also be in all matters.

Thus, through serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, he becomes a partner in every particular point in the act of creation. In other words, he affects an ascent in the entirety and totality of the world, so that it ascends to a loftier state than it was before the creation, as explained before.

This is also why it states "He becomes a partner (*Na'aseh Shutaf*-שותף-נעשה)" in the singular. For, since this comes about through the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of each Jew as an individual, as our sages, of blessed memory, said,⁴⁹¹ "This is why Adam was created alone... to teach that whosoever sustains even one soul of the Jewish people, it is as if he sustained the whole world, (even though, at first glance, it seems to be is unlike Adam, the first man, who himself was singular, but from whom the whole of the world was created). Therefore, every person has an obligation to say: The world was created for me." In other words, through the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of every Jew as an individual, *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Supernal intention for the entire creation is fulfilled, and he thus becomes a partner with the Holy One, blessed is He, in the act of creation.

⁴⁹¹ Mishnah, Sanedrin 4:5; Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 37a