

Comprehending the Spiritual

by Rabbi Y. Ashlag (1882-1955)

We distinguish among many levels and many distinctions in the (upper, spiritual) worlds. And it is known that when one speaks about levels and distinctions, one speaks (only) regarding the souls' comprehension of what is received from these worlds; according to the principle that what one cannot comprehend, one cannot know by name and that is because the word 'name' connotes comprehension; it's similar to a person who names something after having comprehended some characteristic in it, according to his (depth of) comprehension.

On this (principle) the totality of existence is divided with regards to spiritual comprehension into three distinctions :

1) The Blessed Self

2) The Endless, Blessed be He

3) The Souls

1) The Blessed Self is beyond words and speech. The reason is that the root and origin of the creatures begins from the Thought of Creation; that is where they are included in the secret of "What ends in action, begins in thought".

2) *The Endless* denotes the Thought of Creation, in the secret of *He desired to do good to His creatures*, in the aspect of Endlessness, called *The Endless* . And that is the connection that exists between His Blessed Self and The Souls. This connection is understood by us in the secret of a *desire to give pleasure to the creatures*.

The Endless is the beginning of the activity. And He is called "Light without a Vessel" for there begins the root of the creatures, i.e., the connection that exists between the creator and the created called *His desire to do good to His creatures*. This desire begins from *The Endless World* and extends until the World of *Asiya* (making, doing).

3) The Souls. The recipients of the good, that good which it is His desire to do.

The Endless is named so because this is the connection that exists between The Blessed Self and The Souls, that we (the creatures) understand as the secret of a *desire to give pleasure to His creatures*. And outside of this connection of a *desire to give pleasure* we have no words. And it is there that the activity begins. And it is called Light without Vessel; yet, it is there that the root of the creatures commences, i.e., the connection between the creator to the creatures that is called *His Desire to do good to His creatures*, and this desire begins from *The Endless World* and extends until the World of *Asiya* (the world of doing, human life on earth).

And all the (upper) worlds as they are in themselves are as Light without a Vessel, and there is no speaking of them. And they are regarded as in the same aspect as The Blessed Self. And thus there is no comprehension of them.

Do not be surprised that we distinguish there (in the worlds) many distinctions, and this is because these distinctions are there in an aspect of potentiality, that afterwards, upon the arrival of The Souls, these distinctions then become manifest to The Souls that receive the Upper Light according to what they fixed and set in order such that The Souls are able to

receive them, each one according to one's strength and fitness. Then these distinctions are revealed in actuality. However, as long as The Souls do not grasp the Upper Light, then everything as they (the upper worlds) are in themselves is considered to be the same aspect as The Blessed Self.

And vis-à-vis the Souls that receive from the worlds, these worlds are discerned in the secret of *The Endless*. That is because the connection that exists between the worlds and The Souls, i.e., what the worlds bestow to The Souls, this is continuous from the Thought of Creation, that is the aspect of a relation in common between The Blessed Self and The Souls, and this relation is referred to by the name *The Endless*, as mentioned above. And when we pray and beseech of the Creator to help us, and to give us our requests, the intention is directed towards *The Endless*, for in that aspect the root of The Souls exists and He desires to give them benefit and delight, called *His desire to do good to His creatures*.

And the prayer is to the Blessed Creator, who created us, and His Name is His Desire to do good to His Creatures. And He is known by the name The Endless. Since speech is before the Tsim'tsoom (original withdrawal of Light to create a space for the creation), and even after the Tsim'tsoom there is no change in Him; for there is no change in Light, thus this Name remains always.

And all plurality of the names are only vis-à-vis the recipients, therefore, the first name that was made manifest in the secret of *Root of the creatures* is known as *The Endless*. And the manifestation of this name remains without any change at all. All Tsim'tsoomim and multiplying of the differences are done only vis-à-vis the recipients. And He shines always with the First Name called *His desire to do good to His creatures endlessly*. Thus, we pray to The Blessed Creator who is called *The Endless*, who shines without ever any withdrawal or termination. And that afterwards there is a termination, this is a correction for the sake of the recipients that they may receive His Blessed Light.

The Upper Light is composed of two aspects: the one who comprehends, (a soul), and a concept (light, an idea that is comprehended). And everything that is said with reference to the Upper Light is only about the comprehending soul's being effected by the idea. However, each component is by itself alone, i.e., the comprehending soul alone, or the idea (that is comprehended) alone; are not either of them called by the name *The Endless*. Rather the idea (alone, without a soul to comprehend it) is called by the name The Blessed Self, and the comprehending soul (alone, without an idea to comprehend) is called by the name Souls -- which is a new aspect, that is separate from the whole. And it (Souls) is new in that there is implanted within it (something new, i.e.) a *desire to receive*. And because of this (new) manifestation the creation is called Yesh m'ayin (Ex nihilo, *something from nothing*).

And vis-à-vis themselves the worlds are defined as a simple unity - there is no differentiation in God - that is the secret *I Havaya (God, the tetragrammaton) have not changed*. And in God, the sphiroth and manifest aspects are irrelevant. Even the names that are most subtle do not name the Light as It is in Itself - for the aspect of It's own Blessed Self is beyond comprehension. Rather, all the sphiroth and distinctions (in the upper worlds), one speaks of them only from what man can comprehend of them. Because The Blessed Creator desired that we comprehend and understand the flow (of His Light, the Light of the Upper Worlds, His beneficence) to us in the secret of *His desire to do good to His creatures*.

And in order that we be able to comprehend what He desired that we comprehend and understand in the secret of *His desire to do good to His creatures*, He created and gave us these senses, and these senses perceive the Upper Light's effects.

And with this there were made and measured out for us many distinctions because the general (universal) sense is called *Desire to receive* and it is divided into many many particulars according to that measure the recipients are fit to receive. With regards to this

there are many categories and details that are termed (spiritual) *ascents* and *descents*, *ecstasy*, *withdrawal* (from the body), and the like.

And being that the *Desire to receive* is called "creature" and "*a new manifestation*", therefore, precisely from that place where the *Desire to receive* begins to become excited - from there speech begins. And speech is differentiated by distinctions in excitement (verbs). For here (where speech is relevant) there exists already a side in common between the Upper Light and the Desire to receive.

And this is termed *Light and Vessel*. However, with respect to *Light Without a Vessel*, speech is not relevant, as discussed above. For Light that is not an *idea to be comprehended* by a recipient is then distinguished as The Blessed Self, for there speech not permissible because comprehension is not possible. And that which is incomprehensible, how is it possible to give it a name?

And from this we understand that in prayer that we pray to Havaya, (God, the tetragrammaton) that He send us relief, healing, and the like, we can distinguish in this two things: 1) The Blessed Creator 2) that which emanates continuously from Him.

Aspect number 1, that denotes The Blessed Self, here speech is not permissible, as discussed above. Aspect number 2, that which emanates continuously from Him, that denotes the Light that extends into our vessels, i.e., into our *Desire to receive*; it is this that is named *The Endless*, Be He Blessed; this is the connection that exists between The Blessed Creator with the creatures, that being the manifestation of *His desire to do good to His creatures*. Thus, the *Desire to receive* denotes the *Light that extends* because its (the extended Light's) end is the *Desire to receive*.

And while the Desire to receive receives the Light that extends, then the Light that extends is called by the name *The Endless*, and it comes unto the recipients through many coverings in order that the one below (on earth) be able to receive them.

Thus according to this, all the distinctions and differences (in the upper light) are relevant specifically to the recipient with regards and according to the recipient's (degree of) excitation from them (the Light that extends onto the recipient). But we need to understand the perspective of the speaker - when speaking about the distinctions in the (upper) worlds - one speaks of distinctions in potential, and when the recipient comprehends (attains) those manifestations, then they are spoken of as actually existing.

Spiritual comprehension is that the comprehending soul and idea that is comprehended join together. For without a comprehending soul - there is no form for that idea that is (to be) comprehended, since there is no one to receive the form of *the idea that is (to be) comprehended*. Therefore this aspect (of a formless idea) is distinguished by the name The Blessed Self, and there is no place to speak at all. And it is irrelevant to say that *the idea that is comprehended* received some form from itself.

And we have nothing to say but from a place that our senses are excited by the *Light that is extended*, which is a manifestation of *His desire to do good to His creatures*, and it comes onto the recipients in actuality.

And this is similar to our looking at a table. Then, according to our sense of touch, we feel that it is a hard thing. And so too its width and length, and all of it according to our senses. But this is not to say that the table must appear thus to someone with another sort of senses, for example, an angel, when gazing at the table with his eyes, sees it according to his senses. Therefore, we do not have any set form (of the table) with regards to the angel, because we have no knowledge of his senses.

And from here, since we have no comprehension of The Blessed Creator, it's axiomatic that we have nothing to say about the form of the worlds according to Him; we only comprehend the worlds according to our senses and our feelings. And thus was His desire about our comprehending it (the worlds).

And this is the interpretation of: "There is no change in the Light" Thus, all the modifications are in the vessels, i.e., in our senses; for all is measured according to our mind's eye. And from this you can infer, that if many persons gaze on one spiritual thing, that each one of them comprehends it according to his mind's eye and his senses. And therefore, each one sees a different form. And similarly, in the person himself the form changes according to his own positive or negative states of mind. As mentioned above that the Light is a simple Light, and all the modifications are only in the recipients.

And may it be His desire that we merit to receive His Blessed Light, and to go in the ways of the Creator, and to serve Him, not in return for rewards, but to cause spiritual pleasure to the Blessed Name, and to uplift the *Sheh'hina* (Divine Presence, Spirit) from the dust, and for the merit that brings union with the Name, and the manifestation of the Revelation of the Blessed God to His creatures.