

Alter Rebbe - Torah Ohr
Parshas Bo
בעצם היום הזה יצאו כל צבאות ה' מארץ מצרים

"On this very day, all the legions of Hashem went out from the land of Egypt." (Shemot- 12:41) Behold, our sages of blessed memory said regarding Channah: from the day that the Holy One, blessed be He, created His world, there was no one who called Him "Tzevaot" (Lord of Hosts) until Channah came, etc. That is, she was the first to begin calling the Holy One, blessed be He, by the name 'Hashem Tzevaot.' And the Holy One, blessed be He, said: In the future, one who is from you (Shmuel) will initiate prophecy with this name, as it is written, "And Shmuel said, 'Thus said Hashem Tzevaot, I have remembered...'" And the later prophets prophesied using this name, especially Chaggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, more than all others. And we hold (as in the Sefer of Shevuot) that 'Tzevaot' is one of the names that may not be erased. Now, first, we must preface by explaining the concept of Divine names—what they are—as well as the superiority of the unique name, the Tetragrammaton (Hashem's four-letter name), over other names. Then, we will explain the meaning of the name 'Tzevaot.' It is known that the essence and being of the Infinite One, blessed be He, is absolutely simple and beyond any description. No attributes whatsoever apply to His essence and being, even those that the Torah, the words of the prophets, and the sages of blessed memory have used—such as wise, kind, merciful, etc. For He, blessed be He, is exalted, transcendent, and beyond all these definitions, as wisdom—the highest quality among creations—is considered like physical action compared to His essence and being. How much more so regarding the attributes (middot), as it is stated: "He is not of these attributes at all," as is known.

Nevertheless, there exists a reality in which these descriptions appear in the Tanach and the teachings of our sages. This follows what our sages said: "Wherever you find His greatness, there you find His humility" (Talmud, Megillah 31a)—meaning that He lowers Himself to be clothed in the ten vessels of Atzilut (Emanation), which correspond to the attributes of kindness and might, etc., and the intellectual faculties of Chochmah, Binah, and Da'at (wisdom, understanding, and knowledge). Then, it is appropriate to call Him by these descriptions. He is called 'wise' because He manifests within wisdom, as Eliyahu stated, "You are wise"—which expresses His humility in that He lowers Himself to be clothed in the vessel of wisdom, even though wisdom is utterly incomparable to Him, as mentioned earlier. Similarly, He lowers Himself to be clothed in the attribute of kindness and is thus called "Great" or "Kind." This is why His greatness is expressed in His humility—because through humility and self-lowering, He becomes manifest in the attribute of kindness, and then He is rightly called "Great," whereas in His essence and being, He is above and beyond such a concept, as stated earlier.

Now, the names of the Holy One, blessed be He, correspond to the vessels of the ten Sefirot of Atzilut, within which the Infinite Light is clothed and united with them in perfect

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unity, as in the phrase "He and His attributes are one." That is, the name "El" corresponds to the vessel of kindness, the name "Elohim" to the vessel of might, and the name "Adonai" to the attribute of kingship. However, the name "Havayah" (the Tetragrammaton) represents the inner aspect of all these names, which are vessels—because it signifies the divine light that is clothed within the vessels. That is, in the attribute of kindness, which is identified with the name 'El,' the divine light that flows from the Infinite One to be clothed within it is identified with the name "Havayah." Likewise, within the attribute of might, which corresponds to the name 'Elohim,' the divine light within it is from the name "Havayah." Similarly, with all the other divine names that may not be erased, they correspond to the vessels, whereas the name "Havayah" represents the divine light that is clothed within them.

Therefore, the name "Havayah" is combined with other names, as it is written: "On the day that Hashem Elohim made the earth and the heavens," and "Hashem Tzevaot," etc. This is because the name "Havayah" draws down the Infinite Light to be clothed within the names "Elohim" and "Tzevaot," which are the vessels. It serves as the intermediary between the divine lights and the vessels, thus connecting them together.

"And it is written: 'This is My name forever, and this is My remembrance...' (Shemot 3:15) And it is explained in the *Tikunim* that "My name" (שמי) with "Y-H" (י-ה) corresponds to the 365 negative commandments, and "My remembrance" (זכרי) with "V-H" (ו-ה) corresponds to the 248 positive commandments. This means that the entirety of the Torah—its 248 positive commandments and 365 prohibitions—are rooted in the name *Havayah*, which corresponds to *Ze'ir Anpin* of *Atzilut*. The 248 positive commandments extend from the aspect of kindness (*Chasadim*) within *Ze'ir Anpin*, and the 365 prohibitions stem from the aspect of might (*Gevurot*) within *Ze'ir Anpin*. Included within them are all the details of the laws of permitted and forbidden, valid and invalid, liable and innocent, etc.—for that which is permitted and valid extends from the aspect of *Chesed* in *Ze'ir Anpin*, while one who transgresses a prohibition draws upon himself the aspect of *Gevurot*, thereby incurring punishment, etc. And the Infinite Light (*Or Ein Sof*) is clothed within the vessels of *Ze'ir Anpin* to the extent that "He and His attributes are one," as mentioned earlier, and this is the aspect of the name *Havayah*.

With this, we can understand why, throughout the Torah, the name *Tzevaot* is never mentioned—only the name *Havayah* alone—until Channah said, "Hashem *Tzevaot*." For Moshe Rabbeinu, who merited that the Torah be given through him, achieved this because he drew down the clothing of the Infinite Light within the vessels of *Ze'ir Anpin*. From there, the Torah extends, as mentioned above (and from there also came his prophecy, for the essence of his prophecy was from *Atzilut*, only passing through *Beriah*, as explained in *Sha'ar HaKedusha* of Rabbi Chaim Vital, Part 3, Gate 6).

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However, Moshe did not extend the clothing of the Infinite Light into *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah* (*BYA*) in the same way that it unites with the vessels of *Atzilut*—such that it would also unite with the vessels of *BYA*. Moshe did not draw this down, nor was it necessary for him to do so, because the extension of the Torah he transmitted was from the level of *Atzilut* itself. There, the Infinite Light is fully united with the vessels, to the extent that "He and His attributes are one," as mentioned above. However, in *BYA*, the revelation is not present within the vessels (and "He and His attributes are not one in them," as is known).

But the prophets who followed him extended the Infinite Light into the vessels of *BYA* as well, which had not been the case in Moshe's time. This is why Channah was the first to introduce the name *Tzevaot*, and after her, all the prophets followed suit. The significance of this name is that it indicates the clothing of the Infinite Light within the vessels of *BYA*, so that it too becomes united with them, as will be explained further, God willing. This was necessary because, in Moshe's time, since his prophecy was from *Atzilut*, he extended the Torah downward from there, from the level of *Atzilut*, and thus, "the word of Hashem" was in Moshe's mouth, and Israel observed the Torah accordingly.

However, in the times of the prophets who followed him, when Israel was not properly observing the Torah, the prophets were required to rebuke them. The difference between the rebuke given by a prophet and that of an ordinary rebuker is that, with a prophet, the rebuke is *the word of Hashem* clothed in the prophet's speech—so that it is actually *He, blessed be He*, who is delivering the rebuke. Therefore, it became necessary to extend the Torah from *Atzilut* into *BYA*, so that Israel would observe it. For as long as the Torah remained in *Atzilut*, as in Moshe's time, Israel of the later generations would not have observed it, since it was too lofty for them—the Torah remained separate, and man remained separate.

Thus, the Torah needed to be clothed from *Atzilut* into *Beriah*, and there, "the word of Hashem" extended into the mouth of the prophet to admonish Israel so that they would observe the Torah. Through this, the rebuke reached them as *the word of Hashem itself*, clothed in the vessels of *BYA* and then into the mouth of the prophet, etc.

Now, although a prophet is not permitted to introduce anything new, this is not an innovation or an addition to the Torah of Moshe Rabbeinu. Rather, it is the transmission of the Torah—without any addition or subtraction—from *Atzilut* into *Beriah*. And this is the significance of the name *Tzevaot*, which is mentioned in the prophets, for *Tzevaot* means "hosts" or "legions," referring to the multitudes of souls and angels in *Beriah*, whose legions are innumerable. These are created and brought into existence from

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absolute nothingness (*yesh me'ayin*), and they are not divinity at all, unlike *Atzilut*, which is truly divine in nature.

Nevertheless, the prophets drew down the Infinite Light (*Or Ein Sof*) to be clothed within them in complete unity—just as it is clothed within the vessels of *Atzilut*, where "He and His attributes are one"—to the extent that the Infinite Light clothed within them is called *Tzevaot*. This is a descriptive name, indicating that He Himself is the aspect of *Tzevaot*—similar to the way that in *Atzilut*, "He and His attributes are one," meaning that He Himself is knowledge, and so on. Likewise, He unites with the vessels of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah* (*BYA*) to the extent that He Himself is the *Tzevaot*.

This does not mean that they (the created beings of *BYA*) exist as independent entities that are merely nullified before Him, but rather that He truly unites with them. This can be compared to the unity and fusion of the soul with the body—although the body is merely a vessel and the primary essence is the soul, nevertheless, the soul unites with the body to the extent that the person is called "a human being," meaning the soul within the body. The body does not have an independent name of its own, just as in the example of the snail (*kamtza*), whose garments are part of itself.

Similarly, when a person studies wisdom, he is called a "wise man." Before he studied wisdom, the wisdom existed as an independent entity, separate from the person who later acquired it, and the person was also an independent entity. However, once he acquires wisdom, he is called a "wise man" based on the wisdom he has attained—this being a descriptive name.

Similarly, by way of analogy, just as the vessels of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah* (*BYA*) are independent entities—namely, created souls and angels—that are merely nullified before Him, nevertheless, through the prophets drawing down the revelation of the Infinite Light (*Or Ein Sof*) within them, in a manner similar to its unification in *Atzilut*, He is then called *Hashem Tzevaot*. This is a descriptive name, indicating that He, blessed be He, is unified with these *Tzevaot* (hosts), and they are not separate from Him.

Therefore, the name *Havayah* is joined with the name *Tzevaot*, because the name *Havayah* belongs to *Atzilut* and represents the drawing down of the Infinite Light into the vessels of *Atzilut*. Thus, in order for the Infinite Light to be extended into *BYA*, it must first pass through the name *Havayah*. This is the meaning of *Hashem Tzevaot*.

Once the prophets drew down this level, they rebuked Israel in this name, for it is from this aspect—within *Beriah*—that prophecy extends to the prophet. Thus, the *word of Hashem* is what rebukes Israel, and it is entirely unlike ordinary rebuke, which is merely the reproach of a created being. This is instead the rebuke of the Creator Himself, blessed be He.

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The power to draw down this illumination—such that the Infinite Light would be clothed in *BYA* in the same manner as in *Atzilut*—was drawn down by the prophets from the level of the *Igul* (circle) and *Sovev Kol Almin* (the encompassing light), within which darkness and light are equal, and He makes great and small alike. Only from this level is it possible for Him to lower Himself down to the very depths, even into *BYA*, because before Him, blessed be He, all are equal, as it is written: "And underneath are the everlasting arms" (*Devarim* 33:27).

(With this, we can understand what is written regarding Channah: "And Channah prayed upon Hashem... and she said, *Hashem Tzevaot*." In order to draw down the aspect of *Tzevaot*, it was necessary to first draw from a level above *Havayah*, as explained elsewhere. See *Parashat Mishpatim*, on the verse: "There shall not be a woman who miscarries or is barren...")

And this is the meaning of "On this very day, all the legions (*Tzevaot*)... went out." The phrase *Tzevaot Havayah* is in the construct form (*smichut*), meaning that *Tzevaot* is subordinate to the name *Havayah*, but it is not a descriptive name like *Havayah Tzevaot*. This refers to the sparks that were refined during the exile in Egypt and were elevated to be included within the name *Havayah*—these are called *Tzevaot Havayah*. For 288 (*Reish Pei Chet*) sparks fell in the *Shevirat HaKeilim* (Shattering of the Vessels), and from these, 202 (*Reish Beit*) sparks were refined during the exile in Egypt. About this, it is said, "And they emptied (*vayenatzlu*) Egypt" (*Shemot* 12:36). And this is also the meaning of "And a mixed multitude (*Erev Rav*) went up with them" (*Shemot* 12:38), and the verse "It is enough (*Rav*) for you..." (*Devarim* 3:26).

The reason they are called *Tzevaot Havayah*—in the sense of being subordinate and attached to the name *Havayah*—is as follows:

The number 288 corresponds to the aspects of the divine names *AV* (72), *SaG* (63), *MaH* (45), and *BaN* (52), etc. When these sparks are refined from *BYA* (*Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, *Asiyah*) and return to their source, they are no longer called by these names at all, because they have been fully absorbed into their origin in absolute unity. Therefore, they do not have any name at all.

An analogy for this is when a person contemplates the greatness of Hashem with deep reflection and comprehension—at that point, his understanding is felt as something substantial, as an entity (*yesh*) and as something distinct. However, when he reaches a state of total *bittul* (self-nullification), he no longer perceives his understanding or his *bittul* as something distinct or substantial. Instead, he is utterly nullified, without any awareness of self at all.

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Similarly, the sparks of *Tohu* that fell in the *Shevirah* (Shattering) had names—indicating that they were something separate and identifiable, to the extent that they could be called by a name. (This is similar to a person, who in himself has no need for a name; rather, it is only others who call him by a name.)

But once these sparks are refined and return to their source in absolute *bittul*—fully merging with divinity—they no longer have any names at all. Therefore, at that point, they are called *Tzevaot Havayah*, meaning they are subordinate, attached, and fully included within the name *Havayah*.

And this is the meaning of "Hashem brought out the children of Israel according to their legions" (*Shemot* 12:51)—that the souls of Israel are on a higher level than these refined sparks