

Alter Rebbe - Torah Ohr
Parshas Shemos
ויאמר ה' אליו מי שם פה לאדם וגו

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And Hashem said to him: "Who gave man a mouth, etc."

To understand this, what Moshe said, "I am not a man of words, for I am heavy of speech, etc.," and what Hashem responded to him, "Who gave a mouth to man, etc.," which is entirely puzzling—did Moshe not know this initially, that it is Hashem who gives a mouth to man?

The matter can be understood through an introduction: Behold, it is written in the *Sefer HaTemunah* (in the introduction to the third image, 27, 29, 31) that this world is the second *Shemittah* (cosmic cycle), and before it there was also one *Shemittah* that was drawn from the attribute of *Chesed* (kindness). However, the *Shemittah* of now (that is, the six thousand years in which the world exists and one thousand years of desolation) stems from the attribute of *Pachad* (fear/awe). Therefore, its ways are strong, difficult, and harsh, etc., meaning that it included the destruction of the First and Second Temples, etc. This was not the case in the first *Shemittah*, which was from the attribute of *Chesed*. The service then was of a different kind, and also the Torah was of a different kind (see there), and there was only good and kindness, etc. This is the opinion of the *Sefer HaTemunah*, and later Kabbalists followed it, concluding from this that there must necessarily be another five *Shemittot* after this *Shemittah*, for there must be seven *Shemittot* corresponding to the seven higher attributes, etc. (as stated in the *Sefer HaTemunah*).

However, the Arizal disagrees with this conclusion that there must be another five *Shemittot*. He also offers a different understanding regarding the notion that this world is the second *Shemittah*, though he agrees with the general premise. Hence, the Torah begins with the letter *Bet* ("Bereishit") to indicate that there was already one *Shemittah*, and now we are in the second *Shemittah*. But the Arizal explains that the intention is not to suggest that there was a physical world like this one, with physical heavens, earth, and creatures (mineral, plant, animal, and human), as this existed only in the current *Shemittah*. Rather, the *Shemittah* that preceded this one refers to the world of *Tohu* (chaos), that is, the matter of the seven primordial kings of *Tohu* who "died"—a concept of spiritual emanations, as is known. The *Shemittah* of now refers to the world of *Tikkun* (rectification) that was established afterward (see *Likutei Torah* on Parshat Kedoshim and *Eitz Chayim*, Gate of the World of Tohu, Chapter 46, page 25a).

And as is known from the holy Arizal. Behold, two souls from the first *Shemittah*—that is, from the aspect of the world of *Tohu* (chaos) that preceded the world of *Tikkun*

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(rectification)—descended and were drawn down into the second *Shemittah*, which is the aspect of rectification. These are the souls of Chanoch (Enoch) and Moshe (Moses).

Regarding Chanoch, it is written, "And Chanoch walked with God" (*Bereishit* 5:22), to indicate that he had already "walked with God" in the first *Shemittah*. Similarly, concerning Moshe, it is written, "For I drew him out of the water" (*Shemot* 2:10), meaning that he was drawn from the first *Shemittah*, which was from the aspect of *Chesed* (kindness), referred to as "water." From there, he was drawn into the current *Shemittah*, which is rectification.

The primary reason for their descent into this *Shemittah* was to rectify the worlds, for their roots are exceedingly lofty, being above the level of the souls of this *Shemittah*. This is because in their source, there is far greater *bitul* (self-nullification) than exists in this *Shemittah*. Hence, it is said of Moshe, "And what are we?" (*Shemot* 16:7), and "Now the man Moshe was exceedingly humble" (*Bamidbar* 12:3). He also saw souls of great stature that were above him, such as Chanoch, Lemekh, and others.

Therefore, they descended into this *Shemittah* to rectify it as well. Chanoch lived prior to the generation of the Flood, when the world had reached the depths of lowliness, as it is written, "The end of all flesh has come before Me" (*Bereishit* 6:13). Thus, Chanoch descended into this world to rectify it, preventing it from completely reverting to *Tohu va'vohu* (chaos and void). Instead, there was the Flood upon the earth to purify it, leaving Noach and his sons alive in the ark. Without Chanoch, the world would have been entirely destroyed, with not even Noach and his sons remaining. Similarly, Moshe descended to redeem Israel and to bring about the giving of the Torah through him.

Behold, the difference between *Tohu* (chaos) and *Tikkun* (rectification) is well-known from *Etz Chayim*. In *Tohu*, there were no *Partzufim* (structured configurations), but rather the ten *Sefirot* (divine emanations) were in the form of *Nekudot* (points)—that is, a "point of Chesed," a "point of Gevurah," etc. This means that the *Sefirah* was not divided into specific details, spread out in length and breadth, but rather existed as a singular point in a very general and contracted manner: one point representing Chesed, another representing Gevurah, and so on. Additionally, the ten *Sefirot* were arranged one beneath the other, separated from one another—Chesed existed on its own, and Gevurah on its own—and they did not integrate with each other (and this is why they were merely points, as one aspect depends on the other).

This is not the case with the world of *Tikkun*, where the *Sefirot* were formed into *Partzufim*. From *Chochmah* (wisdom), the *Partzuf* of Abba (father) was built, and from the minor aspects (*Moachin* and *Zon*), the *Partzuf* of Zeir Anpin (the smaller countenance) was formed. In this way, the *Sefirot* expanded and divided into details:

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head, trunk, and extremities (*Rosh-Tokh-Sof*). Each one contains its own subdivisions, such as five kindnesses (*Chassadim*) that expand and form 248 "limbs," etc. Additionally, integration occurred among the *Sefirot*, such that one included within the other.

This distinction between *Tohu* and *Tikkun* can also be understood through the analogy of the powers of the soul within the body. The 248 powers of the soul are clothed within the 248 limbs of the body. The power of sight is clothed in the eye, the power of hearing in the ear, the power of action in the hands, and the power of movement in the feet, etc. This clothing of the soul's powers into the body's limbs represents an unfolding and integration of these powers within vessels (the limbs).

Additionally, there is a certain level that encompasses all the detailed powers divided among the limbs, encircling them from all sides—from the head to the feet. This is the power of thought in a person. It is clearly observable that when a person's toenail is struck, the mind immediately senses the pain, and similarly, when a person wishes to move their foot, it moves instantly upon the thought. This demonstrates that thought is also present in the foot, though in an encompassing manner.

The clothing of powers within limbs serves as an analogy for the *Partzufim* of the world of *Tikkun*, where they are clothed within vessels, such as the *Partzufim* of the intellect (brain) and the arms, etc. (In the life of *Tohu*, the emanations were in the form of circles (*Igulim*), which are encompassing powers, analogous to thought.) (See also in *Etz Chayim*, where it discusses the verse "The king of Egypt spoke to the midwives," which explains this concept in detail regarding *Igulim* and *Yosher* [linear configurations].)

Since in the *Yosher* (linear arrangement) of *Tikkun*, the *Sefirot* are divided in detail into *Partzufim*, a new quality is found in *Tikkun* that was not present in *Tohu* when the *Sefirot* were merely points. This is what the *Sefer Yetzirah* states: "Their end is embedded in their beginning, and their beginning in their end." There is an advantage in the end that does not exist in the beginning. This is found only in the world of *Tikkun*, not in *Tohu*, because in *Tikkun*, the *Sefirot* are formed into *Partzufim*.

This can be compared to the powers of the soul within the body. The intellect is clothed in the brain of the head, which is the most elevated and primary organ for the powers of the soul. Subsequently, the power of action is clothed in the hands, allowing for writing, drawing, and craftsmanship—all lower-level powers compared to the intellect in the brain. Lastly, the lowest power, movement, is clothed in the feet, which enable walking. If one were to evaluate the powers themselves, independent of their vessels, the power of intellect would certainly be infinitely superior to the power of action in the hands or

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feet, as intellect comes from the soul's inner dimension and is far more elevated than the external power of movement.

However, once these powers are clothed in vessels—the intellect in the head, the power of movement in the feet—a unique advantage is found in the feet that is not present in the head. The feet support the head and carry it from place to place, a capability the head does not possess. Thus, "their end is embedded in their beginning, and their beginning in their end." There is an advantage in the end (the feet) that is not in the beginning (the head). This arises specifically from the clothing of the powers within the vessel of the feet.

The analogy can be understood by examining the difference between the *Igulim* (circles) of *Tohu* and the *Yosher* (linear configuration) of *Tikkun*. In *Tohu*, the *Sefirot* were arranged one beneath the other and were not in the form of *Partzuf* (a structured configuration). Therefore, the concept of "their end is embedded in their beginning" (*Na'utz Sofan B'Techilatan*) was not present there. However, in *Tikkun*, where the *Sefirot* are clothed in numerous vessels in the form of a *Partzuf*, this concept exists due to the vessels, as the feet possess a quality that the head does not, and so on.

This idea, where "their end is embedded in their beginning," meaning there is no distinction of head or end—where the end has a quality that the head does not—can also be understood regarding *mitzvot* (commandments), which are also an aspect of *Tikkun*, as it is written: "This is the Torah, a person" (*Bamidbar* 19:14). There is an advantage in practical *mitzvot* that in a certain aspect is higher than the Torah itself. Even though the Torah represents an internal aspect, and the *mitzvot* are external, focused only on action, we see that Torah study is interrupted for attending to the deceased or for escorting a bride, as mentioned in the story of the child in *Balak* regarding "the scent of your garments" (*Shir Hashirim* 4:11), even though reciting *Shema* involves lofty unifications.

[NOTE: In *Parshat Balak*, Balak, the king of Moab, hires Balaam, a prophet with mystical powers, to curse the Jewish people. Despite his intentions, Balaam ends up blessing the Jews, as God controls his speech. One of his blessings famously includes phrases and ideas that later Jewish commentators have interpreted as prophetic insights into the nature of Jewish spirituality and destiny.

The Story:

The story, often brought in Chassidic or Kabbalistic teachings, involves a child commenting on the verse "*The scent of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon*" (*Shir Hashirim* 4:11). In these mystical teachings, the "child" often represents an innocent soul with deep, intuitive wisdom, reflecting pure spiritual truth.

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The child explains that:

- While lofty spiritual activities such as meditating on God's unity or reciting *Shema* achieve incredible spiritual heights, these moments are transient—they are like glimpses into the divine.
- However, the *garments* (symbolizing mitzvot and good deeds) are what truly carry the "scent" that lingers and makes an enduring impact. Garments, being physical, connect the spiritual and physical realms. They are tangible expressions of one's relationship with God and the world.
- Thus, even though the *Shema* represents unifications of the divine (spiritual harmony in the upper worlds), the *scent of the garments* reminds us that our actions in the physical world leave the lasting fragrance that continues to sanctify and elevate the mundane.

Lesson:

This story emphasizes the enduring value of practical deeds over fleeting spiritual highs. Reciting *Shema* is deeply important, but it must inspire and lead to righteous actions. It highlights Judaism's unique synthesis of the spiritual and the physical: ultimate spirituality is not escaping the world but infusing the physical with holiness through mitzvot. **END NOTE]**

Additionally, the Sages said, "A positive commandment overrides a negative commandment," such as circumcision overriding leprosy, or *Shaatznez* (mixed fabrics) being permitted in *Tzitzit*. All this is because there is an advantage in action, which corresponds to the *Netzach-Hod-Yesod* (NeHi) aspect, representing the "feet," that is higher even than the level of *Chochmah Ila'ah* (supernal wisdom).

Thus, even a simple Jew who fulfills a practical *mitzvah* without any mystical intentions or deep understanding—simply because this is what Hashem commanded—may have their deed be more precious in Hashem's eyes in one aspect than the lofty intentions and comprehension of the *tzaddikim*. This is because there is a superior quality in the *supporters of Torah* (*Tomekhin D'Oraita*), which exceeds even the "eyes of the congregation," as mentioned in the analogy of the feet relative to the head. Similarly, the Sages said that a simple person who performs charity in secret is considered greater than Moshe Rabbeinu, as it is written regarding water.

This quality exists specifically due to the world of *Tikkun*, where "their end is embedded in their beginning" is found. This is because, in *Tikkun*, there is an abundance of vessels, and it is specifically through the vessels that this quality is revealed. This is not the case in *Tohu*, where the lights were abundant, but the vessels were few. Therefore, this quality was not present in *Tohu*.

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Behold, it has already been explained that the soul of Moshe originated from the first *Shemittah* and was drawn into the world of *Tikkun*. He was from the aspect of *Chochmah* (wisdom), which is the aspect of sight, as it is written about him: "He saw the beginning for himself" (*Devarim* 33:21). Thus, when Moshe beheld, with actual vision, everything in the world of *Tikkun* in *Atzilut*, into which he had descended and was drawn, he observed the concept of "their end is embedded in their beginning, and their beginning in their end." This was entirely new to him because it did not exist in the world of *Tohu*. He was greatly astonished by this, and therefore, he humbled himself before the souls of the world of *Tikkun*, saying, "Send, I pray, by the hand of whomever You will send" (*Shemot* 4:13). He recognized that they had a superior quality over him due to the vessels of *Tikkun*, in which "their end is embedded in their beginning." This was not the case with him, as his root was in *Tohu*.

This is what he meant when he said, "I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue" (*Shemot* 4:10). He was alluding to the fact that his root was in *Tohu*, where the lights were abundant and could not be contained within vessels. This is the meaning of "heavy of mouth"—he could not transmit the light of his intellect into the vessel of speech. To him, this was a significant deficiency, and he considered the advantage of *Tikkun*—that its vessels were numerous and could contain the lights—to be a wondrous and precious thing. Therefore, he said, "Send, I pray, by the hand of whomever You will send," meaning someone from the world of *Tikkun*, because in *Tikkun*, there is an additional advantage due to what was innovated there: "their end is embedded in their beginning." This arises specifically from the vessels of *Tikkun*, as explained above. This quality was not present in him, as he was "heavy of mouth," etc.

This was the argument of Moshe Rabbeinu, who humbled himself greatly, as he was the most humble of all men. (Indeed, for us, his "heaviness of speech" was actually a virtue, for it was a result of the abundance of lights, which the vessels could not contain. In *Tikkun*, on the other hand, there is a diminishment of lights and an abundance of vessels. Both are true, yet nonetheless, *Tikkun* possesses an additional advantage due to its vessels, as explained above in the matter of "their end is embedded in their beginning.")

Behold, Hashem, blessed be He, replied to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Is it not I, Hashem?" (*Shemot* 4:11). The explanation is as follows: You are correct in saying that you are "heavy of mouth"—that you lack the vessels found in *Tikkun*, where "their end is embedded in their beginning." Because of the root of your soul, you are "heavy of mouth," meaning that your intellect cannot fully enclose itself within the vessel of speech, etc. However, "Who has made man's mouth"—with the vowelization of *Kamatz*—alludes to the well-known *Adam* (Man) of *Atzilut* (Emanation), which is on the

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Kiseh (Throne), representing the name *MaH* (45 in gematria), which corresponds to *Adam* and encompasses all of *Tikkun*, as is known.

The matter of the vessel of the mouth is that it draws down the surrounding light (*Ohr Makif*), as is explained in *Pri Etz Chaim*: Through the blessing recited over a mitzvah, the surrounding light is drawn down, and through the mitzvah itself, the inner light (*Ohr Pnimi*) is drawn down. (For the breath of the mouth becomes the surrounding light, as mentioned in *Tanya*, Chapter 5.) This is why there is a difference of opinion between Sephardim and Ashkenazim regarding whether a special blessing should be recited on the *Tefillin Shel Rosh* (head phylacteries). The Sephardim do not recite the blessing, as they hold that it is impossible to draw down the surrounding light of the *Tefillin Shel Rosh*, which is exceedingly lofty. The Ashkenazim, however, believe it is possible to draw it down. In any case, we learn that the vessel of the mouth is what draws down the surrounding light.

Thus, "Who has made man's mouth?" means: Who created the vessel of the mouth, which is the vessel that draws down the surrounding light? Who created it for the *Adam* of *Tikkun*? "Is it not I, Hashem?"—referring to the essence of the Infinite Light (*Ein Sof*), the source of the *Kav* (line) and *Chut* (thread) of the Infinite Light, which is the source of all inner and surrounding lights.

Therefore, nothing is withheld from Me. "I will be with your mouth as well," meaning that even though your root is in *Tohu* and you lack such vessels, I, Hashem, who created the vessels of *Tikkun* and also the world of *Tohu*, can merge these two aspects together. This means combining the advantages of both: the abundant lights of *Tohu* and the abundant vessels of *Tikkun*.

Thus, "their end is embedded in their beginning," and "I will be with your mouth." Even though your root is in *Tohu*, you will have the vessels of *Tikkun*, especially the vessel of the mouth, through which the surrounding lights are drawn down. In this way, you will possess both advantages. Since "their end is embedded in their beginning," and "their beginning is embedded in their end," the qualities of *Tikkun* can even be found in *Tohu*. Therefore, they can unite.

(See elsewhere where it is explained on the verse "I will exalt You, for You have drawn me up" (*Tehillim* 30:2) how David, representing the aspect of speech, was included within Adam, who represents *Chochmah* (wisdom). This relates to the concept of "heavy of mouth" and the revelation of speech as represented by David. "Who has made man's mouth? Is it not I?" corresponds to the idea of "I will exalt You," referring to the depth of height. See there. Similarly, it is explained elsewhere regarding the advantage of rabbinic mitzvot: The 248 positive commandments correspond to the 248 limbs, which

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draw down lights into vessels. The 365 negative commandments correspond to the 365 sinews, representing lights that transcend vessels and limbs. Therefore, negative commandments do not involve active fulfillment. This corresponds to the lights of *Tohu*, which are above the lights of *Tikkun* and cannot be contained in vessels. However, rabbinic mitzvot, which also stem from the level of negative commandments, are nevertheless clothed in active performance because of the "additional understanding" (*Binah Yeteirah*), etc.

Thus, it was said to Moshe: "I will be with your mouth," meaning that even the lights of *Tohu* will become clothed in the vessels of *Tikkun*, as explained above. See further on the verse, "This is My Name.")