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Bo



BE'ETZEM
HAYOM
HAZEH



(Torah Or, 60a–c)



Summary of the discourse:

The expression, “the hosts of G-d”—tzivos Havayah in Hebrew—can be used as a springboard for discussion of some fundamental principles of Judaism, notably the significance of the various names of G-d; the progression of G-dly revelation over time; and the difference between the Pentateuch and the books of the Prophets.

The word tzivos is a form of the word tzvaos, meaning “hosts” or “legions.” The latter is also used as a name of G-d, in everyday speech pronounced Tzvagos. It signifies that all the diverse hosts of heaven and earth are nothing but manifestations of G-d. This name is not found even once in the Pentateuch but is often used in the books of the Prophets—and even then, almost always in combination with the name Havayah.

The seven holy names of G-d represent the seven keilim of za within the Realm of Atzilus. (The name Havayah is unique in that it is also associated with the undifferentiated Or Ein Sof within all the keilim.) The Torah as we know it, with mitzvos relating to objects and circumstances in this material world, derives from the Or Ein Sof as invested within the keilim of za of Atzilus. It was Moshe who drew the Or Ein Sof into those keilim, and that is why the Torah was given through him. In Moshe’s time, the Pentateuch—the Five Books of

Moses—was therefore on the spiritual plane of Atzilus, and this was not a problem because the populace then was also on that lofty spiritual level.

However, by the time of the prophets, people tended to be on the lower spiritual level of Beriah, and could not relate to the Torah, which they perceived as “up in the clouds.” The prophets drew the Or Ein Sof further down into the Realms of Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah so the people could once again relate to it. In the Realm of Atzilus, the keilim are utterly united with G-d; there is no room for diversity and multiplicity. It is only in Beriah and below that these concepts apply. Therefore the name Tzvako, applicable to diverse “hosts” as they are united with G-d, is appropriate for the books of the Prophets, but not for the Pentateuch since that is on the level of Atzilus.

(A point that follows from this maamar: This did not end with the prophets. Throughout Jewish history, as more areas of Torah were introduced to the world [e.g., the Mishnah and Talmud, the commentary of Rashi, the Shulchan Aruch, the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidus], the Or Ein Sof extended further and further down until it has finally reached this lowest of all realms and we are ready for Mashiach to arrive.)





Key topics to be covered in this discourse:

- ❖ Some Background Information on the Hebrew Word *Tzvaos*
- ❖ *Oros* and *Keilim*—“Lights” and “Vessels”
- ❖ The Realms of *Atzilus*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*
- ❖ Relation between *Havayah* and Other Divine Names
- ❖ Temporal Progression of G-dly Revelation
- ❖ From the Pentateuch to the Prophets
- ❖ Significance of the Divine Name *Tzvako*s and its Association with the Prophets
- ❖ Chanah’s Prayer Transcended the Name *Havayah*
- ❖ The Combination “*Havayah Tzvako*s”
- ❖ The Construct Form “*Tzivos Havayah*”: The Hosts Are Subordinate to *Havayah*



One of the most dramatic events in the Torah is recounted in this week's Torah reading: the Exodus from Egypt. After its account of how the Egyptian oppressors had been brought to their knees by miraculous demonstrations of G-d's omnipotence, the Torah triumphantly proclaims,¹ "On that very same day, all the hosts of G-d went out from the land of Egypt."

In addition to its simple, narrative meaning, the expression, "the hosts of G-d" can be used as a springboard for discussion of some fundamental principles of Judaism, notably the significance of the various names of G-d; the progression of G-dly revelation over time; and the difference between the Pentateuch and the books of the Prophets.

The expression, "the hosts of G-d" can be used as a springboard for discussion of some fundamental principles of Judaism.

Some Background Information on the Hebrew Word Tzvaos

Let us begin by noting several related things. First, the word "hosts," although not particularly common in modern English, denotes a multitude of troops; in our context, it refers to the vast population of Jews redeemed from Egypt.² Second, the Hebrew word for "hosts" is *tzvaos*, a word which is also used as a name of G-d.³ Third, by the rules of Hebrew grammar, two nouns can join together to form a construct in which the first noun takes on the additional meaning "of,"

The Hebrew word for "hosts" is tzvaos, a word which is also used as a name of G-d.

1. Exodus 12:41.

2. As we shall see below (see p. 91), on a more mystical level it can refer to other "troops" as well.

3. In that context, out of respect for its holiness, it is pronounced "*Tzvakos*" unless spoken in prayer or formal Torah reading.



“The hosts of
G-d” / “G-d of
Hosts”

e.g., “the children of Israel,” “the hosts of G-d.” In such cases (known as *smichus*, the conjunctive), the first noun often changes form slightly. Thus, in our verse, the single word for “hosts of,” *tzivov*, is the same word as that for “hosts,” *tzvaos*. Finally, this word is found in the Torah on either side of the construct, as “the hosts of G-d” and as “G-d of Hosts.” In the latter phrase (*Havayah Tzivakov* in Hebrew), the word is considered a Divine name.

The Talmud⁴ observes that “from the day the Holy One, may He be blessed, created His world, there was no person who called the Holy One, may He be blessed, “*Tzivakov*” until [the prophetess] Chanah came [and did so].”⁵ In recognition of this, G-d promised her, “Your son is destined to prophesy using this name,” as it is written,⁶ “And Samuel said, ‘So says the G-d of Hosts: ‘I have remembered, etc.’””

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There are many words used in the Bible and rabbinic literature to describe G-d (e.g., “great,” “mighty,” “awesome”), but there are only seven words which Jewish law considers Divine names, which are holy and forbidden to be erased. The name *Tzivakov* is one of these.⁷ Interestingly, this particular name of G-d is not used even once in the Pentateuch, and in the rest of the Bible it is never found other than in combination with another Divine name—virtually always the name *Havayah* (G-d’s four-letter name, the

4. *Brachos* 31b.

5. See I Samuel 1:11.

6. *Ibid.* 15:2.

7. See *Shavuos* 35a.

Tetragrammaton).⁸ To understand the significance of the name *Tzvaikos*, we must preface the concept of the Divine names generally and the special status of the name *Havayah* in particular.

Now, the everyday words we use to describe G-d, such as “wise,” “kind” and “mighty,” serve to help us understand G-d as He wishes to be known to us. These human attributes cannot be said to describe G-d’s true “Self,” so to speak, at all, since He is not a human. G-d’s true Self is utterly unknowable and indescribable by any term or name. However, there is still significance to these other descriptions: since it is G-d’s will that we mortals be able to relate to Him, He manifests Himself **to us** in these ways.

G-d’s true Self is utterly unknowable by any term or name. How is this gap bridged?

But—how does this work? There seems to be quite a gap between G-d, the utterly unknowable and indescribable by any term or name, and His manifestation as wise, kind, etc. How is this gap bridged?

Oros and Keilim—“Lights” and “Vessels”

As explained in the adaptation of the discourse *Erda Na*,⁹ to understand the answer we must know something of the mystical concept of *oros* and *keilim*,

To understand the answer, we must know something of the mystical concept of oros and keilim.

8. There are a number of verses in which the name *Tzvaikos* appears with the name *Havayah* plus a third name: either the name *Elokim* (or one of its forms, such as [2 Samuel 5:10] *Havayah Elokei Tzvaikos*) or, much less frequently, the name colloquially pronounced *Adnoi* or *Ado-sbem* (but pronounced in prayer or public Torah reading as *Adonoy*; for example [Isaiah 3:15], *Adnoi Havayah Tzvaikos*). Note, though, that in the latter case, the name *Havayah* which follows *Adnoi* is read as the name *Elokim*. There are, in fact, only two verses in all of Scripture in which the name *Tzvaikos* appears without the name *Havayah* at all: Psalms 80:8 and 15 (which both say *Elokim Tzvaikos*). But see the commentary of *Radak* to Psalms 80:15.

9. *Words of the Living G-d* 1:76–78.



“lights” and “vessels.”

G-d chooses to manifest Himself within the universe in ten principal ways, known as the ten Sefiros.

G-d chooses to manifest Himself within the universe in ten principal ways, known as the ten *Sefiros*. These are referred to by names intended to hint at their respective spiritual natures: “wisdom,” “understanding,” “knowledge,” “kindness,” “strength,” “beauty,” “victory” or “eternity,”¹⁰ “glory,” “foundation,” and “sovereignty.” Yet this does not imply any plurality in G-d Himself (G-d forbid), for these ten forms of Divine manifestation are only for **our** benefit: G-d Himself is not any of these, He is simply perceptible to **us** through them.

The great Kabbalist Rabbi Moshe Cordovero compared this to water contained in vessels of differently colored glass. The same is true of light through differently colored lenses.

In a famous simile,¹¹ the great Kabbalist Rabbi Moshe Cordovero compared this to water contained in vessels of differently colored glass. Although the water in each vessel is the same colorless liquid, it appears white when viewed through the white vessel, red through the red vessel, and so on. The same is true of light viewed through differently colored lenses. Similarly, G-d—Who is indescribable and indivisible—is the same and unchanged regardless of which vessel, or *Sefirah*,¹² He is viewed through; it is only the vessels, not the light they contain, that are different.

The indivisible G-dly emanation (for even this is only an emanation from G-d, and not G-d Himself) which is, metaphorically speaking, contained within the colored glasses is referred to as the *Or Ein Sof*, the

10. The Hebrew word for which, *netzach*, means both things.

11. *Pardes Rimmonim* 4:4 (see also *Chovos HaLevavos, Shaar HaBechinah*, chap. 1).

12. The singular of *Sefiros*.

“Light of the Infinite One,” while the spiritual parameters of its manifestation to us—the contours of the pitcher which shape the fluid inside; the color of the glass which is imparted to the contents—are called *keilim*, or “vessels” for that light. Thus, in speaking of the ten principal means of Divine manifestation, the ten *Sefiros*, we must understand that each *Sefirah* consists of two components: the *or*, or light, within; and the *kli*, or vessel, without. The light in each *Sefirah* is the same; it is only the vessels which differ.

Descriptions of G-d as wise, kind, mighty, and the rest can only be applied to G-d as He is perceived by us through the lenses of the *Sefiros*. To apply such terms (or any terms at all, for that matter) to G-d from His own perspective—i.e., not as He is manifest through the *Sefiros*—is not only meaningless, but actually absurd. This is what is meant by the statement of Elijah the Prophet,¹³ “He [Himself] is not of any of these attributes at all.” Indeed, it is said,¹⁴ “Where you find G-d’s greatness, there do you find His humility.” That is, when we praise G-d as great, it is not really his being great that we are praising, for this is meaningless as applied to G-d. It is actually a deliberate and inconceivable lowering of Himself—to the point He can be perceived as great—that makes such a description possible at all. Thus, in reality, it is G-d’s humility, His willingness to come down to our level (in a manner of speaking), that we are praising by describing G-d in terms such as “great.”

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When we praise G-d as great, it is not really his being great that we are praising, for this is meaningless as applied to G-d. It is G-d’s humility, His willingness to come down to our level, that we are praising.

13. Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar*.

14. *Megillah* 31a.



The Realms of Atzilus, Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah

This physical world is the end result which G-d had in mind in creating the universe.

To make this possible, G-d created a virtually endless progression of spiritual worlds, grouped into four broad categories: Atzilus, Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah.

Another point must be understood before going on. This physical world, in which G-d's presence and participation are so hidden from our perception that it is even possible to mistakenly believe there is no G-d at all (G-d forbid), is the end result which G-d had in mind, so to speak, in creating the universe. This is because G-d wanted us to come to our own realization—guided by the Torah—that He is King of the universe and to subjugate ourselves to Him of our own volition, which would not be possible if everyone could see G-d as plainly as day. To make this possible, G-d created not just this one world, but a virtually endless progression of spiritual worlds in which His presence is increasingly hidden until we arrive at the point of this physical world, with its total concealment of G-dliness. These innumerable spiritual worlds are grouped into four broad categories, known as the realms of *Atzilus*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*, in which *Atzilus* is the spiritual realm closest to G-d's very Self—that is, in which G-d's presence is hardly concealed at all—and *Asiyah* is that in which G-d has so thoroughly concealed Himself that even this physical world can exist.

Each of these realms—*Atzilus*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*—allows for the existence of created entities with varying degrees of spiritual awareness. The realm of *Beriah*, for example, is considered the habitat of souls whose ability to perceive G-d and worship Him is commensurate with the great degree to which G-dli-

ness is openly revealed there; the souls originating in the realm of *Asiyah*, by contrast, do not have the same spiritual capacity. Within each of the four realms, G-d manifests Himself through the ten *Sefiros*. Thus, the “creatures” of *Beriah* derive their great perception of G-d through the lenses of the *keilim* component of the *Sefiros* within *Beriah*, and so on with respect to all the worlds.

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Now, in the realm of *Atzilus*—the highest spiritual realm—the degree of G-dly revelation is so great that in fact, no independent existence is possible. The *keilim* of the realm of *Atzilus* are not something apart from G-d, even on a very subtle level, but are themselves considered an aspect of G-d, as it were. Yet their existence is the first step in the entire progression, for in the next lower world, *Beriah*, the *keilim* are no longer considered G-dly (although the *or*, the light, within them certainly is), and so on until this physical world.

In the realm of Atzilus—the highest spiritual realm—the degree of G-dly revelation is so great that no independent existence is possible. The keilim of Atzilus are not something apart from G-d.

Relation between Havayah and Other Divine Names

Let us now return to our discussion of the names of G-d.

We said above that descriptive terms like “kind” and “mighty” only apply to our perception of G-d “filtered” through the *keilim* of the ten *Sefiros*. For this reason, such terms are not holy in and of themselves, for, as explained above, they do not apply to G-d Himself. On the other hand, the seven holy names of G-d which may not be erased are identified with the

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keilim of *Atzilus* themselves. Since, as mentioned above, the *keilim* of *Atzilus* are themselves G-dly, these seven names of G-d are holy. The Divine name *Kel*,¹⁵ for example, is identified with the *kli* of the *Sefirah* of *Chessed* (“kindness”); the name *Elokim*¹⁶ with the *kli* of *Gevurah* (“strength”); and the name *Adnoi* with *Malchus* (“sovereignty”).

By contrast, the name Havayah is associated with the oros, the lights, within the keilim. It is the intermediary between the oros and the keilim.

By contrast, G-d’s unpronounceable¹⁷ four-letter name—pronounced for everyday purposes by scrambling its letters to read *Havayah*—is the inner aspect of all the other names. That is, whereas the other names are associated with the *keilim* of *Atzilus*, the name *Havayah* is associated with the *oros*, the lights, within the *keilim*. That is why the name *Havayah* combines with all of the other Divine names, as in the verse,¹⁸ “On the day that G-d, the L-rd [*Havayah Elokim*] created earth and heaven,” and in the Scriptural expression “G-d of Hosts” [*Havayah Tzvakos*]. In the above examples, the name *Havayah* is that which draws the *Or Ein Sof* into the names *Elokim* and *Tzvakos* respectively; it is the intermediary between the *oros* and the *keilim* and binds them together.¹⁹

15. Properly pronounced *E-l* in prayer and formal Torah reading. (Note that the hyphen between the letters is for the purpose of avoiding writing one of G-d’s names in full. The name itself has no hyphen. The same is true of the other hyphenated names in this discussion.)

16. *Elo-bim* in prayer and formal Torah reading.

17. Even in prayer and Torah reading, where it is read as the name *Ado-nay*. It is not literally unpronounceable; rather, it is forbidden to pronounce it.

18. Genesis 2:4.

19. As reflected in the foregoing paragraph, the original of this discourse seems to make contradictory statements: that, on the one hand, the name *Havayah* is associated with the *oros* within the *keilim*; and also, on the other hand, that the name *Havayah* is the intermediary between the *oros* and the *keilim*. Relatedly, this discourse seems to state rather unambiguously that the seven holy names of G-d are the *keilim* of *Atzilus*, whereas elsewhere (see the references section [*marei mekomos*] of *Torah Or* [p. 354, cols. 1–2 (s.v. *shemosav shel HaKadosh Baruch Hu bem bakeilim* and s.v. *mitztaref im kol hasheimos*) and ref-

erences cited there]) the seven holy names, too, are described as intermediaries that bind the *oros* with the *keilim*. We may formulate the question thus: are the names identical with the thing they signify (in the case of the name *Havayah*, the *Or Ein Sof*, and in the case of the other divine names, the *keilim* of *Atzilus*), or are they intermediaries binding the *Or Ein Sof* and the *keilim*?

The resolution lies in understanding what Jewish mystical literature means by the concept of a name (summarized in *Words of the Living G-d* 3:246–54, which is drawn from the discourse about to be quoted). In the explanatory supplement (*beinur*) to the discourse *Es Shabsosai Tishmoru* (*Likutei Torah, Behar*, 43b) analogy is made to the name of a person (for example, “Samuel,” as opposed to a mere description like “tall,” “wise,” etc.) A name is not essential, and a person has no need for one at all when alone. It is merely a device by which a person can be known to others. However, although someone’s name in no way resembles that person and is certainly not physically connected to them in any way—the name nevertheless represents the person in his or her entirety, including even aspects the caller was unaware of. When one person calls another by name, the attention of the person called is drawn to the caller; the one called is focused on and connected to the one who called. We see, then, that—paradoxically—a name has elements of both: On one hand, it is a stand-in for the person, signifying that very person in every respect; on the other hand, it is not the person in any way, yet it draws that person to focus on and connect with another.

Applying the above to the names of G-d, we may say that the name *Havayah* is not the very same entity (so to speak) as the *Or Ein Sof*, but is nevertheless identified with the *Or Ein Sof* in the same deep and mysterious way (actually, far beyond it!) that the letters “S-a-m-u-e-l” are identified with that person. Likewise, the other Divine names are not the *keilim* themselves, but are still identified with them in the manner just described. At the same time, though, all these names serve as intermediaries that call forth the thing named (in the case of the name *Havayah*, the *Or Ein Sof*; and in the case of the other divine names, the *keilim* of *Atzilus*) and connect it with its respective counterpart (in the case of the name *Havayah*, the *keilim* of *Atzilus*; and in the case of the other divine names, the *Or Ein Sof*).

Yet that seems contradictory: which is the true intermediary connecting the *Or Ein Sof* and the *keilim* of *Atzilus*: is it the name *Havayah* (as stated in this *maamar*) or the other divine names (as stated in the sources referenced in the first paragraph of this footnote)?

The answer to this new question is: both, because we are talking about two different manifestations of the *Or Ein Sof*. On the one hand, as explained above, G-d Himself cannot be said to be kind, mighty, or any other attribute; He utterly transcends them all. However, since it is His wish to manifest Himself to us in those ways, He invests His Light (the *Or Ein Sof*) within the vessels (the *keilim*) of Kindness, Strength, and so on—so that, as clear water appears colored when viewed through colored vessels, G-d appears kind through the vessel of *Chessed*, mighty through the vessel of *Gevurah*, etc. On the other hand, if G-d is indeed undifferentiated and infinite and utterly transcendent of such things as kindness, strength, and the rest, how did those *middos* come to exist in the first place? Where did “kindness” even come from?

For the *keilim* to exist at all required a creative act on G-d’s part, an infusion of G-dly life force to bring them into being. When we speak of the other names of G-d drawing forth the *Or Ein Sof* into the *keilim* of *Atzilus*, we are talking about that G-dly life force that creates the *keilim* in the first place. It is only after this creative infusion of G-d’s Light has brought the *keilim* into being that we can speak of a separate manifestation of the *Or Ein Sof* as that “colorless liquid” perceptible to us through the *keilim*. And as to that, it is the name *Havayah* that draws it forth into the now-existing *keilim* of *Atzilus*.

(Regarding the name *Kel* in combination with other divine names, see the first paragraph of the reference cited in the first paragraph of this footnote, s.v. *mitz'aref im kol hasheimos*.)



Temporal Progression of G-dly Revelation

We will return to the above ideas shortly. Let us now introduce a new concept: the progression of G-dly revelation over time.

As discussed above, G-d created the world “one step at a time,” in the sense that He started with a realm in which He was only slightly concealed, and, through countless intermediate steps, ultimately brought about this physical world, where He appears completely hidden. The goal of the entire progression, however, is, as explained, that even in this lowest world we should reveal G-dliness by our study of Torah and performance of *mitzvos*. The world was not “ready-made” with G-dliness fully manifest in the physical world; even now, this is something we are still striving to accomplish, day by day, person by person, *mitzvah* by *mitzvah*. It was G-d’s will that over the course of Jewish history, His radiance and revelation be drawn further and further down into the lower realms and made as accessible to their respective inhabitants as it is to the more refined spiritual beings; this was accomplished through the efforts of various saintly souls who were best suited for the particular task, and whose birth into the world occurred at the appropriate time to fulfill it.

The world was not “ready-made” with G-dliness fully manifest. It was G-d’s will that over the course of Jewish history, His radiance be drawn further and further down into the lower realms; this was accomplished through the efforts of various saintly souls.

For example, the giving of the Torah after the Jews left Egypt was a revelation of G-dliness simply staggering in its magnitude. For reasons of His own, it was G-d’s plan that prior to that period in time, the world was not ready for that revelation.²⁰ The soul of Moshe

20. See, e.g., p. 59.

(Moses) was spiritually best qualified, as it were, to transmit this G-dly manifestation to the Jews, which is why G-d chose him to bring us the Torah. However, although the entire corpus of Torah knowledge was included in what G-d gave Moshe, what Moshe actually received in an openly revealed manner was the Pentateuch—the Five Books of Moses. It was not until later in the course of time that G-d revealed the books of the Prophets, each book at the hands of that particular prophet.²¹

The above is not merely a description of the course of Jewish scholarship. Each stage in the revelation of the Torah has literally been the manifestation in earthly form of the spiritual “light” of G-d—contained within the Torah—being drawn further and further down to earth. What is more, there is a very real and practical consequence to this: that additional revelation provides us with the spiritual fortitude and strength we need to maintain (and, indeed, to improve) our worship of G-d despite the challenging conditions of succeeding generations.

Anyone familiar with the accomplishments of generations past knows that we who are alive today are not of the same spiritual stature as our forebears. To com-

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Each stage in the revelation of the Torah has been the “light” of G-d drawn further and further down to earth. It provides us with the strength we need to maintain our worship despite the challenges of succeeding generations.

21. This *maamar* does not say so explicitly, but the same is true throughout Jewish history, as the G-dliness implicit within the Torah has been gradually made explicit through the contributions of such great souls as the rabbis of the Mishnah and Talmud; the great commentators and codifiers like *Rashi*, *Rambam*, and the author of the *Shulchan Aruch* (the universally accepted codification of Jewish law), and so on. This process has continued today with the revelation of the very essence of the Torah, that part known as *Chassidus*, and will culminate with the revelation by the Messiah of the deepest and loftiest G-dly knowledge in a clearly revealed and comprehensible manner. See the *Sichah* (talk) of the Lubavitcher Rebbe given on the last day of Passover 5730 (available in both Hebrew and English as the Appendix to *On the Essence of Chassidus* (New York: Kehot, 2003), esp. pp. 112–115).



pare the average Jew of our time with the average Jew who lived in the period of *Rasbi*, for example, or of the sages of the Talmud, or the Holy Temple, or the generation of Moshe, would only confirm the well-known adage that the generations have tended to decline over the years. Indeed, none of those periods would compare favorably with its predecessors.²²

Our souls today tend to stem from lower in the spiritual hierarchy (Atzilus, Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah) than did the souls of former generations.

The mystical explanation of this phenomenon is that our souls today tend to stem from lower in the spiritual hierarchy (the realms of *Atzilus*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*) than did the souls of former generations, which in turn were not as lofty as their own predecessors, and so on. If the souls in Moshe's time were closer to the realm of *Atzilus*, our "modern" souls are more like the lower reaches of *Asiyah*; we just don't have the same spiritual capacity they did.²³

Therefore, the G-dly light inherent within Torah had to be made more and more explicit for the benefit of succeeding generations.

In any event, the result of the above is that, just as a professor can present a profound and difficult concept to a brilliant graduate student in very advanced terms but would need to reformulate and thoroughly simplify the presentation of the same concept for a lay audience, the G-dly light inherent within Torah—while perfectly accessible to the Jews of Moshe's time—had to be made more and more explicit for the benefit of succeeding generations in history.

22. Cf. *Shabbos* 112b; *Rosh Hashanah* 25a–b.

23. It is important to understand that this is only a **quantitative** assessment of the souls. From a **qualitative** standpoint, however, all souls are equal. No one in our time, for example, will be held to account for why they did not reach the same level of spiritual distinction as Moshe did; that would be unreasonable. Rather, each person is expected to achieve his or her **own** spiritual potential—whatever that may happen to be—and if they do, each and every one of us is considered fully as righteous as Moshe himself.

From the Pentateuch to the Prophets

In fact, this could **only** have been accomplished by succeeding generations. A soul such as that of Moshe, rooted in the loftiest heights of heaven, could only draw the G-dly revelation which is the Torah so far: he could bring the light, the G-dly revelation, which G-d desired to bestow upon the Jews down to his own level, but no lower than that.²⁴

Accordingly, as the generations progressed and souls originating at relatively lower levels of the spiritual hierarchy came to populate the Jewish nation, G-d saw fit to allow His light to be drawn further down—to their level—by someone whose soul could indeed relate to them.²⁵ And once the Torah became accessible again to the people of each respective age, they were able to observe the *mitzvos* of the Torah—which are conduits for the spirituality G-d transmits into the universe—in such a way as to bring the spirituality associated with those *mitzvos* down to levels it had not previously reached.²⁶

Once the Torah became accessible again to the people of each respective age, they were able to observe the mitzvos in such a way as to draw spirituality down to levels it had not previously reached.

24. That is the mystical significance of Moshe's protest, when charged by G-d to lead the Jews out of Egypt so they could receive the Torah, that he was inadequate to the task because he had a speech impediment (see Exodus 4:10). "Speech" is the revelation to others of what is within one's own mind, and in our context it symbolized the transmission of the Torah as Moshe himself understood it to the Jews. Moshe's concern was that, owing to the rarified stature of his soul, he would be unable to transmit the Torah to the Jews "beneath" him, and that someone else would therefore be better suited for this task.

25. Paradoxically, we may thus identify an advantage of later generations over earlier, in that the later generations were able to express the G-dly revelations of the Torah more thoroughly, to bring them more fully down to earth.

26. At our point in Jewish history, the entire process has been completed: even the souls of *Asiyah* have now been enabled to relate to the Torah, as it has been drawn down to our level through the successive realms of *Atzilus*, *Beriab*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*. We have thus been able, through our worship and *mitzvah*-observance, to reach up by means of this "Torah-bridge" and bring the awesome light of G-d Himself, the *Or Ein Sof*



The Pentateuch contains the mitzvos. Their spiritual source is the name Havayah, particularly as invested within the so-called “emotional” group of Sefiros (known as “za”) in the realm of Atzilus.

Now, the Pentateuch contains the 613 *mitzvos* of the Torah: 248 positive precepts (like “put on *Tefillin*”) and 365 negative injunctions (like “do not steal”). The spiritual source of these *mitzvos* is the name *Havayah*,²⁷ particularly as invested within the so-called “emotional” group of *Sefiros* in the realm of *Atzilus*. The attributes of *Chessed* (“kindness”) and *Gevurah* (“strength” or “restraint”) and related qualities are all within this group, collectively known as *za*²⁸ of *Atzilus*. All the details of the *mitzvos*—forbidden or permitted, valid or invalid, guilty or innocent, etc.—are bound up with these spiritual attributes: that which is permitted and valid has its source in the *Chessed* aspects of *za*, while one who transgresses a negative *mitzvah* (G-d forbid) draws upon oneself something of the *Gevurah* aspects of *za* (in that they are punished), etc.

What Moshe was able to achieve was the bringing of the light of the Ein Sof down to the point where it could invest itself within the keilim of za of Atzilus in the first place.

What Moshe in particular was able to achieve was the bringing of the light of the *Ein Sof* down to the point where it could invest itself within the *keilim* of *za* of *Atzilus* in the first place, and utterly unite with them (for, it will be remembered, in the realm of *Atzilus*, even the *keilim* are G-dly). As mentioned earlier, this *or* (light) within the *keilim* of *Atzilus* is identified with the name *Havayah*, and this union of the name *Havayah*—the *Or Ein Sof*—and the *keilim* of *za* is, as explained in the previous paragraph, the source of the *mitzvos* of

embodied within the *mitzvos*, all the way down to the point of its open expression even in this physical world. Cf. the famous *maamar Basi LeGani 5711*, the very first *maamar* recited by the Lubavitcher Rebbe upon assuming his role as Rebbe.

27. See the synopsis of the discourse *Zeh Shmi LeOlam* in chapter 1, in which the first two letters of the four-letter name *Havayah* are identified as the source of the negative *mitzvos* and the latter two letters of the name *Havayah* as the source of the positive *mitzvos*.

28. An abbreviation for *Z'vir Anpin*, or “minor countenance.”

the Torah. This is why Moshe merited that the Torah be given through him: it was his spiritual achievement that, very literally, made it possible.*

Prior to the giving of the Torah, the Jews were unable to relate to G-d by means of the *mitzvos*, a fact whose significance is now more clearly understood: Moshe had not yet “enabled” the source of the *mitzvos*—the investiture of the *Or Ein Sof*, through the name *Havayah*, into the *keilim* of *za* of *Atzilus*.³⁰

Nevertheless, Moshe did not bring the *Or Ein Sof* down to the level at which it would unite with the *keilim* of the lower realms—*Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*—in the same way in which it utterly united with the *keilim* of *Atzilus*. Nor, however, did Moshe need to do so, for the Jews of Moshe’s time were of such lofty spiritual stature that they were able to relate to the Torah as it existed in the realm of *Atzilus*. It was only as the generations progressed, and the souls of the Jews were no longer of such lofty origin, that they began to lose touch with the Torah—which, from their lower perspective, now seemed “up in the clouds”—and they transgressed. This occurred in the time of the prophets, which is why the books of the prophets are full of rebuke and exhortation to the Jews to repent.

Nevertheless, Moshe did not bring the Or Ein Sof down to the level at which it would unite with the keilim of the lower realms in the same way.

As the generations progressed, the Jews began to lose touch with the Torah. This occurred in the time of the prophets.

* *This level was also the primary source of Moshe’s prophetic powers, which, however, had to be transmitted by way of the realm of Beriah.*²⁹

29. As explained in *Shaar HaKedushah* (“Gate of Holiness”) by Rabbi Chaim Vital of blessed memory, part 3, “gate” 6.

30. This is also consistent with G-d’s statement to Moshe (Exodus 6:3) that the name *Havayah* was unknown even to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see chapter 2 for an explanation of this concept), who lived before the Torah was given.



Significance of the Divine Name Tzvakos and its Association with the Prophets

We are now in a position to understand why, in the Pentateuch, the name Havayah is used but the name Tzvakos never appears; whereas the books of the prophets frequently use the combination

Havayah
Tzvakos.

Atzilus is characterized by unity as opposed to diversity and multiplicity. The lower realms are just the opposite: each of the legions of souls and angels there is considered an individual in its own right. These are the innumerable hosts of heaven.

We are now in a position to understand why, in the Pentateuch, the name *Havayah* is used, but the name *Tzvakos* never appears; while, beginning with the prophetess Chanah, the books of the prophets frequently use the combination *Havayah Tzvakos*.

For, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, the Divine name *Tzvakos* is the same word as that which means “hosts,” or “great multitudes.” The significance of this is as follows:

The spiritual world of *Atzilus* is characterized by unity as opposed to diversity and multiplicity, since in *Atzilus* G-d’s presence is so manifest that there is no room for independent existence and all is one with Him. The lower realms, those below *Atzilus*, are just the opposite: since, in those realms, the *Or Ein Sof* does not utterly unite with the *keilim*, there is room for diversity and multiplicity. Each of the countless beings—legions of souls and angels—of these realms is considered an individual in its own right; these are the innumerable hosts of heaven.

Now, when Moshe, whose prophetic powers reached into the realm of *Atzilus*, spoke to the Jews, he was transmitting to them G-d’s own words, since in *Atzilus*, the *Or Ein Sof* pervades all and there is nothing apart from G-d. Moshe was “merely” a conduit; it was G-d Himself speaking through his mouth. The prophets after Moshe, though, were not capable of the

same level of prophecy; their prophesies flowed from the level of *Beriah*. This posed a problem with respect to their task of rebuking the Jews and urging them to repent. When G-d Himself rebukes someone (in the manner in which G-d Himself was speaking directly to the Jews through Moshe's mouth), there is a direct connection between that person and G-d, and the value and efficacy of the rebuke is of a different order entirely than if a mere mortal were doing the rebuking.

Thus, it was in the age of the prophets that the time had come for the *Or Ein Sof* to descend further, infusing even the realm of *Beriah*. In this way, the light of G-d united with the *keilim* of *Beriah* in the same absolute manner as in *Atzilus*,³¹ so that when the prophets transmitted their prophetic inspiration originating at this level, they, like Moshe, were literally conveying the word of G-d Himself—not merely telling the people what they, in turn, had heard G-d say. Through the prophets, the Torah once more came down to the level of the Jews.*

* *Although there is a principle³² that “a prophet may not introduce an innovation [over the Torah as taught by Moshe],” the above is not an innovation. Instead, the very same Torah as taught by Moshe was drawn down by the prophets from the realm of Atzilus to that of Beriah—that is, it was brought within reach of the Jews of their day—without adding or subtracting anything.*

31. This is no contradiction to the statement found frequently in Chassidic and Kabbalistic literature to the effect that in *Atzilus* (as opposed to the lower realms), G-d and the attributes and even the *keilim* are all one. That statement refers to the “natural state,” as it were, of things in *Atzilus*, whereas in the lower realms, the natural state of the *keilim* is separate from G-d Himself (as if such a thing were possible). This *maamar*, however, is teaching us that in real life—not in terms of their natural state but rather how they are now—even in *Beriah* and the lower realms the *keilim* are united with G-d just as they are in *Atzilus*, because of the accomplishment of the prophets.

32. *Shabbos* 104a.

Now, when Moshe—whose prophetic powers reached into the realm of Atzilus—spoke to the Jews, it was G-d Himself speaking through his mouth. The prophets after Moshe, though, were not capable of the same level of prophecy; their prophesies flowed from the level of Beriah.

The time had come for the Or Ein Sof to descend further, infusing even the realm of Beriah. Through the prophets, the Torah once more came down to the level of the Jews.



This effected a transformation: G-d's unity pervaded Beriah as well, and the formerly separate hosts were shown to be one with G-d after all. The Divine name Tzvagos signifies this.

Since, as noted above, the realm of *Beriah* is one of diversity, inhabited by the “hosts” of heaven, G-d’s infinite light—the *Or Ein Sof*—being manifest in that world effected a transformation: His unity pervaded *Beriah* as well, and the formerly separate hosts were shown to be one with G-d after all.³³

The Divine name *Tzvagos* signifies this. Before the prophets drew the *Or Ein Sof* into *Beriah*, the hosts (*tzvagos*) of *Beriah* were not one with G-d, and the word describing them is therefore not holy. (On the contrary, the word *tzvagos* actually connotes a multitude of separate individuals, as opposed to the true unity of G-d.) As a Divine name, however, the very same word represents G-d as He is united with the hosts of *Beriah*: the actual hosts themselves are G-dly, and the word itself—referring now, in effect, to G-d—is holy.

This may be better understood by the following examples. The word “person” cannot properly be applied to either a disembodied soul or a lifeless body; it refers to the soul (the main thing) as it is invested

33. It is important to avoid confusion on this point. Needless to say, nothing was “added” to G-d (as if such a thing were possible) by the creatures of *Beriah* becoming absorbed in His unity. G-d was, is, and always will be One with a simple, all-pervasive unity that encompasses all realms equally. From that perspective—which is the true one—everything in *Beriah* and everywhere else was always nothing more than a manifestation of G-d and had no existence independent of Him. However, since G-d wanted to create a physical world in which He appeared hidden, for the reasons described earlier, He concealed His light from the perspective of the created universe, making it appear to **created beings like us** as though we are separate from him; but that appearance of independent existence is nothing more than an illusion. Everything in this entire discussion—about G-dliness being drawn down to places it formerly had not been—must be understood in this light. In reality, G-d is, and always has been, everywhere. However, in accordance with His wish that we gradually come to recognize that for ourselves, He has allowed that fundamental truth to be revealed, through the spiritual effects of Jewish worship, in gradual stages over time. This is what is meant by the hosts of the realm of *Beriah* “becoming” one with G-d.

within a body (its container). Use of this one term to describe the combination is an indication of their integration into one entity, a person. Likewise, “knowledge” refers to abstract data, independent of the one who knows it. Someone who acquires knowledge can be described by adjectives, like “wise” or “knowledgeable,” but these do not connote that the person and the knowledge are a single entity. Such words are really part of a phrase, whether explicit or understood: a “wise person,” or a “knowledgeable person.” However, there are certain nouns (more so in Hebrew than in English) which actually refer, like all nouns, to a thing, and not an aspect of that thing: “sage,” for example, may perhaps be said to describe specifically the person as that person is suffused with knowledge. There is no separate knowledge component to the term “sage”; it refers exclusively to the person. It is as though the knowledge possessed by that person is no longer a separate entity, but is part and parcel of the sage; it cannot be referred to separately, but is inherent in the description of the person. The Divine name *Tzvakos*, likewise, connotes not merely that the hosts of *Beriah* exist but are subjugated to G-d; rather, it means that G-d Himself **is** the *tzvaos*, which are not separable from Him.

Chanah’s Prayer Transcended the Name Havayah

The prophets were able to bring about this great revelation and unity because of the fact that, as mentioned above, G-d essentially transcends all distinctions between levels of creation anyway. It is, after all, only from our limited perspective that G-d appeared

The Divine name Tzvakos connotes not merely that the hosts of Beriah exist but are subjugated to G-d; rather, it means that G-d Himself is the tzvaos.



The prophets were able to bring about this great revelation and unity because G-d transcends all distinctions between levels of creation.

This is hinted at by the language of the verse: “Al Havayah” literally means, “upon Havayah,” and the implication is that Chanah’s prayer was directed to a level that transcends the set order of gradual revelation.

not to have been revealed within *Beriah*, but since, in fact, G-d is everywhere (not just in the spatial sense, but even in the spiritual realms), the prophets were able to tap into that reality* and express it openly within *Beriah*.

This is hinted at by the language of the verse³⁴ describing Chanah’s prayer, in which she became the first to use the name *Havayah Tzvakos*: “She prayed to G-d,” in which the Hebrew words for “to G-d” are *al Havayah*. As explained elsewhere,³⁵ the Divine name *Havayah* symbolizes the manner in which G-d makes Himself manifest to created beings by concealing his full radiance from our perception and compressing it into a form we can withstand. “*Al Havayah*” literally means, “upon *Havayah*,” and the implication is that Chanah’s prayer was directed to a level of G-d (in a manner of speaking) which transcends the set order of gradual revelation represented by the name *Havayah*. Only from this exalted level could Chanah elicit the manifestation of the *Or Ein Sof* within *Beriah* as thoroughly as within *Atzilus*.

The Combination “Havayah Tzvakos”

However, even in the books of the prophets, the name *Tzvakos* is not used alone but is preceded by the name *Havayah*: as explained above, the name *Havayah*

* *In mystical terms, the concepts of iggul and Sovev Kol Almin.*

34. I Samuel 1:10.

35. See, for example, the adaptation of the discourse *Haazinu* available on LikkuteiTorah.com and to be published, with G-d’s help, in *Words of the Living G-d*, vol. 5.

refers to the *Or Ein Sof* as drawn into and united with the *keilim* of *Atzilus*; that was a necessary prerequisite to the further progression of the *Or Ein Sof* into *Beriah*, symbolized by the name *Tzvakos*.

The Construct Form “Tzivos Havayah”: The Hosts Are Subordinate to Havayah

Finally, in our verse (“On that very same day, all the hosts of G-d went out from the land of Egypt”), the word “hosts of” is used in the *smichus* construct—in which, grammatically, the word *tzivos* (“hosts of”) is subordinate to the word *Havayah* (“G-d”)—as opposed to as a word in its own right. The reason is as follows:

The hosts referred to may be understood as being the 202 “sparks of holiness” that the Jews elevated to their spiritual source and brought up with them out of the land of Egypt.³⁶ These 202 sparks are the spiritual spoils the Jews took with them from Egypt, as it is written,³⁷ “and they despoiled Egypt.” They are also alluded to by the verses,³⁸ “a mixed multitude [of Egyptian converts] (*erev rav*) also went up with them,” and³⁹ “you [Moshe] have enough (*rav*),” since the Hebrew word *rav* in these verses is equivalent, by the system of Hebrew numerology known as *gematria*, to 202.

The name Tzvakos is preceded by the name Havayah because Havayah refers to the Or Ein Sof as drawn into and united with the keilim of Atzilus, a necessary prerequisite to the further progression of the Or Ein Sof into Beriah, symbolized by the name Tzvakos.

The hosts may be understood as being the 202 “sparks of holiness” the Jews elevated to their spiritual source and brought up out of the land of Egypt.

36. See the adaptation of the discourse *VeHinei Anachnu Me'almim Alumim* (*Words of the Living G-d* 1, chap. 9), where it is explained that 288 sparks of G-dliness “fell” into the created realms. The Jews succeeded in restoring 202 of these during their sojourn in Egypt; it was left to us, their descendants, to elevate the rest.

37. Exodus 12:36.

38. Ibid. 12:38.

39. Deuteronomy 3:26.



The 288 sparks of holiness⁴⁰ are derived from the four Divine names whose numerical values yield 72, 63, 45 and 52 respectively. While the meaning of this concept is beyond the scope of this adaptation, the relevant point for our purposes is that a name is something used for the benefit of others; one does not need to use one's name when alone. The name identifies a specific person as a discrete entity among other people. When the Jews left Egypt and raised the 202 sparks up to the point of reabsorption into their spiritual source, the elevated sparks were thereby divested of their status as independent entities and became one with G-d. They could no longer be referred to by name (associated with the four Divine names mentioned earlier, the Names of 72, etc.), but only as subordinate to G-d (as *Havayah*),⁴¹ as in the phrase, *tzivos Havayah*, the "hosts of G-d."

The elevated sparks were divested of their status as independent entities and became one with G-d. They could no longer be referred to by name, but only as subordinate to G-d, as in the phrase, tzivos Havayah, the "hosts of G-d."

(An analogy to this degree of absorption into G-d can be taken from a person contemplating the greatness of G-d. Such contemplation, at first, may cause the person to be conscious of G-d's greatness and to feel total dedication to Him. However, although commendable, at this stage the person still has enough sense of his or her own self to experience that consciousness and feel that dedication. On the other hand,

40. See note 36.

41. The Names of 72, 63, 45 and 52 are derived from the name *Havayah*, in that each is a separate expansion of the name *Havayah*. That is, each of these names is formed by spelling out the four letters of the name *Havayah* as words in their own right. (For an example, see chapter 4, note 18.) Thus, when the 202 sparks derived from these names became one with G-d and could no longer be referred to as separate entities, they were reabsorbed into the source of the Names of 72, 63, 45 and 52—that is, into the name *Havayah*. That is why they are referred to as *tzivos*—hosts of—the name *Havayah* specifically.

it is possible to meditate on G-d's greatness to the point at which the person loses all sense of self, in which case he or she cannot be said to have any consciousness or feeling at all. This is the absorption into G-dliness and loss of separate existence we are discussing.)

Of course, it was the **Jews'** Exodus from Egypt—as opposed to that of the elevated sparks of holiness—that is the main theme of our story. Regarding this, it is written,⁴² “On that very same day, G-d brought the Children of Israel out from the land of Egypt by their hosts [i.e., in their great multitudes].” In this verse, the Hebrew words for “by their hosts” are *al tzivosam*, which, as explained above regarding Chanah's prayer, literally means “upon their hosts.”⁴³ The significance of this is that, while, as we have been saying, the subordinate word *tzivos*—hosts [of]—may be taken as alluding to the elevated sparks of holiness, the souls of the Jews themselves—the Children of Israel—stem from a higher level than even that (“upon [i.e., transcending] their hosts”).

It is possible to meditate on G-d's greatness to the point at which the person loses all sense of self, in which case he or she cannot be said to have any consciousness or feeling at all. This is the absorption into G-dliness and loss of separate existence we are discussing.

The souls of the Jews themselves stem from a higher level than even the elevated sparks.



42. Exodus 12:51.

43. Still using the subordinate, construct form (*smichus*) of the word.



Practical lessons to be derived from this discourse:

1. The world was not “ready-made” with G-dliness fully manifest in the physical world; even now, this is something we are still striving to accomplish, day by day, person by person, *mitzvah* by *mitzvah*.
2. As the generations progressed and souls originating at relatively lower levels of the spiritual hierarchy came to

populate the Jewish nation, G-d saw fit to allow His light to be drawn further down—to their level—by someone whose soul could indeed relate to them.

3. There is a very real and practical consequence to the progressive revelation of Torah over time: each additional revelation provides us with the spiritual fortitude and strength we need to maintain (and, indeed, to improve) our worship of G-d despite the challenging conditions of succeeding generations.

