



THAT WAS QUITE enjoyable. It is profoundly pleasurable to reveal how two Torah ideas which, ostensibly, are unrelated, are in fact intimately connected to one another. Ya'akov Avinu first found his small jar of oil in 1435 BCE. He went back for it 34 years later. The Chashmonaim did not find THEIR jar of oil for another 1,263 years. The only question is, WHY are they connected?

The truth is, the story did not begin with Ya'akov Avinu. It only went THROUGH him.

And, it is not about the oil. It is about what the oil represents. It is also not about the connection between Ya'akov Avinu and the Chashmonaim. In the end, they are but two “pearls” on a strand that stretches all the way back to Creation and forward to Yemos HaMoshiach, and then some.

It's about light. It's ALWAYS about light. Is there anything else? Long before there was “good” and “evil” there was the light, unimaginably intense and unlimited light, predating EVERYTHING, except itself.

We're not talking about physical light. That's a creation. Photons and waves may be imperceivable by the human eye, but they are nevertheless quite physical, in existence only since the beginning of Creation. The light we are talking about is COMPLETELY spiritual. It was NEVER created, only filtered and manipulated by God to execute His will.

What was His will? As far as we know, to make Creation, and to make it in such a way as to allow a free will being to exist who could EARN a life of eternal pleasure. There is something about EARNING one's place in the World-to-Come that makes it far more eter-

nally gratifying¹

This required the creation of a reality called by Tzimtzum.² It means “constriction,” because that is what God did to His infinite light to make the finite reality. Prior to any creating, God’s light was infinitely equal EVERYWHERE. After Creation, God’s light exists on varying different levels of intensity.

To the extent that an aspect of God’s light is not perceivable, it is hidden. Some aspects will remain that way forever, some only until the World-to-Come. Some will even be revealed in Yemos HaMoshiach, actualizing the prophetic vision:

God will be King over the entire land. On that day God will be One, and His Name, One. (Zechariah 14:9)

In the Messianic Era, enough light will be revealed to make it eminently clear that God not only exists, but that He runs Creation and ALWAYS has. Some people today find it hard to BELIEVE in God. Then, it will be impossible

¹ Derech Hashem, Section 1.

² Otzros Chaim, Sha’ar Adam Kadmon. Drushei Olam HaTohu, Chelek 1.

NOT to believe in Him.³

It's hard to imagine how something so spiritual can result in something so massively physical. Even harder to imagine is how the light does this just because it is constricted, but that is exactly what happens. All reality is a function of how much of God's light is revealed in Creation.⁴

There are limits to tzimtzum, though. Man's free will choices affect it, but they are not allowed to cause enough of it to destroy all of Creation. This is why history seems to reboot itself at times, even if the causes seem manmade and random. It's actually Hashgachah Pratis⁵ halting the tzimtzum process in order to preserve Creation.

Man's first home was Gan Aiden—Paradise. It was unlike anything man has known since since living outside the Garden. It took a lot of tzimtzum to create it, but a lot more to hide it. It was Paradise specifically because of how much tzimtzum it did not yet undergo. It was Messianic in nature.

The idea of tzimtzum actually comes up

³ Succah 52a.

⁴ Drushei Olam HaTohu, Chelek 1, Drush 5, Siman 7, Os 6.

⁵ Divine Providence.

on the first day of Creation. Even Rashi mentions it:

God saw that the light was good, and God separated between the light and the darkness. (Bereishis 1:4)

He saw that the wicked were unworthy of using it, and therefore set it apart for the righteous in the Future Time. (Rashi)

God set the light apart? He hid it, for the righteous at a future time. The evil people can use the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars, and whatever physical light is ever going to exist, but they can NEVER use the light of the first day of Creation. It has been constricted and placed out of man's mental reach, appropriately called the "Ohr HaGanuz," or the "Hidden Light."

The light did return briefly to some degree:

For 36 hours the Light served [Adam Ha-Rishon]: 12 hours Erev Shabbos, and 24 hours of Shabbos. (Yerushalmi, Brochos 8:5)

Apparently, the Ohr HaGanuz did reappear in history for Adam HaRishon while he remained in Gan Aiden. It was there for him from the time he was created until the time he was expelled from the Garden, 36 hours altogether.

From the Talmud, the number 36 seems incidental, just the sum total of the 12 hours of Erev Shabbos and the 24 hours of Shabbos itself. The following suggests otherwise, and creates yet another connection between Ya'akov Avinu, Chanukah, and the rest of history:

The sun—shemesh—shone for him—lo
—as he passed Penuel and he was limping on his hip. (Bereishis 32:32)

This hints that it was the “lo” (i.e. 36) candles and “shamash” of the Chanukah of the Chashmonaim that healed the thigh of Ya'akov. (Tzeidah L'Derech)

Fascinating. We just need to answer how a FUTURE miracle could RETROACTIVELY heal a wound. Unless, of course, it wasn't the FUTURE Chanukah miracle that healed Ya'akov Avinu, but a PAST one . . .

A more pressing question at this time however is what did Adam HaRishon gain from the Ohr HaGanuz? The Talmud answers that as well:

With it Adam HaRishon saw from one end of the world to the other. (Yerushalmi, Brochos 8:5)

That's it? That's the entire difference between having access to the light and having no access, how far a person can see?

Well, yes . . . AND no.

With the Ohr HaGanuz a person CAN see further. "Further" however in this case does not mean PHYSICALLY, but SPIRITUALLY, and THAT makes all the difference in the world, or rather, worlds.

Tzimtzum has never been all-or-nothing. It happens in stages so that many different spiritual levels can co-exist. This is what makes possible gradual spiritual growth. Just as the light was constricted in countless stages by God, it can be revealed in countless stages by man, as a result of his moral choices and actions.

In general there are five levels. They are, from top to bottom: Adam Kadmon, Atzilus,

Beriyah, Yetzirah, and the one of which our entire physical universe is but one small part, Asiyah.⁶ Beyond the top level of Adam Kadmon is God's Infinite Light—Ohr Ain Sof—free of ANY tzimtzum. Below Adam Kadmon the tzimtzum increases as the light descends from level to level, to the point that man can even doubt the existence of God.

That's history in a nutshell. Revelation and constriction. Light and less light. Most of it is beyond the control of man, directed by God to keep the world going. We don't will the solar system to exist, nor do we meditate on making the trees grow and produce food. God does all that, and so much more.

We, on the other hand, use our free will to make Creation a better place, or the opposite. We either increase the light in Creation or decrease it, depending upon how we act. We either reveal light or hide it. When we hide it, we create a Tisha B'Av. When we reveal it, we create, well, a Chanukah. It may be only a holiday to most, but as Adam HaRishon found out during his 36 hours of Ohr HaGanuz, it is really SO MUCH MORE.

⁶ Literally, they are: First Man, Emanations, Creation, Formation, and Action.