

אלה תולדות השמים והארץ  
בהבראם  
ביום עשות יהוה אלהים  
ארץ ושמים:

4 These are the progeny of the heavens and the earth  
when they were created;  
on the day GOD Almighty made  
earth and heavens.

The second  
creation narrative

all men are descendants of one person, such as Adam or Noah, who transmitted this tradition to his children.

-KUZARI

#### "Which God created to make"

Everything that God created in the six days of creation requires further development: the mustard seed needs to be sweetened, legumes need to be softened, grain needs to be milled—even the human body requires fixing through circumcision.<sup>67</sup>

-R. HOSHAYAH IN MIDRASH RABBAH

2:4

#### "When they were created"

The prophet Isaiah declares, "With *yud-hei* God formed the worlds." But I still do not know: which world was created with the letter *hei* (ה), and which with the letter *yud* (י)? So it says, "These are the progeny of the heavens and the earth when they were created." Instead of "when they were created" (בהבראם) ~ be'hibare'am, read "with a *hei*, he created them" (בה' בראם ~ be'hei bera'am). So now I know: this world was created with a *hei*, and the World to Come with a *yud*.

Indeed, our world takes the form of a ה: enclosed on all sides, with an opening on the bottom representing the trap of evil. But there is also a small opening near the top, representing the opportunity of *teshuvah*.

-R. YEHUDAH BAR ILA'I IN TALMUD  
-RASHI

In its written form, the ה is the least substantial of letters—a mere dot; but is quite substantial in its enunciation. In contrast, the י is visually substantial, but phonetically, it is a simple, formless emission of breath.

So, too, the spiritual reality, which seems ethereal and insubstantial to our eyes, is in truth a vast, profound and enduring world of Godliness and truth. And the physical reality, so formidable to our eyes, is a mere puff of breath on the divine-cosmic scale.

-CHATHAM SOFER

The three lines that form the ה represent thought, speech and action. The roof of the ה

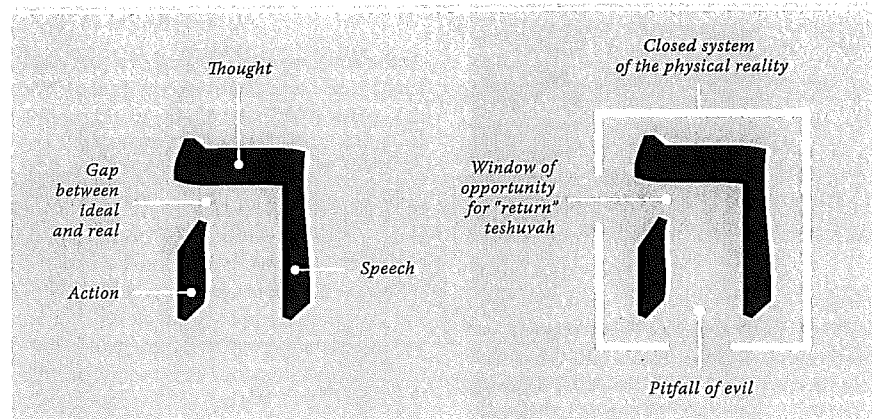


fig. 9: THE WORLD AS THE LETTER "HEI" – TWO INTERPRETATIONS

ה is thought; its two vertical lines are speech and action, which extend the realm of thought down to the ground of reality. The right line is joined to the roof, as there is no disconnect between thought and speech. But above the left line is an empty space, corresponding to the gap that exists between thought and action.

-R. SCHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI

This is what our sages are telling us when they say that God created the word in the form of a ה: that the gap between thought and action is real, and integral to our world as God created it.

In thought, we comprehend our mission in life and the process and means of its actualization. This is the roof of the ה—its higher, more abstract dimension.

With speech, we can forge a reality that is a direct extension of the thought reality: we can express an idea as we understand it, communicate a vision as we see it, convey a belief as we believe it. But when we seek to apply our ideals in the realm of action, we encounter a gap—an inherent inconsistency between the ideal and the real. We act upon the physical world, we develop it and transform it, but there remains this unbridgeable breach between our inner truth and an obstinate external reality.

The gap is not an illusion; it is not a subjective projection of our own deficiencies or lack of determination. Rather, it was put in place by the creator of our world, who desired that the breach between thought and action should be a real and inescapable feature of our existence. Our task is not to eliminate the breach, but to forge a "left leg" for our world which, despite the disconnection from its roof, conforms to the lines delineated by the thought and speech of our ideals.<sup>68</sup> And it is this dichotomy, this

<sup>68</sup> Otherwise what results is a פ—a corrupted ה whose realm of action has fallen "below the line" into the domain of unholiness.

There are two other letters which represent corruptions of the ה: the ך, which jettisons the line of action entirely to retreat into a wholly ideal world of thought and speech; and the ן, which describes the reality of one who deludes himself that there is no "gap," imagining that his thoughts and words are actions, or that a few vague, symbolic deeds suffice to transform the world into an actualization of its highest potentials. The three corruptions of the ה spell קרה (Korah), the name of the infamous challenger of the truth of Moses, who was swallowed alive by the earth (as related in Numbers 16).

Only in the age of Moshiach will the dichotomy between the ideal and the real be resolved. Then the world will resemble the letter ם ("final mem"): not only will the breach between thought and action be healed, but also the underside of creation, which currently exists as irredeemable evil, will be transformed as a wholly positive fourth dimension of a perfected world. -The Rebbe

<sup>67</sup> See midrash on page 00.

tension between the ideal and the real and our perpetual striving to overcome it, which lends challenge, significance, and true achievement to our lives.

-THE REBBE

### "God Almighty (Havayah-Elokim)"

Whenever the divine name *Havayah* appears, it indicates the divine attribute of compassion. Where *Elokim* is employed, it indicates the divine attribute of justice.

In the previous chapter it says, "In the beginning *Elokim* created the heavens and the earth." But here the Torah writes, "On the day *Havayah-Elokim* made earth and heaven." For at first, it arose in God's mind to create the world with justice. When God saw that the world could not endure this, he put compassion before justice and joined them together.

-MIDRASH RABBAH; RASHI

God's original intention was not negated; indeed it remains creation's most fundamental and ideal state. Absolute justice is absolute perfection, and this is what God desires in essence, also after he mitigated his justice with compassion—a world that is in full conformity with his law.<sup>69</sup> Man, too, must strive for this ideal of uncompromising perfection. If our intent mirrors the divine intent, then the Creator extends his compassion to us also when we fail to meet that ideal in actuality.<sup>70</sup>

-SEFATH EMEH

It is written, "As the sun and its sheath, (so is) *Havayah-Elokim*" (Psalms 84:12). Meaning that God desired that the infinite light with which he creates the world (*Havayah*) should be sheathed and concealed within the definitive laws and patterns of nature (*Elokim*).

But seeing that the world could not endure an absolute concealment, God allowed glimmers of his infinite light to be glimpsed

<sup>69</sup> This will be achieved in the messianic age. *Ari* writes that while today we follow the more lenient halachic rulings of the School of Hillel, in the era of Moshiah we will follow the more stringent applications of the School of Shammai, as the world will have achieved perfect conformity with the divine will. Similarly, of the three patriarchs, Isaac, who personifies the divine attribute of *gevurah* (justice and law), is the one most identified with the messianic age (see commentary from *R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi* to 21:6).

<sup>70</sup> The process is repeated every Rosh Hashanah when, in the words of *Midrash Rabbah*, "God sits on the throne of judgment, and then gets up from the throne of judgment and sits on the throne of compassion." Meaning that the duality that defines our existence—the potential for and the goal of uncompromising perfection, coupled with an actual tolerance for human failing—is generated anew each year on the anniversary of creation.

### NOTES

#### 2:4-25

**THESE ARE THE PROGENY...** • the first creation narrative (Genesis 1:1-2:3) gives a general account of the seven days of creation; the second narrative (2:4-25) goes back to recount some of the key creations in greater detail, particularly the first man and woman created on the 6th day - *Rashi* • the first narrative describes God's creation of the natural order; the second tells the story from the perspective of God's special relationship with man - *Ibn Ezra*; *Hirsch*; *R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik*

#### 2:4

**PROGENY** (תולדות ~ toledoth) • see note to 6:9

**WHEN THEY WERE CREATED** (בְּהִבְרֵאֵם ~ be'hibere'am) • also reads as בְּהִבְרֵאֵם - **with the letter ה he created them** (see commentary) - *R. Yehudah bar Ilai in Talmud*; *Rashi*

• has the same letters as בְּאַבְרָהָם - **with Abraham** indicating that the world was created for the sake of Abraham (see commentary to 18:2) - *R. Abahu in Midrash Rabbah*; *Midrash Tehilim* • the ה with which God created the world was added to Abraham's name to

enable him to father the people of Israel (see 17:5 and commentaries to 17:15) - *Bechayei*

The small ה indicates • that בְּהִבְרֵאֵם should be read as two words, as per above - *Me'am Loez*;

*R. Yitzchak Chasid* • the second or "lower" ה of the divine name, corresponding to the

*sefirah* of *malchuth*, source of the divine speech of creation - *Zohar*; *Recanati*; *Ari* • God's

constriction (*tzimtzum*) of his light to create the world - *Tzemach Tzedek* • Abraham's

name change from אַבְרָם to אַבְרָהָם - *R. Abraham Rapa*; *Chida*

**GOD** (י-ו-ה ~ YHVH, not pronounced) • the most sacred of the divine names, the ineffable four-letter name of God was uttered only in the service of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and its actual pronunciation is unknown today. In prayer and the Torah reading it is verbalized as *Adonai* ("Lord," another of the divine names to which it is related); otherwise it is referred to as *Hashem* ("the name"), or by transposing its letters as *Havayah* • represented in this

translation as **GOD** (all caps) to distinguish it from *Elokim*, which is translated **God**;

when the two names are combined as YHVH ELOKIM, as in this verse, they are rendered

as **GOD Almighty** (see Notes to 1:1)

Carries the meanings • God as the **generator of existence** - *Zohar*; *Nachmanides*;

*Cordovero*; *Ari*; *Sforno*; *Abarbanel* • a composite of **was / is / will be** (יְהִי הָיָה וְיִהְיֶה ~ hayah

hoveh yihyeh) - i.e., God acting in time while transcending its temporality - *Zohar*;

*R. Yonah*; *R. Yosef Caro*; *Cordovero* • the **eternal** (as per previous meaning) • God as the

**absolute existence** - *Maimonides*; *R. Yosef Gikatilla*; *Ikarim* • the **divine self-revelation**,

referred to by the kabbalists as the **infinite light** - *R. Meir Ibn Gabai*; *Shaloh*; *R. Schneur*

*Zalman of Liadi* • God as he expresses himself via the **transcendent** and the **supra-natural**

- *Ibn Ezra*; *Akeidah*; *R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi* • the divine light as it manifests itself via

the **ten sefirot** of the world of *atziluth* (see fig. 5 on page 11) - *Zohar* • the four phases in the

"descent" of the divine light through the worlds - contraction (י), expansion (ה), extension (ל),

expansion (ה) - *R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi* • God acting with **compassion** - *Midrash Rabbah*;

*Zohar*; *Rashi* • the divine attribute of **tifereth**, which embodies the qualities of **truth** and

**harmony** - *Zohar* • as the **essential name** of God it is beyond any specific meaning

- *Kuzari*; *Maimonides*; *Ibn Ezra*; *R. Yosef Caro*; *Cordovero*

through the sheath. These glimmers are the souls of the righteous and the miracles recounted in the Torah.

-R. SCHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI

The divine name *Havayah* is introduced here because we are discussing the formation of the soul of man, whose eternity derives from *Havayah*. The name appears on its own for the first time in 4:1 with the first human birth, indicating that God's eternity is now

embodied in the perpetually regenerating human race.

-IBN EZRA; RADAK

### "Earth and heavens"

The *School of Shammai* says: First the heavens were created, then the earth; as it is written, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The *School of Hillel* maintains: First the earth was created, and then the heavens; as it is written, "On the day God Almighty made earth and heavens."