

Neurology & Pain Management

JULIAN UNGAR-SARGON, M.D., Ph.D.
123 McKinley Avenue
Rensselaer, IN 47978

Igulim and Yosher, Makif and Pnimi,

Circles versus Lines

June 16 2007

The *makif* represents that which is beyond me, my awareness, “out there” a transcendent spirituality always beyond reach and not sensate as opposed to the *pnimi* which goes through me immanently and is digested according to my level of spiritual awareness.

In my previous Torah I suggested that for Jacob to become Israel needed both the world of hidden-ness, tears and suffering of Leah, as well as the world of revealed light of Rachel. She alone realizes that for his growth he needed Leah as a prerequisite for her spirituality, he needed the suffering of Leah (or at least to be able to deal and integrate her archetypal suffering persona) before he could access Rachel so she handed over the “*simanim*” the hidden secrets and signs on their supposed wedding night to Leah.

In this essay I would like to situate this dynamic within the context of the Kabbalistic view of the cosmos and creation. In the worldview of the Ari z'l creation is the result of catastrophe. In midrash (see my Akiva essay especially the section by Reb Nossan on suffering as access to the vacated space of *chala hapanui*) where God initially desires to create the world with Middas Hadin, then is forced to use Middas Harachamim because “the world could not survive on din alone” . In both cosmologies human beings inherit a world suspended between forces of harsh judgment as well as mercy. Strung between these poles our lives seem to be an oscillation between suffering and grace. I wish to explore the original motifs for this existential result.

Rabbi Moshe Miller (Ascent.org) expresses the problem as follows:

Before the Ari'zal, the prevailing view of how the Creator brought the Creation into being can be summed up as follows: In order for a finite world to come into existence within the revelation of the infinity of G-d, a process of self-contraction or self-limitation of the infinite (the *Or Ein Sof*) was required. The worlds then came about, according to this view, by a series of emanations that proceeded in a sequence of cause and effect, in which the Creator gradually reduced the intensity of the *Or Ein Sof* and downgraded it from level to level until the worlds were created (see e.g., *Eilima Rabbati, Eyn Kol Tamar* part 2, ch. 3-5, 11-12; part 3, ch. 1.) Accordingly, the *Or Ein Sof* was never actually "removed" from any given place - it was merely reduced in intensity.

This view, however, is problematic: If G-d would have merely reduced the intensity of His infinite revelation (the *Or Ein Sof*) in a quantitative manner, i.e., in a gradual ebb from level to level by means of cause and effect, a finite world could not have

come into being, since in a causal process "the effect is encompassed by the cause, in relation to which it is essentially non-existent... so that even numerous contractions would not bring about physical matter..." (*Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh*, ch. 20) by way of an evolution from spirituality. In other words, in the cause-and-effect relationship, the effect is already contained within the cause, albeit in an unrealized state.

Thus when the final effect is eventually produced, it is not a newly created entity; it is merely revealed from its former state of potential or of concealment. Accordingly, the effect always remains in some way commensurate with the original cause that produced it. Thus the infinite can never become finite through gradual reduction: "The creation of the worlds is not by way of a development from cause to effect... for even myriads upon myriads of dwindling and evolution from level to level [of the *Or Ein Sof*] in a causal process will not bring about the development and being of physical matter... Rather, it is the power of *Ein Sof* who creates *ex nihilo*, not progressively, but by way of a radical 'leap'" (*Likkutei Torah, Devarim* 46c). Thus, *tzimtzum* as contraction or self-limitation precludes the existence of finite beings, and cannot explain how finite Creation came into being.

Moreover, *tzimtzum* as contraction or self-limitation also seems to contradict the important principle of "*yesh mei'ayin*" - which the world was created *ex nihilo*, and not that it evolved from some prior state of being.

Accordingly, the Arizal explained that we must understand the *tzimtzum* in an entirely different way - in a qualitative sense - as the total self-exclusion of the infinite *Or Ein Sof* from its state of revelation, thereby allowing finite worlds to exist:

Prior to Creation, there was only the infinite *Or Ein Sof* filling all existence. When it arose in G-d's Will to create worlds and emanate the emanated...He contracted (in Hebrew "*tzimtzum*") Himself in the point at the center, in the very center of His light. He restricted that light, distancing it to the sides surrounding the central point, so that there remained a void, a hollow empty space, away from the central point... After this *tzimtzum*... He drew down from the *Ohr Ein Sof* a single straight line [of light] from His light surrounding [the void] from above to below [into the void], and it chained down descending into that void.... In the space of that void He emanated, created, formed and made all the worlds.

(*Etz Chaim, Heichal A"K, anaf 2*)

The exact nature of the *tzimtzum* became the subject of disagreement among later kabbalists. Some viewed the *tzimtzum* as a metaphorical act of self-limitation in which the *Or Ein Sof* was merely concealed rather than removed, while the essence of G-d remained completely unchanged. Others maintained that the *Ohr Ein Sof* was actually removed, not merely concealed another opinion maintained that the *tzimtzum* was the actual withdrawal of G-d's essence as well as the removal of the *Or Ein Sof* a fourth view held that the *tzimtzum* consisted of a concealment (but not a withdrawal) of both G-d's essence and the *Or Ein Sof* .

The effect of the *tzimtzum* (irrespective of which explanation is offered) is nevertheless clear: it established a radical distinction between Creator and created (from the viewpoint of the created, although not from the viewpoint of the Creator between cause and effect, so that creation comes about by way of a "quantum leap" rather than by way of a developmental, evolutionary order.

Whether we see the tzimtzum as literal withdrawing of the divine light or merely a perceptual appearance of withdrawal may only be language games since we are discussing events beyond our cognition. More on the light however from the Lubavitcher Rebbe's discourse called "Heichaltzu" Chapter 27.

Our Sages declared: [T.B. Shab. 77b] "In the beginning of the world's creation there was first darkness and then light." There, too, was darkness and light, concealment and revelation, and there too was their unification - light and revelation out of darkness and concealment, and concealment out of revelation.

The teaching of the Etz Chayim [1:2] [on this matter] is well known. Before the first tzimtzum [contraction and concealment of the infinite light], also referred to as the "vacant space" (Makom Panui), the Ein Sof-light filled all space. Nothing existed other than the revelation of the [infinite] Ein Sof-light. Concerning this it is stated, [Pirke deReb Eliezer Ch3] "Before the world was created there was only Him and His Name," and likewise, [Amidah] "You are holy and Your Name is holy." So, too, [amidah Shabbat mincha] "You are One and Your Name is One." The "Name" refers to the level of Malchus ["Kingship"] of Ein Sof, also called shmo hagadol and shmei rabbah ("the great Name"), which is truly included in G-d's absolute Essence.

Afterwards He contracted Himself, retracting the first light totally, and submerging it within the essential Being of the Ein Sof. All that remained was a trace¹ of the original light, one solitary point like the point of a yud. This point included within itself all that could possibly be revealed in the order of hishtalshelus [the progressively descending levels of existence. And only] this point remains after the tzimtzum because the worlds cannot receive the original light. G-d therefore contracted and concealed the light within Himself, and there remained only the point, the merest glimmer which could be revealed.

¹ *Possibly the text refers to the level mentioned in Shaar HaYichud, beginning of ch. 15, [that describes the Reshimu as] the yud of G-d's Name that numerically equals sixty-three, that is within Tehiru Ila'ah, as stated in Emek HaMelech.*

146. *From the text of Emek HaMelech, Shaar 3, and the commentary of Mikdash Melech on the Zohar I, 15a - quoted in Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim, in the explanation of the maamar entitled Shechorah Ani, ch. 3 - it appears that the yud referred to above is the yud of the milui of the final hei of the name Yud-Hei-Vav-Hei with the numerical equivalent of 63.*

Emek HaMelech, Shaar 1-3, and the above-mentioned commentary of Mikdash Melech state that within the Makom Panui is found the Reshimu of Ein Sof which is called the "Primordial Light" (Or [rut] Kadmon) and the Reshimu of the garment which is called the point, i.e., the letter yud [h]. Thus this Makom Panui is called Avir [rhut] Kadmon. However, the Makom Panui referred to in these texts is not the same as the Challal and Makom Panui referred to in the beginning of Etz Chayim, or in Otzros Chayim or Mavo She'arim (Maamar 8), and as cited in many chassidic discourses, for it transcends (lit., "precedes") the tzimtzum of igul, it being meruba, etc. For a discussion of these matters in Chassidus, see the maamar entitled HaOseh Sukaso, 5674.

Igulim is a nebulous "place" of latent potential that is beyond division. Like a circle, which has no beginning or end, the level of *Igulim* does not contain higher and lower levels, nor right and left, kindness and restraint; all is one and equal.

Creation is described in Kabbala as a process including "circles" and "straightness", in Hebrew "*Igulim*" and "*Yosher*", respectively (see also *Etz Chaim, drush Igulim v'Yosher*, and our article. In short, "*Igulim*" describes the divine light that does not conform or tailor itself to the recipient of the light. It remains "undefined" and infinite like a circle that has no beginning or end. "*Yosher*" represents the divine light that conforms to the recipient; it is also called the "*kav*", or "line", which entered the "hollow" space of divine concealment after the original *tzimtzum*. *Yosher* refers to the manifestation of divinity through the ten *sefirot* as they are in the form of a man, the triads of *chesed, gevura, tiferet* etc.

One of the examples given for *Igulim* is the soul's powers as they exist within the soul, before they descend and manifest in the respective, different parts of the body. The quality of energy that the soul delivers to the eye is different than that which it bestows to the foot. Yet as these powers exist within the soul, before their manifestation in the body, they are one and indivisible. The proof for this is the fact that the energy of the brain, which is "cold and moist" exists side by side with the "heat and flame" of the heart. If these powers existed within the soul in a defined form, the "water" of the brain would douse the "fire" of the heart and vice versa. Thus it must be said that these powers exist in undefined form within the soul and can therefore coexist. (See *Derech Mitzvotcha* 76b.)

Igulim "surrounds" its subject and is not internalized. *Yosher*, on the other hand, is identified with the Inner Light, a light that is internalized by its recipient. *Igulim* is associated with transcendence, faith, beyond nature and rules, while *Yosher* relates to immanence, intellect and emotions, internalization, and the natural order.

Igulim is expressed in a concealed way on the earthly plane (where there are differences - right/left, etc.) "sleep", when the discriminatory mind absconds: the time of exile, when opposites coexist. On the superficial level this takes place because during exile the soul's vision is disturbed. But on a deeper level, it is because the source of exile is the level of *Igulim*, where all is indeed equal and non-contradictory (*Torah Ohr*).

In a remarkable passage² the Alter Rebbe discusses the relationship between the line and the circle inasmuch as there are still circles and bands that emanate from the line. He suggests that those circles still have their source in the great circle beyond and thus are constellated by the archetype despite emanating from the line.

Using a passage from genesis regarding the brothers Yuval and Yaval, he claims the two represent the *makif* and the *pnimi* Ohr. Yet being brothers they remain close and steadfast in their love and brotherliness.

His midrashic reading of the genesis verses point to a deeper connectedness to the midrashic imaginative rather than philosophical speculative approach to the issue.

בראשית פרק ד

(כ) וַתֵּלֶד עֵדָה אֶת יָבֶל הוּא הָיָה אָבִי יִשְׁבַּח אֶל וּמְקָנָה:

² Parshas Korach p 104 Likutei Torah

(כא) וְשֵׁם אָחִיו יוּבָל הוּא הָיָה אָבִי כָּל תְּיָפֶשׂ כְּנֹר וְעֹגֶב:

Gen. 4:20-21

And Adah bore Yaval; he was the father of such as dwell in tents and has cattle.

And his brother's name was Yuval; he was the father of all such as handle the harp and pipe.

The license to interpret proper names the Rebbe (or The Tzemach Tzedek in the parenthesis) derived from the Talmud Bechoros: 55b.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת בכורות דף נה עמוד ב

והנהר הרביעי הוא פרת אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק ואיתימא רב אחא בר יעקב הוא פרת דמעיקרא. תניא רבי מאיר אומר יובל שמו שנאמר +ירמיהו ט"ז/ז'+ והיה כעץ שתול על מים ועל יובל ישלח שרשיו

It has been taught: Its name (Euphrates) is Yubal [river] because Scripture says: For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters and that spreadeth the roots by the river [Yubal]³.



³ Jer. XVII, 8, referring to the Tree of Life and the Tree of Life was in the Garden of Eden, the Euphrates watering the Garden of Eden.

The son Yaval is read plainly as the originator of those in tents whereas his brother Yubal is associated with musical instruments.

The tent may well refer to the cosmic tent or the *makif* and *iggul*, that which encompasses all creation and which all creation is bathed within. The sphere of the *iggul* surrounds but also permeates everything the only problem is we have no access to it to appreciate it. On the other hand Yuval represents the musical instrument and through the playing of music he allows us access to the *primi* the line or the filtered light.

I love this midrashic play on the brothers Yubal and Yabal since it also allows for the closeness of one to the other.

Whereas I had previously thought that the divine was either transcendent or immanent I now read the Rebbe as teaching us how close the two really are. The only difference is from my perception, that *makif* light is inaccessible since it surrounds me and permeates me I dwell within it as does all creation. The *primi* light filters down but requires my participation through becoming a master musician and player of instruments making music through practice and diligence.

In stark contrast to the above mentioned Chabad masters and the kabalistic sources quoted by Rabbi Moshe Miller, Reb Nachman of Bratzlav radically interprets the whole notion of the *makif*. In his article on Reb Nachman Shaul Magid has convincingly articulated the true paradoxical nature of the *makif* and how far he departed from the classical Hassidic view. Miller had distinguished those who viewed the absence of God in the vacated space as either to be taken literally or figuratively but Reb Nachman demands that the experiential feeling of the absence of God remains even after creation.

“God’s presence in creation does not fully supplant the initial creation of the void”⁴

Unlike his predecessors who felt the remnant of divine light after the *tzimtzum* served as the source for the notion that God is present everywhere, Reb Nachman suggested that the *chala hapanui* of the vacated space is not filled with *Yosher* or the *primi* automatically. Thus his approach to the *makif* is also highly complex. Whereas for the kabalistic masters quoted above the *makif* becomes the source of the *pleroma* of undifferentiated light and godliness, undamaged by the breaking of the vessels and are thus available for access to bring new light into the world of *Tikkun*, for Reb Nachman the *makif* becomes the slow and painful awareness of the absence of God in one’s life and the world, and the source for human yearning for the divine and prayer.

Reb Nachman’s faith is dialectical and paradoxical and gives up any hope of accessing the light of the *ein Sof* (see *Lekutei Mehoran Torah I*: 13, 1, 24) except by losing oneself in holy joy (*simchah*).

In the Yuval/Yaval dialectic Reb Nachman too has a completely different take on the exegesis of the Genesis 4:20 verse. In *Torah II*: 63 he discusses the musicality of the Land of Israel, the relationship between Jacob and Joseph and Shepherding and Kingship.

“When Jacob sent the ten sons to Joseph (in Egypt) he also sent along with them the melody of the Land of Israel. And here’s the secret of the quote “Take from the best produce (*zimras*) of the land in your satchels” (Gen 43:11) *zimras* meaning *zemer* or song and melody which he also sent along to Joseph... for know that any shepherd has a specific melody according to the vegetation and the landscape where he tends his flock, for each animal species has its own particular grass

⁴ *Through the Void*, Shaul Magid, *Harvard theological Review* 88:495-519, 1995

which it needs for nutrition, and shepherds tend to migrate according to the availability of grazing feed. Thus according to the specific grazing and landscape here he tends so to is that particular melody. For every blade of grass has its own song...and from the collective songs comes the melody of the shepherd.

And this is the secret meaning of the verse in Gen. 4:20-21

And Adah bore Yaval; he was the father of such as dwell in tents and has cattle.

And his brother's name was Yuval; he was the father of all such as handle the harp and pipe.

For the moment there evolved shepherds of cattle there emerged musical instruments. So too King David who was a master musician (I Sam. 16) was also a shepherd.

So Jacob sent the melody to Joseph since a shepherd who spends most of his time with animals might descend from a human level to the level of animal (behavior). The melody thus saved them from themselves for music is the *birur* refinement of the wind (spirit) and distills out the animal from the human spirit...for the purpose of music is to refine out the good spirit from the animal spirit.

In this highly complex Torah Yuval/Yaval is less dialectic and rather a cause and effect. The evolution of villager and cattle herders from nomadic tribes also heralded the evolution of the musical instrument alongside. Reb Nachman sees this less as a coincidence and more a direct cause and effect by the proximity of the verses and similarity of the brothers' names. With cattle razing and shepherding comes music and melody. His deeper secret torah then explains the reason behind Jacob sending such melodies of the Land of Israel to Joseph. Not as one have thought to bribe him with the produce of the land rather the opposite, to protect the brothers from descending into the animal instinctual mode by being around herds of cattle. The refining effect of the music and instruments was to purify and refine their animal nature. For Reb Nachman the allusion to the master gardener/shepherd is also felt here with the messianic flavor and access to the *makif* lights which only the Tzaddik can accomplish.

Reb Nossan of Nemirov, Reb Nachman's foremost disciple writes in his *Lekutei Tefillot* a compendium of personal petitionary prayers about the desire to access the *makifim*:

“And so may it be Thy will o Lord our God and God of our fathers that we me be able to merit the ability to access (lit. grasp) the *makifim* lights, that we merit to understand and fathom and internalize into our (*primi*) inner intellect all the knowledge (*daas*) and intellect we hitherto were unable to understand. And may we merit ascending at all times from level to level and height to height in holiness and great purity. And to enlighten each time the intellect and experience of holiness as is fitting for proper children and pupils. And to grasp each time new *makifim* and to internalize the lights of *makifim* into the inner *primi* of intellect.

..Until we eventually merit to grasp the supernal *makifim* lights which in fact are the essential pleasure of the world-to-come (*olam haba*) ... the *makifim* **that are above time**, but hidden for those who fear You.

Mostly I feel the existential abyss of the distance from any notion of the divine pleroma and the *makif*. But on rare occasions I will feel a Presence that I cannot describe in which I am literally bathing and constellated by deep inner joy. Both approaches outlined above allow me to articulate the dialectical nature of the divine as described by these masters of mysticism.

I also have a new understanding of *makif* that allows me to be prescient to the notion that I dwell within the divine and the understanding that despite my lack of sensory awareness of Him within me and without, I can “play” the music of the spheres by living and experiencing the divine in my life at certain precious moments.

The evolution of divine consciousness has thus historically moved from deistic to theistic to pantheistic to panentheistic and I believe that the project the alter Rebbe embarked upon was the re-imagining of Torah in the light of this single truth. For Reb Nachman the truth is more complex and rather than such grand philosophical claims his reality-based paradoxical approach allows for the highs and the lows of spiritual life albeit a road less traveled and far more demanding.

I however remain poetically moved by the notion of being “bathed in the divine light”. Memories of reading Hymns to the Drowning Vishnu by Nammalvar and the feeling of bathing in the divine conjure up such delightful readings and experiences. If God invades me and we are in God then I need merely to dis-cover my own representation of God inside to find Him.

Finding God within me first and foremost requires me to accept myself as who I am and this seems to me harder than anything I have ever done!

Maybe all my struggles are in fact a mirroring of God discovering Himself through me and my discovering Him in my life. Rather than a distant transcendent Being He was here all along, and I did not know it...

בראשית פרק כח

(טו) וַיִּיקָץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיֵּאמֶר אֲכֹן יֵשׁ יְקֹנֵךְ בְּמִקְוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֵנִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי