

[1.] Epigraph

כי עמך מקור חיים באורך נראה אור, הוא מאמר כנסיי במעמד ומצב דמדבר שממה, שאין שם גילוי אלוקות. וצריך להבין הרי הוא אומר באורך נראה אור, ומשמע ד"אורך" הוא רק הכנה ל"נראה אור", אשר על ידו מתגלה אור שהוא יותר נעלה, ולכאורה הרי ידוע ש"אורך" נעלה יותר.

Light as being revelatory, and the aspects which are revealed.

REMARK: Light is that which reveals, or "Sheds Light". It is through Light that we know of something. However Light has limitations on what it can reveal; it is obvious that Light cannot reveal the actual entity as it is for-itself, i.e. how the entity exists as it is. Hence Light, can at best, reveal the entity as it relates to the Other, or to what is outside of it.

[2.] Through the Revelation of the Infinite⁷ Light it is possible to know of the Subsistence¹ of the Creator i.e. just as the Light is infinite⁷, so is He. However, what is known² about Him is not Grasped³, as it is impossible to grasp the Identity⁴ of the Creator. Grasping is only possible in respect to physical objects, and hence it is called "Grasping", i.e. it is possible to hold and feel the object. However in the Spirit⁵ such is impossible; what can be gleaned from the Spirit is only knowledge thereof. The knowledge of the Spirit is attained through an approximated assertion⁶ (of and) through the impact of the Spirit on the physical; through observing the physical it is possible to discern a spiritual entity which affects it in such and such a form. Hence it is not possible to grasp the Spirit, and furthermore, what is known thereof is only approximated.

Light and Sustenance

REMARK: The following essay discusses the concept of "Light" and "Sustenance": Light is that which reveals or provides guidance – yet what light reveals is never (merely) itself, but also something else. For instance the light of a candle in a room reveals (not only the light itself), but (also) what is included in the room.

[3.] The Infinite Light⁷ retains the Identity⁸ of the Radiant⁹ but is nevertheless not the Essence¹⁰ of the Radiant itself. This is analogous to the sun whose essence

and Identity is not descended¹¹ within its rays "as they are"¹², but are nevertheless contained within the rays as figments¹³ of them – as the sun is revealed through them¹⁴. Just as the sun's essence and identity is that of Being Luminous¹⁵, so too its revelation or Light is Luminosity; although the light itself is not a source of luminosity – as that would require the light to have an Essence of being luminous.

Likewise the Soul¹⁶: The Essence of the Soul is "Alive"^{17, 18} and its Radiance is Liveliness. However the Soul is not affected by this radiance; the soul is not impacted by the success or failure of providing liveliness¹⁹. Furthermore, the soul itself is uninvolved²⁰ in its radiation as the fire is not involved in heating the poker. As the fire is Hot²¹ it radiates heat, and hence the poker becomes heated – there is no reason to ascribe a special action or involvement to the fire.

Hence the concept of Light is explained as being an instrument of revelation. It is only through this entity of Light that any object can make itself known or revealed; and for this reason the Light must contain properties which are compatible and of the same substance as of its source. Seen from an opposite perspective, the light must contain nothing other than that substance of its source; it must have a quality of transparence in order for it to reveal something else. Yet if the light contains a foreign element, then it is not revealing its source, but rather that foreign element, and is thus not an actual "Infinite" light, but a different form of "Light" called "Sustenance" explained below.

[4.] There is another form of descension²² which is called "Sustenance"²³. Sustenance is formed by means of involvement, i.e. there must be a specific and willed action in order to form sustenance, such the effort made to teach a

¹ "Metziut" – lit. "Entity"; from the verb "Limtzo" – "To Find". i.e. what is found.

² "L'D'a" – lit. "To Know"

³ "Hasaga" lit. "To Grasp", "To Attain". "To Proceive". In this context it connotes a certain internalization or conception of the entity being understood or grasped.

⁴ "Mahut" – lit. "what it is". i.e. the way the Creator is in Himself.

⁵ "Ru'hani"; "Spiritual", "Metaphysical"; from the word "Ruah" – lit. "Wind"

⁶ "Hasaga"; see note 3; i.e. what is being grasped is a certain physical notion, which although caused by the Spirit is nevertheless, in itself, physical.

⁷ "Ein Sof" – lit. endless in Hebrew. As opposed to finite light; Infinite Light expresses whatever it is representing without any limitations; whereas finite light has a "Destination" of expression, and hence must be tailored and altered according to its destination.

⁸ i.e. it contains that which gives it its identity; hence the Light retains the distinct notion of its source, the Radiant; see note 4

⁹ "Maor" – lit. "that which produces light", i.e. that which illuminates, the faculty of illumination and radiation.

¹⁰ "Etzem" – lit. "Essence", in this context, it implies that the Light is not the true Essence or the true importance of the Radiant; i.e. it is not part of the actual faculties of the Radiant.

¹¹ "Nimshach" – lit. Pulled. This word is used in the Hebrew for both "Descended" and "Transcended"; its general meaning implies a commute of properties.

¹² i.e. as they function within the sun

¹³ "Ziv", "Ha'arah" – lit. "[Particle of] Radiation", "Flicker"

¹⁴ And in order that the sun may be revealed, the light must possess properties of the sun itself, insofar as it is to reveal or (re)present it.

¹⁵ "Le'hair" – lit. "To be luminous"; i.e. the sun's essence is to provide light, or a "Provider of Light"

¹⁶ "Nefesh Ha'adam" – lit. "Soul of Man"

¹⁷ "Hai" – lit. "Is Living", this should be distinguished between "Hayot" – "Liveliness", and "Haim" – "Life", as well as from the genitive "Hei" – "Life of-".

¹⁸ In this context, the Soul is a source of Life, or is Alive; and hence its revelation is Liveliness; just as the Sun's essence is Light, or Being Luminous, while its light is luminosity

¹⁹ E.g. there are instances wherein the soul cannot provide liveliness

²⁰ "Mit'asek" – lit. "To deal with~"

²¹ "Ham" – lit. "Hot" (n); "To heat" is "Me'hamem" –

²² "Hamshacha" – (see note 11)

²³ "Shefa" – lit. "Sustenance", however in certain contexts it may also take the meaning of "Flow". It is important to note that the flowing quality of Sustenance is a central aspect in understanding the concept. Just as water flows from a high place to a low place, so does Sustenance flow from a "High" or "Essential" realm to a "Low" or "External" one. And as will be explained in the body of the text.

new subject²⁴ to a student. The matter or concept exists within the mind of the teacher in a form not palatable for teaching²⁵. The teacher must first assess the capabilities of the student; afterwards he must change²⁶ his mindset and his concept to that of the student's level. During the actual process of teaching (sustaining), he must too, constantly ensure that he does not err, in confusing the student. Understandably, there is also involvement on the part of the student to prepare himself for the reception of the concept of the teacher, which requires him to rid himself of all prejudices and assumptions regarding the subject matter; he must also provide an effort during the actual teaching (learning), in which he must concentrate and rid his mind of any thoughts which are foreign to the concept being taught.

Since an entity²⁷ is being transmitted, the nature of this entity being new for both the sustainer²⁸ and the sustained, it therefore requires involvement in order to adjust and change from the previous (regular, customary) mode of action to a mode of action accommodating this new entity. This notion is not present within Light, since light is of the identity of the radiant, hence light is merely an extension²⁹ of the radiant. It is for this reason that this extension is performed without involvement (like the extension of the light from the sun and heat from fire as explained above).

Whereas in sustenance, the matter being sustained is *different* from that which is providing it (the sustainer). It has yet to be explained how it is at all possible for the sustainer to provide and form something which is not of its own body and being; if the Essence (of the sustainer) is in such and such a form, then its sustenance must also be an identical manner? Rather the matter is as such: The Essence contracts³⁰ itself in order to allow it relate³¹ to the Other;³²

²⁴ Similar to "Shefa" – Sustenance in respect to its flowing quality. A concept is also sustenance in the sense that it is matter for the mind

²⁵ Since the concept as it is included within the mind of the teacher is connected and assimilated with other concepts in the mind. Furthermore, the concept does not exist in isolation, but is rather integrated within the mind of the teacher. In order that the concept be made palatable for the student, it must first be abstracted and dislocated from all of its prior associations, and secondly, it must be readapted into a language fit for the student. These two actions are distinct, although at first glance they may seem similar. See () for a more extensive discussion on the distinction between the two.

²⁶ "L'Tzamtzem" לְצַמְצֵם – lit. "To Diminish". It is assumed that the teacher is on a "Higher" level than the student, and this is due to the fact that the teacher knows the concept and has already assimilated it; the student however, has not.

²⁷ "Davar Mah" דָּבָר מָה – lit. "A What-Thing", i.e. "Something". It is not necessarily a new entity in the objective sense, as it is irrelevant whether someone else has taught or comprehended this concept before. What is relevant, however, is that both the teacher and the student do not take this process with a regular approach. In other words, it is not their *natural* state.

²⁸ "Mashpia" – lit. "Sustainer"; "One who is providing sustenance"; "One who makes (something) flow"

²⁹ "Hitpashtut" הִתְפַּשְׁטוּת – lit. "Extension" or "Spreading Out"

³⁰ "MitTzamtzem" – see note 26

³¹ "Mit'Asek" – see note 20

³² "Zulat" – "Other"

³³ It needs to contract itself to the constraints of the Other. Once the Essence is constrained, the essence is no longer said to be in its natural state³⁴. For this reason, sustenance is considered an entity²⁷ that is, a new entity or a new form in respect to the Essence.

[5.] We have just discussed the difference between the sustainer and the radiant in respect to their manner during transmission. The difference between the two transmissions i.e. light and sustenance will now be discussed.

Since the sustainer must change his current mode in order to sustain, the sustenance is not like the sustainer (in his natural state). For to sustain is not to mimic or to reveal – as one merely mimics by transcribing a text verbatim – but rather to create and transmit a New Substance³⁵ which is of level and mindset of the Other (the sustained). Secondly, the sustainer must involve himself within the process of change³⁶; the extent of this involvement will also determine the extent of the quality of the sustenance (i.e. in terms of it being an Entity^{27,37}). Hence sustenance comes by means of change and involvement of the sustainer, and (as a consequence) is unlike the sustainer.

[6.] Looking at the process of sustaining, we may divide the sustenance into two stages; first, the sustenance as it is still present within its origin, although it is by definition different from his natural state; the second, as it is within the recipient³⁸ – or the target of the sustenance.

In addition to the change affected by the sustainer to form the sustenance, it undergoes another change when it has been received by the recipient. Once the recipient has received the sustenance, he will attempt to assimilate it at his own level; which is of a different composition than that of the sustainers (and it is understood that that manner of his grasping³⁹ is different than that of the teacher):

Once⁴⁰ the student has assimilated this sustenance, this sustenance is no longer sustenance properly so-called. Since the student has already assimilated it, and therefore no longer feels any involvement or (unnatural) change in

³³ i.e. the Other which is foreign to the Essence. It must adjust itself to the terms and values of the Other.

³⁴ "K'mo Sh'hu" – lit. "As it (he) is"

³⁵ "Davar 'Hadaash" – lit. "New Thing"; see note 27

³⁶ i.e. this change is not merely a difference of kind, but also a difference of intensity.

³⁷ i.e. the extent of the change of the sustenance qua Entity, i.e. qua something different than the origin is proportionate to the extent that the origin will involve itself in attempting to diverge from its natural mode

³⁸ "Mekabel" – lit. "One who receives". The two terms of Mashpia (see note 28) and Mekabel, or Sustainer and Recipient, are rather common; and are usually presented as a pair.

³⁹ "Hasagah"; this word has many different connotations and meanings; in this context it simply means to "Understand"; for a more detailed treatment, see note

⁴⁰ In the original source, the explanation follows using the terms "Light of Mind" in the context of sustenance, i.e. sustenance is called "Intellectual Light" to differentiate it from "Pure" or "Essential Light"; generally "Light" has an ambiguous usage and its meaning can only be discerned from the context.

respect to it, what has been called sustenance is, at this state, been transformed into Intellectual Light⁴¹, i.e. the light of the mind, which assumes the role of Radiant. Intellectual Light, when it Radiates within the confines of mind, is emanated according to the manner of the mind; hence, if the mind is corrupt, so will the light take a corrupt form.

However Light (i.e. radiance, non sustaining) does not change according to the form of what it may illuminate, for even the light that shines in a place of filth is still clean and pure. Also, in mind there is a difference between 'greatness'⁴² and 'ignorance' in the capacity to produce and assimilate sustenance, whereas there are no differences or divisions within light.

The Light as a potential source.

REMARK: It was explained earlier that the Light cannot be a source for anything, since the Light is not the essence, and hence cannot produce anything – or cannot radiate anything. Nevertheless, the Light can indeed serve as a source – a source of Revelation. In truth, the Light does have an Essence, but this essence is not a complete essence – such as that of the Radiant – but rather an essence of Revelation. It is true that the Light cannot contain anything which is foreign to its source, lest the Light not reveal its source, but the Essence of Revelation is this very virtue itself. Although Revelation is completely opposed to the notion of “Covering” or “Concealing”, it is nevertheless, in isolation, something which can serve as a source for a “Revelation of a Revelation”; i.e. since the Essence of Light is Revelation, therefore its Light (the Light of Light) is Revealing as well.

[7.] However, the light is not part of the Essence of the radiant, and for this reason it is possible to change the light into sustenance (or vice versa). Indeed the light does not contain anything but the Radiant; however the light is not its Essence and cannot form new light; it cannot serve as a Radiant of its own⁴³.

According to all of the above we may now understand the Endless⁷ light; Just as the source is endless, so is His light. Thus the light cannot be used as a source for anything finite⁴⁴. Hence it is understood that if this Light is to become a transmission for something finite, it must be diminished; in order that the finite and limited World[s]⁴⁵ may exist, there must be a Diminution⁴⁶. The Diminution is when the light is first concealed⁴⁷ (the endless light, which is boundless cannot be a source of the limited

worlds) and that only a “ray of a ray” should remain⁴⁸. But this Diminution and Concealment is considered a Descent⁴⁹ for the Endless Light⁵⁰; only that this descent is for the purpose of Ascension⁵¹.

On the reconciliation of the Diminution.

REMARK: The Diminution of the Light was caused in order to enable the creation and formation of the [physical] World[s]. The creation of the Worlds requires a thought of Limitation, i.e. how to form the Limited world, and what its constraints, dimensions, and properties would be.

The revelation of this purpose⁵² itself is the very aim of the Descent, and through this revelation the Ascent is accomplished. This revelation is accomplished through the Souls of Israel⁵³:

It is only through the Souls of Israel that (the Light was concealed and) the worlds were created: “With who shall we rule [i.e. create the world]? With the Souls of the righteous⁵⁴!”⁵⁵ Hence the Souls of Israel had precedence over the Thought⁵⁶ (conception) of the (properties) of the Worlds.

There are two types of thought; **General⁵⁷ Thought** and **Autonomous⁵⁸ Thought**. General Thought is the thought that precedes explication⁵⁹ and explanation according to the level of the recipient (student), as it was explained above, that in order for sustenance to be transmitted to the recipient, there must be a diminution (change) in the mind of the sustainer, and that this diminution begins in the mind of the sustainer: he diverges⁶⁰ his mind from its natural state and relates only to the isolated concept which he wished to convey⁶¹; which the recipient is related as well. The beginning of this relationship is called “General Thought”, meaning that he orients his thinking to the Other i.e. the recipient’s mind in general, but has not yet diminished his natural mindset. Likewise the Creator who sets aside His great Light, and does not radiate but a

⁴¹ “Ohr Sechel” – lit “intellectual light”

⁴² Greatness... Ignorance; “Gadlut.. Katnut”; lit. “Largeness... Smallness”

⁴³ i.e. it cannot reveal or duplicate itself; since that is the function of the origin – to Radiate Light. The Light that the Light radiates is not the same as the Light itself.

⁴⁴ Since finitude must be a divergence from the actual nature and notion of the light. Indeed, what we explained above regarding the changing of the light into sustenance within the actual origin does involve a “Change”, but it is not yet a complete change; the sustenance only becomes another actual entity when it has reached the recipient. However, in order for the sustenance to be received, it must have a recipient who is capable of receiving it. However the Light, even if it were to become a form of sustenance, would have no recipients; as there are none who are endless which would be able to attain the endless sustenance.

⁴⁵ “Olamot” – lit. “Worlds”; A compound concept – in this context it refers primarily to the physical world.

⁴⁶ “Tzimtzum” – lit. “Contraction”; This is another central term which has many connotations. For a more comprehensive treatment, see ()

⁴⁷ “He’elem” – lit. “Covered”, “Hidden”, “Diverted”

⁴⁸ First... Remain: The light must first be concealed; since as long as the light is within the presence of its origin, i.e. as long as the light has no visible existence of its own and is merely revealing of the Radiant, its essence cannot be isolated, and it can never manage to produce any Light of its own; since that Light would be entirely indiscernible. It is only after the Diminution that the possibility of discernment arises, in which one realizes that there is also a state wherein the Light is not revealed. Once the Light attains a discernable essence for itself, it can also produce a discernable Light of its own.

⁴⁹ “Yerida”, “Hashpala” – lit. “Descent” “Being Lowered”, “Being brought down to the ground” loose- “Humbled”.

⁵⁰ Since the Light was before in His presence, and is now an entity of its own, whose task it is to create finite worlds.

⁵¹ “Aliyah” – lit. “Ascent”

⁵² “Kavanah” – lit. “Intention”, “Alignment”

⁵³ “Neshamot Yisrael” – lit. “Souls of Israel”

⁵⁴ “Tzadikim” – lit. “Righteous”, “Pious”

⁵⁵ Medrash Rabbah on Ruth; ch. 12

⁵⁶ “Ma’hashava” – lit. “Thought”; “Thinking”; “To Think About”, and see the body of the text.

⁵⁷ “Klalit” – lit. “General”; “Categorical”; “Communal”; “Aggregate”

⁵⁸ “Atzmit” – lit. “Relating To Self”; “Essential”

⁵⁹ “Dibbur” – lit. “Speech”; “Talking”; “Explicating”

⁶⁰ “Mesalek” – lit. “Set Aside”

⁶¹ “Relates... Convey”. “He sets aside the Inner Form of his thought and only relates to its external form”

diminished Light, does He first orient his Light towards the creation of the Worlds i.e. the Other. Whereas Autonomous Thought is “Thought in-itself”, i.e. when one “thinks” about something and its relation to himself without intent of acting upon it, or relating to that thing.

[8.] And there are two levels in the Autonomous Thought, the first is when the one thinks about himself, and the second, when he thinks about the Other, (however, merely how the Other relates to him).

The Other as Container.

REMARK (1): It⁶² was earlier explained that the Souls of Israel have precedence over the Creation of the Worlds; or that they have precedence over the thought of their creation (as is explained in the next paragraph). This is because, in truth, the formation of an Other cannot exist in the spiritual referent of the analogy. Indeed we can imagine the notion of an Other in the physical world, where there are other entities – however in the Realm of God, there is no inherent possibility for the Other, and hence a form of mediation⁶³, or a creation or formation of the Other must ensue. This is naturally done through the Souls of Israel, who are both one with God, and are separate entities which have essences similar⁶⁴ to that of God.

REMARK (2): The Light, as revealing, must have something to which it can reveal; for if there are none to see it, then what existence does it have, and furthermore, what is this revelatory property which is ascribed to it? Rather the Light is revealed to “Containers” which are able to withstand the light, i.e. are able to withstand its intensity, but are nevertheless different from the Light. The formation of these Containers is(, in its initial stages) directly from the *revealing* property of the Light; since the Light is revealing, it also creates entities to which it is revealed to. Nevertheless the notion of “Container” also implies that it is subject to concealment, and that the revelation of light to it is something new, or a change. In truth, the Container is of the notion of Essence described in the first remark; namely that the Essence does not acknowledge, or does not, in-itself, relate to the Other; this includes both the Other(s) that are “Higher” or “Lower” than it.

It is within the Second level of Autonomous thought that the Souls of Israel give their consent for the creation of the World. Their placement in that position (i.e. the second level of Autonomous Thought) is not arbitrary: Since it is they who are the Containers for Essence. For the Essence in itself is not yet in the form of a Vessel since a Vessel has as its function to contain, and requires two separate entities, the transmitter and the recipient⁶⁵; the process of transmission uniting them both. And what is included within the General Thought is no longer on the level of Essence, and is therefore no longer a Vessel, as it cannot contain since it is oriented towards the Other.

⁶² The following passage is intended as an explanation for this context, and should not be taken for an “Accurate” description of the issue. It is accurate insofar as it provides a form of understanding for what is to follow. The following footnotes will address some of the problems with these simplifications; nevertheless, it is far from a comprehensive treatment:

⁶³ This mediation itself is problematic. As a mediation for anything is preceded by an intent for that predicate. It is rather the fact that “He has willed it as such” and that “We cannot understand his powers”

⁶⁴ Similar insofar as their essences contradict that of God. Unlike the Essence of the Light which is to reveal, the essence of the Soul is self-centered, completely oblivious to the notion that there are other entities outside of it. In this sense they are similar to the Essence of God, which does not acknowledge the notion of the other; only that within God, this notion is real, whereas in the Soul, the notion is feigned.

⁶⁵ Transmitter... Recipient; Mashpia and Mekabel in Hebrew.