

# Shaar HaYichud The Gate of Unity

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## Chapter Four

We must now explain how one should contemplate (*Hitbonenut*), whether it should specifically be done in a general way, or a particular way.<sup>1</sup> For example, this may be understood in regard to the G-dly comprehension into the aspect of how G-d permeates all worlds (*Memaleh Kol Almin*). In the general comprehension [of how G-d permeates] the three [created] worlds of *Briyah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*, all the allegories of the ray [emanating from the luminary], or of the spreading forth [of Divine influence], or of the letters of speech etc, are all rooted in one general matter, that of “the revelation of that which is the hidden”<sup>2</sup>. Likewise, in the general comprehension of the great difference between a created, limited being, relative to [G-d] the unlimited Being; although there are many particular ways to understand this and although there are many details (as will be explained<sup>3</sup>), nonetheless, it is all understood in a general manner.

Or, on the other hand, should one contemplate in a particular manner, analyzing each world, each creature and each of the various particular levels in the entire chaining down of the worlds, from cause to [subsequent] cause, [analyzing] each one, specifically in and of itself<sup>4</sup>?

This, likewise, this is the question in regard to the contemplation of the “Upper Unity”, of the lights and vessels of the world of *Atzilut*, including all the details of the ten *sefirot*, until the essence of the Infinite Light (*Atzmoot Ohr Ein Sof*). Should one contemplate this in a general manner, i.e. the matter of the light of *Atzilut*, how it comes about from the essence

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<sup>1</sup> Should one contemplate on the matter of how G-d permeates all worlds in a general manner? This is to say that through contemplation in a general manner his understanding of it will encompass all of created existence generally. Or, on the other hand, should one contemplate the particulars of each creation in a specific manner, to understand all the inner and out aspects of that particular world or that particular being. In such a case, it is possible for him to forget the general matter of what he is truly trying to understand, mainly, how this particular world or being is totally sublimated to G-d. The Rebbe will explain how both of these methods are necessary. He will explain that it is the contemplation in a general manner of how G-d permeates all worlds (through the known allegories) that one will reach the general depth of the matter. He will also explain that it is specifically through contemplation in a particular manner that the depth of the general matter will be brought close to one’s mind. However, one must be very careful throughout, not to forget the primary intent, which is to understand how G-d permeates all worlds.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to the concept of *Giluy HaHe’elem* (revelation of the hidden). This concept and all of its analogies will be explained later in chapter 19.

<sup>3</sup> As previously mentioned, the first part of this book (1-9) comes to explain the methodology of *Hitbonenut*. All the concepts mentioned in this section of the book will be explained in great detail in the second section (10-54), which explains the entire chaining down of the worlds.

<sup>4</sup> That is, should he contemplate on the particular details of the properties and facets of the created world or the specific being itself?

of G-d through *Tzimtzum*<sup>5</sup> and how it is incomparable to the essence of the Emanator? Likewise [in regard to the general contemplation of] how “He and His life force are one” (although there are many particulars in this, as will be explained, nonetheless, it still is a general contemplation). He can understand this matter, generally, through various analogies, such as the analogy mentioned in *Sefer Yetzirah* of a flame which is bound to the coal, or such as a general understanding of the revelation of the faculties of the soul from their concealment in the essence of the soul. Through this analysis he will come to comprehend the depth of the concept of how G-d permeates all worlds, which is called, “The Lower Unity”.

Now, in truth, the two<sup>6</sup> are dissimilar to each other. [On the one hand] there is an advantage to general contemplation, that through it one will be able to come to the general depth of the matter, which is the general aspect of the essence of the G-dly light. [However] he will reach this only in a general way, whether in regard to the comprehension of the “Upper Unity”, or the “Lower Unity”<sup>7</sup>. This revelation of G-dliness in his soul is the ultimate purpose of contemplation.

[On the other hand] there is also an advantage to contemplating in a particular way, specifically, since [through it] the revelation of the G-dly light in his soul will be incredibly closer to him. For, through contemplation in a general way it is possible for one to delude oneself, so that it appears to him that this matter is very close to him. In truth, though, when he only contemplates in a general manner, G-d appears to him from afar. This is not the case when one contemplates in a particular manner, to comprehend all the details of each particular. When he does this, it becomes embedded in his soul in a very close way. From this, he will come to comprehend a higher particular, on a higher level<sup>8</sup>, until he comes to the general comprehension of the general matter<sup>9</sup>. In this way the comprehension is truer, without deluding himself at all.

For example, when he starts contemplating the matter of how G-d permeates all worlds, in a particular manner, he begins by contemplating how the root of the spiritual influence of the orbits and constellations come into actuality, out of nothing, from the waste matter of the *Ophanim* angels.<sup>10</sup> Afterwards, he contemplates the *Ophanim* angels, and *Chayot* angels in a

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<sup>5</sup> This will be explained in chapters 12, 13 and 14.

<sup>6</sup> “The two” refers to “general contemplation” and “particular contemplation”.

<sup>7</sup> As mentioned previously, these two aspects, the “Upper Unity” and the “Lower Unity” refer to the two aspects of how G-d encompasses and transcends all worlds, and how he permeates all worlds.

<sup>8</sup> In other words, he analyzes and investigates the particular details of a particular matter, until it is completely clear and close to his mind. He then moves on to a higher particular matter, contemplating all of its particular details. An example of this will be given momentarily. In any case, after having gone through each particular of the order of creation, piece by piece, particular by particular, when he then grasps the general matter of how G-d permeates all worlds, all of these particulars become unified in this general understanding. The result is an incredibly greater understanding which is far closer to his mind than if he would only contemplate in a general manner.

<sup>9</sup> This refers to the general comprehension of how G-d permeates all worlds (*Memaleh Kol Almin*).

<sup>10</sup> The first thing that he should contemplate is something that is very close to him. That is, the physical world. In our physical world he should begin by contemplating how everything on our planet receives its sustenance and influence from the sun and the other planets and constellations. For example, all vegetables and plant matter basically take sunlight and convert it into plant life. Whether these particular vegetables will be in season is also determined by the influence of the planets and constellations. Furthermore, how

particular manner etc. This contemplation continues until he reaches the aspect of *Malchut* of the world of *Asiyah*, which is the general G-dly light that brings the world of *Asiyah* into being. He continues in this way, contemplating the details of the ten *sefirot* of the world of *Asiyah* until he reaches the aspect of *Malchut* of *Yetzirah*, which becomes the *Keter* for the world of *Asiyah*. In this manner he contemplates the particulars of the world of *Yetzirah*, and [then] the particulars of the world of *Briyah*. He continues in this way until he reaches the aspect of *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, which is the totality of everything, and is generally called by the name *Elokim*, as is known. In this way, after thorough analysis, he realizes the truth of the matter, in a way of great closeness. For, although, in and of itself, each particular of his contemplation is generally not a matter of G-dliness and is only a particular which is of secondary importance, nonetheless, when his whole analysis of all the particulars, comes together and becomes bound to the general principle, then the general principle will become

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much money one will have to purchase these fruits or vegetables is also determined by these forces. (For example, in the winter he will have to pay for heating, and in the summer, he will have to pay for cooling, etc. Whether it will rain and his crops will grow with great abundance, or whether there will be drought and famine, is also determined by these forces.) It has even been discovered that sunspots have an actual effect on our mood and well being, even though the sun is 93,000,000 miles from the earth. (These matters have been known in Kabbalah for thousands of years.) In any case, all influence on our planet is drawn from the sun and other planetary forces. This is the first thing to contemplate in detail, to understand the particulars of this. Following this, he contemplates how great the energy of the sun is. For example, if energy = money, then if he would be capable of harnessing the energy of even a fraction of the sun, his wealth would be mind boggling. As we just explained, all the energy of this planet is derived from the sun. Furthermore, what could be achieved with this much energy also staggers the mind. Once he understands this clearly, and all the particulars of it, he continues his contemplation, by going up one level. He now contemplates how the energy of the sun is literally as nothing compared to the energy of our entire galaxy. The sun is not even like a grain of sand in the Sahara desert compared to the many millions upon millions of stars in our galaxy alone and the galaxy is as nothing compared to all the galaxies in the universe. By contemplating this, and understanding it, specifically and thoroughly, the incredible amount of energy in our universe will stagger his mind. After he thoroughly comprehends this, he should go up another level and contemplate how the *entire* universe, with all its incredible energy, is merely *induced* by the waste matter of the lowest order of angels, which are called the *Ophanim*. The entire universe does not actually come from these angels themselves, but is only *induced* by a tiny speck of their waste matter. This means that our entire universe is literally, absolutely nothing in comparison to a speck of waste matter of the lowest order of angels. Their waste matter is immeasurably *greater* than our entire universe and its energy totally boggles the human mind. Now, here we are only talking about a speck of their waste matter, but, obviously, the *Ophanim* angels themselves are infinitely greater than this. The energy of a single *Ophan* angel is absolutely beyond human comprehension. A single *Ophan* angel could destroy our entire physical universe and it would not even be an infinitesimal fraction of a fraction of its true strength. However, all this is as nothing, for there are one million *Ophan* angels per troop. This too is as nothing, for, as it states, "*Ligdudav Ein Mispar* – His troops are innumerable". This is to say that there are infinite troops. At this point one contemplates the particular details of the *Ophanim* angels, to understand exactly what they are in a detailed manner, until this too comes close to his mind. He then continues to a higher level, contemplating how the *Ophanim* angels only receive their influence from the order of angels above them, which are called the *Chayot*. This is as stated, "*Umekablin Dein Min Dein* – They receive, one from the other etc". This type of contemplation continues in a particular manner, understanding the details of each level until one reaches the level of *Malchut* of the world of *Asiyah* from which all of the lower levels derive their very existence. In this manner one will come to appreciate and truly feel the truth of these levels, and how they are all literally totally sublimated and as nothing relative to G-d, and that their entire existence is totally and absolutely dependent on Him. However, one is only capable of doing this type of contemplation after he has first received the explanations of the entire chaining down of the worlds from the top to the bottom, which will be explained in the second part of this book (chapters 10-54).

embedded in his soul in a greater degree. This has been tried and tested by all those who have toiled deeply in *Hitbonenut* contemplation.

Likewise, the contemplation of the “Upper Unity” should be in a particular manner [as well]; to understand each particular detail of the ten *sefirot* of the statures of *Zeir Anpin* and *Nukvah*, *Abba* and *Imma*, *Arich Anpin* and *Atik Yomin*, all the way to the beginning of the *Kav* in *Adam Kadmon* etc<sup>11</sup>. It is specifically the contemplation of all this, in a particular manner, which will cause the general light of the essence of the Emanator, which includes and unifies everything, to be implanted in his soul.

However, this is not the case if one only contemplates in a general manner, so that G-d appears to him from afar, as mentioned previously. (For, through this, it is possible for him to fall into false delusions, as do fools and those who lack *Da'at*. This comes about because they focus their entire mind solely on one general matter<sup>12</sup>.)

However, the focusing and delving of one's concentration into each detail is the opposite of error and distance [from G-d]. On the contrary, through this the matter becomes closer to his [mind] since he goes from one particular to a higher particular until he unifies them all in a general unification, rather than a particular unification.

This may be understood from the unification (*Yichud*) of “Yours ‘O G-d is the greatness”. The general matter of G-dly unification is the aspect of the depth of comprehending<sup>13</sup> the sublimation of the “something” to the “nothing”<sup>14</sup>, both in the comprehension of the “Upper Unity” and the “Lower Unity”<sup>15</sup>. Now there is a particular unification for each particular thing. For example, in “Yours ‘O G-d is the greatness”, this is the aspect of

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<sup>11</sup> All this will be explained in the second part of the book.

<sup>12</sup> This is not to say that these people are not intelligent, and are nothing but fools. In truth, they have invested themselves greatly in acquiring this general comprehension of how G-d permeates everything. The problem stems from the fact that they err in themselves, thinking that they have a mastery of these concepts and that they are very close to G-d. This is itself a delusional misunderstanding which comes about only because they have not contemplated in the particular manner described above. Because they “focus” and “meditate” on this general understanding, without delving to analyze the details and specifics, they can actually come to totally false delusions and imaginations. However, one who delves into the comprehension of the specifics and details of each level, understanding it thoroughly before moving on, will not fall into these delusions at all. Instead, he will grasp the truth of reality, in a true and real way, as will now be explained.

<sup>13</sup> This refers to the aforementioned *omek hamoosag*. That is to say, this is the depth of the comprehension as it flashes from the “nothingness” of the spring of *Chochmah*, into the “somethingness” of the river of *Binah*. As previously mentioned, the aspect of *Binah*, or analysis, is the aspect of “dissecting and taking the concept apart”. The flash of the depth of the concept is what unifies all the parts back together, so that all the particulars of the concept come together as a whole. This is what a *Yichud* - unification is.

<sup>14</sup> There are two aspects in this. Firstly, the actual point of the contemplation is to grasp how the “something” is literally sublimated to its source in the “nothing”. This is the purpose of contemplation in both the upper unity and in the lower unity. Secondly, when he grasps this depth, in effect, what is happening is that the “something” of his *Binah* comprehension becomes sublimated before the “nothing” of his *Chochmah*-insight.

<sup>15</sup> That is to say, the point is to understand the depth of these two concepts, how G-d encompasses and transcends all worlds, and how he permeates all worlds. When one understands the depth of the concepts (and there are infinite depths), this is a unification. However, as will now be explained, there is a general *Yichud* - unification, and a particular *Yichud* – unification.

*Chessed*<sup>16</sup> of *Malchut* of the world of *Atzilut* as it is invested in the worlds of *Briyah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, in a particular way for each world<sup>17</sup>. That is, even the general matter here is only a single particular attribute of a particular attribute of *Malchut*. Likewise, when one contemplates “Yours ‘O G-d is the might”, both in general and in its particulars in each world, it is, nonetheless, considered to be a particular unification. The same principle applies to the unifications of all the particulars of the ten *sefirot* of each of the worlds of *Briyah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*, as is known.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast, a general unification is like the understanding of, “Behold, the place is with Me”, or, “The exalted King... who is aloof from the days of the world”<sup>19</sup>. [In other words, He is aloof from “the days of the world”, which refers to] the six directions (The emotional *Sefirot*) and the intellect of *Chochmah* and *Binah* [of the worlds]. However, in comparison to the essence of *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, which is *Keter Malchut*, even this is, likewise, only considered to be a particular.<sup>20</sup> In a similar manner there is a contemplation of all the other *sefirot* of the world of *Atzilut*, until the essence of the aspect of *Malchut* of *Ein Sof* (the Infinite), at the beginning of the *Kav*. There are many unifications of the many particulars in each *sefirah* and *partzuf* (stature). The general unification, however, is the general sublimation of the entire chaining down of the *Kav*,<sup>21</sup> relative to the essence of the Infinite Light (*Atzmoot Obr Ein Sof*), as is known.

However, this is not the case with one who has not delved his concentration into particular unifications, but, rather, begins with the general aspect. Even though he toils greatly in comprehending the many general concepts of how everything is generally sublimated to G-d, such as the aforementioned allegory of the flame, and other such concepts, nonetheless, the truth of the matter will not become as embedded in his soul, as much as it would have been, had he gone through a thorough analysis into the particular details, which would bring him to [truly] understand the general concept.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Greatness refers to *Chessed*.

<sup>17</sup> That is, rather than only a general understanding that “G-d permeates all worlds”, he should strive to understand how each particular of the created worlds is totally sublimated to its source in *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, the speech of the King, from which it derives its existence. The above is an example of a particular *Yichud*.

<sup>18</sup> In other words, one should strive to understand how G-d transcends and permeates each particular creation of all the worlds in a particular manner as opposed to only a general understanding, which will now be explained.

<sup>19</sup> That is, these two verses indicate in a general way how G-d transcends all worlds, how “He is the place of the world, while the world is not His place” etc.

<sup>20</sup> That is, the entire existence of the created worlds is barely an infinitesimal fraction of revelation of the infinite potential of *Malchut* of *Atzilut* to create. Moreover, *Malchut* of *Atzilut* itself is only a particular and finite revelation in comparison to its essence in the desire, just as a human being’s speech and expression is incomparably limited relative to his power of desire.

<sup>21</sup> That is, the sublimation of the entire line of limited revelation of our existence to its source in the essence of the Living G-d. All the particulars mentioned in this chapter will be explained at length in Part two of this book (chapters 10-54).

<sup>22</sup> In this case, his understanding and realization of the general matter of how G-d permeates and transcends all worlds will be true and deeply embedded in his soul. This is because he brings this general matter close to his understanding by the thorough study of its particulars. In contrast, if one skips the particulars and only contemplates on the general concept, his understanding of it will be external and general, and he will be incapable of truly relating it to himself.

This, then, is the meaning of “the particular requires the general and the general requires the particular”<sup>23</sup>, for no general concept can exist without particulars<sup>24</sup>. (This matter has already been debated by many of the foremost *Rishonim*, such as Maimonides and the Tur. That is, whether during prayer one’s intentions should be focused on the particular meanings of the words, [such as] contemplating the greatness of G-d [in a particular way]? Or, should one’s intent rather be to realize, in a general way, before whom he is standing and praying? This matter is discussed in Chassidic manuscripts). Now, although [as a rule] a general thought and a particular thought cannot coexist, nonetheless, he who delves with all of his heart and with all his desire, specifically to contemplate the essence of G-dliness, even though his analysis is into the particulars, he will specifically direct everything to the general thought of G-d’s essence. He will not fall from the general intention at all, as a result of focusing on the particulars. This is because all the particulars are drawn to and follow the general principle, as is known to all those who travel upon the “Path of Truth”, [who direct themselves] specifically only to G-d. Likewise, this is as stated by the Sages, “[pray to Him] rather than to His attributes”. This is to say that the main intent of the matter of contemplating the particulars is solely for the specific purpose of coming to the Essential Self and being of G-d Himself. In other words, one should never consider the particulars to be the main thing, such as studying a subject in and of itself [rather than to know G-d]<sup>25</sup>. Likewise, one’s analysis of the Zohar and the writings of the Ari’zal must be specifically in this manner. This will suffice those of understanding.

(My father, our master, mentor and teacher [the Alter Rebbe] of blessed memory, whose soul rests in *Eden*, received this teaching from the mouth of the *Rav*, the *Maggid* [of Mezeritch] of blessed memory, with a full explanation, and this is how I heard it from his mouth.)

Through all of the above we have answered the question of those who inquire regarding the specific [kabbalistic] meanings of the words of the prayers. How is it that those who know them do not become confused [and distracted] from the general intent? Rather, on the contrary, the intent of the meaning of the words of prayer, as explained by Kabbalah,<sup>26</sup> serves to strengthen the depth of one’s general grasp of the essence of G-d, as is known to those who have tasted [the contemplation of the words of the prayers] in a particular manner. However, for those who are novices,<sup>27</sup> it is best that at first they should delve in a general way, until they become accustomed, little by little, to particular contemplation [during prayer], specifically. This will suffice those of understanding.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See Zohar Shmot 3a, Terumah 161b, V’Etchanan 264a.

<sup>24</sup> In other words, if a general rule is lacking particulars, then it is not a general rule. The opposite is likewise true, if a particular is lacking a general, then it is not a particular of anything. The both are necessary to any concept. What is understood here, however, is that both the particular contemplation and the general concept are necessary to any understanding. One who understands a multitude of particulars, but is lacking the general concept which unifies them, cannot understand their depth or true point whatsoever. The reverse is likewise true. One who understands the general concept, but is lacking its particulars will only achieve a very shallow understanding, with no true depth at all.

<sup>25</sup> Rather, even when he is studying the particulars, his entire intent and focus is to know G-d through them.

<sup>26</sup> That is, particular contemplation.

<sup>27</sup> This refers to those who are new to the methodology of Kabbalah and Chassidus, i.e. *Hitbonenu* contemplation during prayer.

<sup>28</sup> In conclusion, it is clear that both general and particular contemplation are required. That is, the particular contemplation should be completely directed towards the general point. In other words, one

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should not just contemplate the general point itself, which will only lead him to a general understanding. Rather, he should contemplate in a particular way specifically. Nonetheless, the particulars he is studying must be completely focused towards the general matter of knowing G-d. At first, beginners should only attempt to contemplate and understand the general matter during prayer, until they are capable of delving into all the particulars. (All of the various levels and particulars mentioned in this chapter will be explained with great length and clarity in chapters 10-54.)