

## MILA YOMIT 9: TOHU

תהו

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OTIOT-Letters

ת TAV -last letter of Aleph Bet, first in this word, perhaps suggesting something closed off  
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ה HEH-expression  
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ו VAV-connection

HEH and VAV are letters of the Divine Name

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MEANING-

תהו means 'desolate', 'matter without substance'

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WORDS CONTAINED WITHIN and RELATED WORDS

הו- HU -literally 'him'-has Kabbalistic significance.

תהו-TaHUI -amazed

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CONCEPTUAL MEANING:

Zohar:

- Tohu (chaos), the abode of 'slime', the nest of 'refuse'...  
Tohu is a place which has no color and no form, and the esoteric principle of 'form' does not apply to it.  
It seems for a moment to have a form, but when looked at again it has no form. Everything has a 'vestment' except this.

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Sefer Bahir- (first century Kabbalistic text) :

What is TOHU? Something that confounds (Taha) people and causes people to sin.

-From Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan's notes on Sefer Bahir:  
"Every concept that is necessary for creation must therefore also be created. As we see, two of the most basic of these are the concepts of giving and receiving. In Kabbalistic terminology, the concept of giving is referred to as "Light" while that of receiving is called a "Vessel".

TOHU refers to the first Vessels, which were shattered. All they could do was receive from God. ... The first state of creation is called the Universe of Chaos or Tohu. This is a state where the Vessels which were the primitive Ten Sefirot, could receive God's Light, but could neither give to one another or interact...these Vessels were incomplete, and therefore could not hold the Light. Since they could not fulfill their purpose, they were overwhelmed by the Light and shattered, this being the concept of the Breaking of The Vessels. The broken pieces of these Vessels fell to a lower spiritual level and subsequently became the source of all evil.

It is therefore said that TOHU-chaos is the source of evil.  
The reason why the Vessels were originally created without the ability to hold the Light was so that evil should come into being, thus giving the human the freedom of choice, which was necessary for the rectification of the Vessels.

Kabbalists also speak of Tohu as the intermediate state between potential and realization. ... For initiates, this also contains a lesson for those who would enter the mystical realm. The Husks (Kelipot) derived from Tohu-Chaos, are the forces that 'confound

people' and cause them to have misleading visions. A complete vessel is a vision that contains a complete, understandable idea, whereas a broken vessel is one that is confounding and confusing." (P.89-90)

Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Itzchaki) the pre-eminent 12th century commentator) and others defined Tohu as 'astonishment' or 'amazement'.

Ramban(Rabbi Moshe Ben Nachman, the preeminent 13th century commentator) mystically interprets -TOHU- as being the very thin substance-entirely devoid of form but having potential. This primary matter was created from absolute nothing by the Creator. It was this that the Divine formed and brought everything else into existence, clothing the forms, putting them into finished condition. (From Artscrolls on Genesis)

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Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch(19th century commentator):  
TOHU- would describe a chaotic condition which would give us the impression of everything being mixed up and nothing consolidated separately...the subjective effect of chaos on us.  
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Midrash Rabba (an early source of the oral tradition):  
"Rabbi Judah Bar Simon interpreted the text as referring to the generations: 'And The Earth Was TOHU-this refers to Adam who was empty and amounted to nothing.'

Rabbi Shimon Ben Lakish interpreted the verse as referring to the various exiles. 'And The Earth Was TOHU-refers to Babylonia, as it is written, 'I look at the earth, is it unformed (TOHU)...' (Jeremiah 4:23)"

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TOHU- the unformed, non material potential of existence, not yet realized.

Only in interacting, in giving and receiving is this manifested into a form worthy of the Divine Light.

Is this perhaps a guide for us in our work of transforming chaos

into harmony?

תורה

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