

Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l on

פרשת בראשית

HOW DID HASHEM CREATE THE WORLD?

In Pirkei Avos we find a *mishna* that is usually studied in a most superficial manner, and yet it contains a hint to one of the most important principles of service to Hashem. So we'll read this *mishna* together, as well as a *gemara* that accompanies it, and we'll try to make some sense of it.

We read in the *mishna* (Avos 5:1) the following: בעשרה במאמרות נברא העולם - "With ten utterances the world was created." Here we are told that in the creation of the world, ten times Hashem gave His command, and through each command another part of our universe came into existence. And the *mishna* goes on to explain why Hashem chose to create the world with ten utterances, instead of just one, but we'll leave that for a different time.

HIGHER MATHEMATICS IN THE TORAH'S FIRST VERSE

What we do see from here, however, is that ten separate times, Hashem gave a command, and another part

of the universe came into existence. The problem is that a basic perusal of the *pesukim* in Bereishis, seem to contradict this. Common calculation leads one to count nine separate commands of Hashem. You don't need higher mathematics to calculate the nine separate times that Hashem uttered a part of the universe into existence. יהי אור - "Let there be light!", יהי רקיע - "Let there be a firmament!" and seven others like these equals only nine. So where is that tenth *ma'amar* that the *mishna* is eluding to?

And the answer is given (Rosh Hashana 32a) as follows: בראשית נמי מאמר היא - "The *pasuk* of Bereishis, the creation of heaven and earth, was also a command of Hashem." Even though it doesn't say ויאמר אלוקים יהי שמים ויארץ - 'And Hashem said 'Let there be a heaven and earth,' " that first step of creation also came into being through the utterance of Hashem.

THE GREATEST MIRACLE; UNMENTIONED

This however needs explanation. The creation of the world, את השמים ואת הארץ, remains the most unique miracle, and the greatest wonder in the world's history, inasmuch as it was the forever unequalled marvel of יש מאין, the creation from nothing. The words בראשית ברא אלוקים - "In the beginning G-d created," enunciate the great principle, the fundamental idea, that Hashem imagined everything into existence from nothing. Before the word בראשית, there was nothing. Not even the basic elements, or even their energy particles. Whatever smaller and smaller particles that scientists continue to discover, are only the building blocks that Hashem created on that great day of the "Creation of something from nothing." And yet this first utterance of creation, this most spectacular miracle of all, is

conspicuously left out, and instead is only hinted at. It is left to the Gemara in Rosh Hashana to reveal to us that **בראשית** **היא**, נמי מאמר **היא**, that the **שמים וארץ** also came into being by the word of Hashem. Why is this greatest of all miracles, not also introduced by a command (“Let there be a heaven and earth”) just as all the other creations were brought into being by an express command of Hashem?

Let us begin by looking at the first dictum, the first **מאמר** that is expressly stated in the Parsha. **ויאמר אלוקים יהי אור** - “And G-d spoke: ‘Let there be light’ ” (Bereishis 3:1). Without having been clued in to the truth, the truth that **בראשית** נמי מאמר **היא**, one would have rightfully assumed that the first utterance of Hashem was this one that created light. And that brings us to our subject for tonight.

BEFORE ALL ELSE: LIGHT

The Creator wished that the command “Let there be light!” to be the first of His commands to be written in the Torah, even though in reality it was only the second dictum that He had spoken. And He did this because He wants to emphasize to us the superlative importance of Light. Hashem is thereby teaching us a fundamental principle of the greatest importance: the creation of heaven and earth (the first dictum) is valueless without the creation of light. In order of importance, it is light that comes before all else. And Hashem wants you to recognize the importance of light, and so **וידי אור** is the first dictum of Hashem to be written in His Torah, and the first creation is conveniently hidden away.

However, that only deepens this mystery. Why is it that light is so superlatively important? What makes light so important that Hashem was willing to veil His first creation,

that wondrous and forever unmatched spectacle of **בריאה יש**, **מאין**, the creation of something from absolutely nothing, and instead bring to the forefront this utterance of **יהי אור** - "Let there be light."?

LOOK AT THE MOON!

And the answer to that question is our subject for tonight. In Koheles we read, **האלקים עשה שראו מלפניו** - "G-d made [everything], so that they should fear Him" (Koheles 3:14). The word **ירא** (fear), is akin to the word **ראה** (see) [the letters yud in **ירא** and hei in **ראה** are unessential letters] because it is the awareness of Hashem that leads one to true fear of Him. And awareness of Hashem comes chiefly from seeing His handiwork in Creation. Essentially, what Shlomo Hamelech is telling us in this posuk is that Hashem created this universe, and everything in it, for the sole purpose of man seeing His creations, and thus recognizing Him.

The purpose of everything that Hashem made - the sky and the clouds, the trees and the grass, the moon and the stars, people's faces and your fingers, the cement on the sidewalk and the asphalt on the street, the leaves on the ground and the weeds in the cracks, your woolen coat and your cotton pants, and everything else that you see in this intricate world - it is all made for the purpose that men should see the wonders of plan and purpose in each phenomenon. Every phenomenon of Hashem exudes usefulness and kindness, and thus we come to recognition of Hashem.

WHAT IS SIGHT?

But it is only the **אור**, the light, that Hashem created, that enables man to succeed at his function in recognizing

Hashem. And thus, it is the creation of light which transforms all of Creation into a Torah which is always teaching us about the Presence of Hashem. And if men fail in their duty to use the creation of light to see Hashem in everything in שמים וארץ, then שמים וארץ did not achieve its purpose. Heaven and earth are valueless without the light that makes everything visible. What does wealth avail a man, if he is ignorant of his riches? It is only by seeing the heaven and earth, and all that is found therein, that one recognizes the greatness of the Creator, and thereby gives purpose to creation. By seeing and appreciating the creations of Hashem, men fulfill Hashem's purpose in creation.

And it is the light that makes sight possible. Seeing is nothing more than the movement of light from the object being viewed, towards the eye of the viewer. And therefore, it is Hashem's words יהי אור - "Let there be light," that enable us to fulfill our most important function of seeing all of His creations, and thereby recognize Him, thus fulfilling our purpose in life. And therefore, Hashem caused the creation of light to be the first dictum, underscoring the vital importance of its function.

THE SINGLE MOST VITAL FUNCTION OF ALL HUMANS

Now, what I'm telling you now might seem like an exaggeration, like propaganda. Of course light is important. We need light, no doubt about that. But to go so far and say that it is the most important creation seems to you a bit extreme. And that is because you are not yet cognizant of your purpose in life. You are not yet aware that you were placed in this world, a world of endless plan and purpose, to see Hashem in His creations. It is not a מידת חסידות, a special service of Hashem that is meant for the tzadikim. It is the

single most vital function of every single one of you sitting here.

Listen carefully to the words of Dovid Hamelech: יודוך השם כל מעשיך... כבוד מלכותך יאמרו... להודיע לבני האדם גבורתו - "All Your works praise You... They speak the glory of Your kingdom... To make known to the sons of man His might" (Tehillim 145:10-12). You say it every day, some of you even a few times a day, but you're not listening to yourself. We are here, in this world, to see Hashem, to become more and more aware of Him. And for that, we need light.

THE LONGEST BLESSING IN THE PRAYERBOOK

Now, even a quick look at our *siddur*, at the *brachos* we say every day, will make very clear how important it is to appreciate the gift of light, and the importance of using the creation of light for its intended purpose. Did you ever think about which is the longest *bracha* in the *siddur*? The longest *bracha* that we say every day is not אשר יצר. Now, going to the bathroom and coming out בשלום, in peace, with everything working, is a very great *simcha*. And it therefore deserves a very great *bracha*. But it's not the longest *bracha*. And neither is the *bracha* that we say after eating bread. Eating bread is a pleasure. *Mamash* such a pleasure. And if used properly, eating can bring you to greater and greater recognition of Hashem. But it's still not the longest *bracha*. And not even the *bracha* of אהבה רבה that we say in gratitude for Hashem's Torah. It's long, but it's not the longest.

The longest *bracha* in our *siddur*, the longest *bracha* established by the אנשי כנסת הגדולה, is the *bracha* of יוצר המאורות, the *bracha* we make on light. You can go look in the *siddur*. It starts right after ברכו and goes on and on for a few

pages. And it deserves the title of the longest *bracha*, because the true good in this world, is the recognition of Hashem's plan-and-purpose, His power and wisdom, and His kindliness. And it is only by means of light that we can see. Therefore we cry out in happiness to Hashem: ברוך אתה השם - יוצר המאורות - "Thank You Hashem for light." Light means sight, and it is by means of sight, through seeing the wisdom of Hashem in everything around us, that we can achieve the perfection of Awareness of Hashem.

EAVERSDROPPING ON THE ANGELS

In this long *bracha* that we make on light, we spend a lot of time speaking about the מלאכים, the angels, and their praises of Hashem. What for? Why does it matter to us exactly what the Ophanim and the Chayos Hakodesh are saying? Why should that interest the בשר ודם down here in this physical world? So allow me to let you in on a secret that many people - even good people -have simply overlooked.

First of all, we must clarify the following: What is the function of these angels? So we say in the beginning of the *bracha*, פנות צבאי קדושים - "All of His hosts, His angels, are perfect with a perfection beyond out comprehension," רוממי - "[These angels,] are all exalting Hashem." These perfect beings are busy declaring how exalted the Creator is - exalted even above their gigantic minds, and inaccessible even to their perfect intellects.

THE NEVER ENDING CAREER

The function of the angels is תמיד מספרים כבוד א-ל - "They relate the glory of Hashem as revealed in this world, and His perfection that is evident in Creation,

without end.” תמיד means continuously. Always. Not just on the special occasion of *Birchas Ha'chama*. Or on *Shabbos Bereishis* or *Rosh Chodesh*. Always means always! This is the never-ending occupation of these perfect ones. And for what purpose? Their function is to serve as models for the people of Hashem, who must also learn to praise Him always.

And why do the angels praise him תמיד, always and without end? Because there is no end to the glory of Hashem as He revealed Himself in all of the creations in this complex world of intricate miracles . And because there is no end to His glory, there is no end to the angels' praises of Hashem. Even the gigantic minds of the angels can never complete His praises, they are מספרים כבודו forever.

And they are our models. They were created to serve as examples to us, by their endless and rapturous praise of Hashem, in order that we should do likewise.

THE ESOTERIC HOLINESS OF SUNLIGHT

When you quote the words of these angels, the words קדוש קדוש קדוש and ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו, if you're not in such a rush to keep up with the *shatz*, you might even get a chance to think about these words. And of course you think that these words are referring to some deep and mysterious holiness that we can't even to begin to fathom. Maybe some impenetrable and esoteric aura of holiness that only our great people are familiar with, and that we might be privileged to glimpse at in the next world - if we're lucky enough.

However, the אנשי כנסת הגדולה, the Men of the Great Assembly who instituted the blessings and the prayers, apparently thought otherwise. Although nothing in the

original context (Yeshai'a 4:3 and Yechezkel 3:12) indicates what is the "holiness" and "glory" that elicits the ecstasy of the angels, yet the composers of the *bracha* revealed to us that it is the phenomenon of light that is Hashem's holiness and glory which fills the world. That is how our early Sages understood these verses, and they thereby teach us that the endless song of the angels dwells on the phenomenon of light more than any other matter.

THE HIGHEST FORM OF PERFECTION

And for us, what does that mean? This secret is revealed to us as a model to emulate, so that we too should endlessly continue to study His greatness, by way of using the light which allows us to view and contemplate everything in this world. Because awareness of Hashem's greatness is the highest form of perfection ("The Holy One Blessed is He has nothing in His treasury except the magazine of Awareness of Him alone" [Brachos 33b]), Hashem contrived to have the creation of Light, the chief cause of this Awareness as the first dictum in the Torah. And because Awareness of Hashem is the highest good available to us, therefore the creation of Light is the first "good" mentioned in the Torah. וירא אלוקים את האור כי טוב - "And G-d saw the light that it was good" (Bereishis 1:4).

And so, if you haven't fallen asleep yet, you are beginning to understand your purpose here in this world. Awareness of Hashem! That's what you're here for! And therefore, Hashem made it so easy for us. Everywhere you turn in this intricate world of wonder, you can see Hashem through His handiwork, and you become more and more aware of Him.

WHEN DOES THE TASTE ENTER THE FRUIT?

And it's not necessary to have any special scientific knowledge or capabilities. All you need is your natural curiosity and a willingness to observe and to think. Look around at everything that Hashem made, all the processes He created, all the phenomena that are right before your eyes, and begin thinking. Ask yourselves questions. "How is it possible for colorful and tasty vegetables to come out of earth that is tasteless? How do the clouds traverse the endless sky from far away over the deep oceans to bring us rain? How could one bland and colorless seed develop into a large tree of wood, bark and leaves, as well as tasty and colorful fruit? How does the dandelion spread its seeds?" Did you ever stop to think about that?! It's amazing! You can see Hashem's hand right in front of you. Here we have thirty or so parachutes containing seeds on a launching pad, waiting for the right wind to come and give a puff, and spread these valuable seeds to further destinations. I say "seeds" like it's a simple thing. Do you know what a seed is? A seed is a thousand times more complicated than the smartest computer!

How can you not see all these things and become aware of the plan and purpose in Hashem's creation?! You can walk down the street and become the biggest מאמין, the biggest believer, by just keeping your eyes open. And that's not supposed to be a *chiddush* that I'm telling you. That's the only purpose of creation. So what are you waiting for?! In the cemetery it'll be too late to make yourself great. Your chance is right here, in this world! But you will have to keep your eyes open and become more and more aware of Hashem with every blink of your eyes, if you want to be a success.

And without the creation of Light, all of Hashem's creations would be useless, a waste. ויאמר השם יהי אור - "And Hashem said, 'Let there be light.'" That moment, way back in the history of the world, was the crowning moment of creation. Because it is light that confers upon us the opportunity to see all the rest of His creation, and to model ourselves after the angels who are תמיד מספרים כבוד א-ל, always and forever speaking about the glory of Hashem that is so evident in this world. And we thereby fulfill our most important purpose in life - recognizing Hashem through His creations and keeping Him always at the forefront of our thoughts.

HAVE A WONDERFUL SHABBOS!

Schamoula לע"נ עזרא בן פרידא

FREE!

TAKE ME
HOME!

תורת אביגדור

"שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך"



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Toras Avigdor was founded with the goal of spreading the Torah of Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l. We send out short daily emails and we publish *parsha* booklets as well as other booklets on Torah *hashkafa*.

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TorasAvigdor.org

EMAIL

info@TorasAvigdor.org

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732.844.3670