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Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Weekly Video: The Blueprint of Creation to Actualize G-d's Glory

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Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Bereishis

The Blueprint of Creation to Actualize G-d's Glory



The Manifestation of Torah in Existence

Torah: "Bereishis bara Elokim- In the beginning G-d created..."

Rashi citing the Midrash: "Rebbe Yitzchak says, 'The Torah should have begun with the commandment of the sanctification of the new moon, which was the first mitzvah that was communicated to the Jewish people. Why does the Torah begin with the story of Creation?'"

Maharal of Prague explains Rashi's question. Since the Torah is not a history book but rather a compilation of laws and dictates to guide the Jewish people how to live their life, why does it begin with the story of Creation? It should have begun with the first mitzvah of the Torah, which is the sanctification of the new moon.

Rashi: "It states in Psalms, 'He expresses the power of His actions to His people to give them the portion

of the nations...' If the nations of the world should claim that the Jewish people were thieves/plunderers because they had conquered the land of the seven nations (of Canaan), the Jewish people will respond by saying, 'All existence belongs to G-d. He chose to give it and He chose to take it from them and give it to us.'"

Gemara in Tractate Shabbos: When G-d was going to give the Torah to the Jewish people the angels in heaven came to Him with a claim, "What is this (unformed) man that is not even worth mentioning? Leave Your splendor in heaven." The angels did not want G-d to give the Torah to the Jewish people, because man is fickle and has a propensity to sin. They wanted the Torah to remain in heaven.

The angels could not understand why G-d would give the most precious commodity in existence to such an insignificant and flawed being. G-d spoke to Moshe saying, "Answer them." Moshe then responded

and refuted the angels' claim by saying, "The Torah states, "I am the Lord your G-d who has taken you out of Egypt" – were you ever in Egypt? The Torah says, "You shall honor your father and mother – do you have a father and mother?"

Moshe provided the angels with many examples, which confirmed the fact that the Torah was intended for man specifically because he is a physical being and does not have relevance to the heavenly body of angels, who are purely spiritual. Understanding that the Torah is a compilation of principles and laws that relate to the Jewish people and their interaction with the physical world, what was the initial consideration of the angels to even request that the Torah should be given to them?

Ramban: The Torah could have been manifested in another context. It could have been manifested purely in a spiritual context, since its essence is spiritual. It is only because G-d chose to present the Torah in a physical context in order to give it relevance to the physical world which He Created. Thus, the angels wanted to receive the Torah in its purely spiritual manifestation.

Midrash: Before G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people, He presented it to the nations of the world. When G-d offered the Torah to each of the nations of the world, they asked Him, "What is written in it?" They were not willing to accept it unless they knew in advance that it did not conflict with their own interests.

Each of the nations rejected the Torah for each of their own reasons.

Sfas Emes: When G-d offered the Torah to the nations of the world, He did not present them with the same manifestation of the Torah that was ultimately given to the Jewish people. This is because the spirituality of the nations does not have relevance to the advanced dimension of spirituality of the Jew. Thus, G-d could not present them with a manifestation of the Torah that had no relevance to them. He thus presented them with a Torah that had relevance to a being of minimal spirituality such as the Edomites. Just as the Torah that would have been given to the angels would have been a different manifestation of the Torah.

Sfas Emes: After the nations of the world rejected the Torah that was presented to them, the Jewish people not only merited to accept the Torah that was initially intended

for them, they also received the manifestation of the Torah that was presented to the nations of the world and rejected by them. This elucidates Rashi's explanation of the first verse of the Torah. The Torah begins with the story of Creation rather than the first mitzvah because it is to establish that it is the manifestation of the Torah that was accepted by the Jewish people after the nations rejected it. As the verse in Psalms states, "He expresses the power of His actions to His people to give them the portion of the nations..." Thus, there can be no claim that the Torah belongs to anyone other than the Jewish people.

Creation, Predicated on the Attribute of Mercy

Torah: "Bereishis bara Elokim- In the beginning G-d created ..." Why does the Torah begin with the appellation of "Elokim" which connotes the Attribute of Justice and not the appellation "Hashem (YKVK)" which connotes the Attribute of Mercy? The Attribute of Justice does not tolerate any deviation or departure from the Will of G-d because it represents the ultimate degree of exactness and truth. If there were to be any deviation, it would be obliterated within the context of the Attribute of Justice.

Midrash: "In concept G-d initially wanted to bring about existence through His Attribute of Justice, but He saw that the world could not be sustained (with that degree of exactness) so He chose to predicate Creation on the Attribute of Mercy to coalesce it with the Attribute of Justice. As the Torah states later regarding Creation, 'Hashem Elokim.'"

We see the appellation "Elokim" continuously mentioned by the Torah throughout the process of the creation of heaven and earth. It is understandable that within the context of the creation of Man, who is prone to fail or deviate from the Will of G-d due to his inclination that G-d would need to coalesce His Attribute of Mercy with His Attribute of Justice. Man could not exist within the context of pure Justice. However, within the context of the creation of heaven and earth and all that is contained within it other than the human being, what is its relevance to the Attribute of Justice since it has no relevance to choice?

Chazal: The opening words of the Torah "Bereishis bara Elokim- In the beginning G-d created ..." allude to the objective and purpose of Creation.

Midrash: “For the sake of Torah, which is “reishis (choicest)” G-d created heaven and earth.” Meaning, all existence only came into being for the specific purpose of the fulfillment of Torah. Another interpretation of Chazal is that G-d created the world for the sake of the Jewish people who are referred to as “reishis (the chosen). Thus, the world was created to accommodate the fulfillment of the Torah by the Jewish people who are the only ones who are qualified to be G-d’s Chosen.

Gemara in Tractate Avodah Zorah: During the first three hours of the day, G-d studies Torah. This period of time is a moment of the ultimate level of exactness. It is because the Torah itself is truth in the most absolute sense. As King Solomon writes in Proverbs regarding the Torah, “Acquire truth (the Torah) and do not sell it.”

Midrash regarding Creation: “G-d gazed into the Torah and created existence.” Meaning, the blueprint of existence is the Torah itself. Existence was created to address every level of spiritual advancement of the Jewish people. Therefore, existence itself needs to have the same level of exactness that reflects the exactness of the Torah. Thus, there is nothing superfluous in creation.

Similarly, the Torah does not contain anything that is superfluous because it is complete in the absolute sense. As we see there is a negative commandment that one is not permitted to add or detract anything from the Torah.

Torah in Haazinu: “Give ear, O heavens and I will speak; and may the earth hear the words of my mouth....”

Rashi: G-d said that heaven and earth should bear witness on behalf of the Jewish people regarding their fulfillment of the Torah. How is this so? When the Jewish people will fulfill the Torah, the heavens will bring forth their rains; however, if the Jewish people do not conform to the Will of G-d then the heavens will withhold their rains. Thus, physical existence is directly related to the spiritual achievement of the Jewish people. If they follow the Will of G-d then physical existence will function properly and bring forth its bounty.

If G-d initially created the world with the Attribute of Justice, physical existence would function properly only within the evaluation of exact adherence to the Torah without any deviation. However, if this were to be so, physical existence (the heavens and the earth) would not be able to continue due to man’s propensity to spiritual

failings. Therefore, G-d chose to predicate Creation on the Attribute of Mercy in order to allow the world to continue despite the spiritual shortcomings of man.

Ramchal in ‘The Way of G-d’: The way the world functions is dependent on man’s behavior. The actions of man below (terrestrial level) activate forces that exist above in the spiritual realm which in turn manifest themselves in the physical realm as bounty and blessing.

If the physical realm existed within the context of the Attribute of Justice one’s action would need to be absolutely perfect in every sense in order to activate a response from the heavenly plane. However, because G-d chose to coalesce His Attribute of Mercy with His Attribute of Justice, even an imperfect act or an act with imperfect intent will activate heavenly bounty. If the Attribute of Mercy were not in effect physical existence would not be able to continue because the standard of evaluation would be beyond the capacity of man to fulfill.

King David in Psalms: “We give power to G-d....” There is another verse in the Torah that states, “The rock has become weakened by the sins of the Jewish people...” How is it possible that the Jewish people could strengthen or weaken G-d through their behavior? It is not that G-d is affected in any way by anything, but rather, G-d established an infrastructure in existence that will advance or regress based on the level of good and evil that is generated by the behavior of the Jewish people.

If the Jewish people do the Will of G-d then blessing and bounty comes upon existence and sustains the world. It is an empowerment of the good. However, if the Jewish people should fail through sin, then G-d withholds His blessing from existence. It is through the behavior of the Jewish people that the system of good and evil in the world is strengthened or weakened.

Speech, the Catalyst for Spirituality

Torah regarding the creation of Adam: “And Hashem G-d formed the man, dust from the ground, and He blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living being (nefesh chaya).”

Rashi: Although the Torah also refers to the domesticated and undomesticated animal as ‘nefesh chaya (living beings)’; however, the human being is

the ultimate of living species because he possesses intelligence and has the ability to speak.

Ramban citing Targum Unkolus: Interpret the words “nefesh chaya” as “he (man) became a speaking species. It is with this unique soul that man will have the ability to comprehend and speak.” If the Torah uses the same words “living species (nefesh chaya)” regarding the creation of man as it does regarding the creation of land animals, what is the basis for the interpretation of “living species,” when stated regarding man, to mean that he became a species with the power of speech?

Torah: “Bereishis bara Elokim- In the beginning G-d created ...”

Chazal: The opening words of the Torah mean that for the sake of Torah, which is “reishis (first/choicest)” G-d created heaven and earth. Meaning, that all existence only came into being for the specific purpose for the fulfillment of Torah. Another interpretation of Chazal for the opening words of the Torah is that G-d created the world for the sake of the Jewish people who are referred to as “reishis (chosen). In essence, the world was created only for the fulfillment of the Torah; however, because the Jewish people are the only ones qualified to receive it, it is the equivalent of the world being created for them. If any other nation would have been qualified to receive the Torah, the world would have been created also on their behalf.

Gemara in Tractate Eruvin: One of the students of Reb Meir was studying Torah without articulating its words. He only meditated upon it. Bruryah, the wife of Reb Meir strongly criticized this student for not enunciating the Torah that he was studying. She had said to him, “You are not accomplishing anything in the manner in which you are studying.” She based her criticism on the verse that states, “Torah is life for those who come upon it (l’motzeihem).” Brurya explained to him that the verse is stating, “Torah brings life only to the one who verbally expresses it (meshe motzi b’peh).” It is only when one articulates the Torah that he is studying that it spiritualizes him and brings about life.

Since the world was created only to be the setting for the fulfillment of Torah (in all its aspects), the ultimate purpose of creation is for the spiritualization of man and all existence. Spirituality, at the most complete level, can only be achieved through the articulation

of Torah when it is being studied and extolling G-d. Consequently, the human species that was created for that purpose is not complete and fully functional unless it was endowed with the power of speech.

The expression “living being (nefesh chaya)” when it applies to the animal means that it was created with a life source that enabled it to be complete within its own context as an animal. Similarly, the words “nefesh chaya” when applied to the human being means that he was endowed with a life source that enables him to be complete in his mission, which is to glorify G-d. As the prophet states, “For My (G-d) glory I have created it (the world).”

Although the nations of the world have no relevance to the spirituality that is generated through the articulation of the Torah; nevertheless, they were endowed with intelligence and the ability to speak only to sing G-d’s praises. As it states in Isaiah that at the end of time, “Every tongue should swear...” G-d will be glorified and extolled by all mankind.

Existence is an Expression of G-d’s Unity

Torah at the conclusion of the first day of creation: “And there was evening and there was morning, day one (yom echad).”

Torah after the second day of creation: “And there was evening and there was morning, a second day (yom sheini).”

Rashi citing Chazal: “According to the order of counting of the days of creation, if the second day is referred to as “yom sheini – second day” and the third day is referred to as “yom shlishi – third day” and so on, the first day of creation should have been referred to as “yom rishon – first day.” However the Torah refers to the first day of creation as “yom echad – day one.”

Rashi citing the Midrash: On the first day of creation, G-d was the only spiritual entity in existence. The angels were only created on the second day. Thus, the Torah refers to the first day of creation as “yom echad - day one” rather than “yom rishon – first day” to indicate that G-d was the only One in existence.

Maharal of Prague z”l: Until the angels were created there was no question pertaining to the “unity/

oneness” of G-d. It was only after the creation of the various echelons of angels (each one with a distinct character), that the unity of G-d became less clear.

Gemara in Tractate Chagigah: Regarding the chayos ha’kodesh, a classification of angel, that it takes 500 years to traverse the length of the thigh of this spiritual being. This is only an indication of the enormity and incomprehensibility of angels.

Midrash: When Adam was created, he radiated with such a degree of holiness that the angels confused his radiance with that of G-d. Thus anything that has a semblance to G-d’s holiness causes the perception of reality to be slightly blurred– namely the indisputable oneness of G-d.

Ramchal: The mitzvah of “yichud – declaring the Oneness of G-d” through the recitation the Shema (once in the morning and evening) is something more than a declaration of monotheism. The mitzvah of “yichud Hashem” is to believe that everything in existence is synonymous with G-d. Every aspect of creation exists only because G-d Wills it to be. Everything is an expression of His energy and thus there is nothing separate from Him. This is the mitzvah of “yichud Hashem.”

On the first day of creation, there was no other spiritual being in existence other than G-d. Thus, when the Torah states “day one” it literally means that the day is synonymous with G-d Himself. Thus, the identification of the first day as “yom echad – day one” rather than “yom rishon - first day” is an indication that it is not simply part of a sequence of “second, third, fourth, etc;” but rather the Torah is communicating to us that the first day of creation was indisputably an expression of the unity of G-d.

Amidah (silent prayer): “Hashem sustains life with kindness...” G-d does not only provide sustenance for every creature in existence, He provides every aspect of life at every moment to all existence. G-d Wills every nuance of existence from the subatomic level to the grand function of the universe.

Gemara in Tractate Chullin: “One does not stub his toe in this existence without it being decreed by G-d.” The stubbing of one’s toe and every aspect of experiencing that pain are all expressions of G-d. This is the meaning of the unity of G-d.

Why Does the Torah Begin with the Letter “Bais”?

Yalkut at the beginning of Bereishis: “Rebbe Akiva says, “There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet that encompass the entire Torah. They are etched with a writing implement made of fire on the crown of G-d. When G-d was about to create the world, each of the 22 letters of the alphabet came before Him and said to G-d, “Please use the spirituality which lies within us to create existence.” The first letter to come before G-d was the letter “tuf” (which is the final letter of the alphabet). The letter tuf said to G-d, “Master of the Universe, if it be Your Will, create the world through me because it is through me that the Torah will be given to Moshe and the Jewish people. As it is stated, “Torah tziva lanu Moshe – the Torah was commanded to us by Moshe.”

Since the word “Torah” begins with the letter “Tuf” and the Torah is the purpose of creation, the world should be created with the spirituality of the letter “tuf.” G-d responded, “No, because the letter “tuf” was written on the heads of those who perished at the time of the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash (Holy Temple), which indicated that they were marked for death. Thus, it was through the letter “tuf” that tragedy came upon the Jewish people and many perished. Therefore the world will not be created with the letter “tuf.”

Gemara in Tractate Shabbos: At the time of the destruction of the Temple, G-d had instructed the Angel of Death to paint the letter “tuf” in red on the foreheads of all the rashaim (evil people) so that they should be marked for death. However, regarding the tzaddikim (righteous people) G-d had said that the letter “tuf” should be written in black to indicate that they should be spared.

Satan complained to G-d that the tzaddikim should also be marked with the letter “tuf” in red (for death) because they did not intercede and protest when the rashaim were sinning. They remained silent. Thus they also deserved to die. G-d responded to satan that even if the tzaddikim had protested, their rebuke would not have been heeded. Satan responded, “Although it is true what You say, the tzaddikim did not know that their rebuke would have been ignored and fallen on deaf ears. Since they did not protest, the tzaddikim also deserve to die.” G-d concurred with satan. Thus even the tzaddikim had the letter “tuf” written in red on their foreheads.

It is interesting to note that the Torah itself is perfect in every respect; however, even the tzaddikim who adhere to the Torah meticulously did not internalize it properly – otherwise they would have protested the inappropriate behavior of the rishaim. This is an indication that they were deficient despite their special level of spirituality. If even the tzaddikim failed, despite their Torah, the world itself could not be manifested through the letter “tuf.”

Yalkut: “The letter “tuf” left the presence of G-d in a depressed state. After this all of the letters of the alphabet approached G-d to be the vehicle for the creation of the world. Each and every one of them was rejected. However, when the letter “bais” (which is the second letter of the alphabet) came before Him and said, “If it be Your Will to create the world through me because every day the Jewish people say, “Blessed is Hashem forever, Amen and Amen.” Because the letter “bais” represents “Baruch Hashem – Blessed is Hashem,” He chose it as the letter to bring creation into existence. As it is stated, “Bereishis bara Elokeem...”

After the letter “alef” (the first letter of the alphabet) saw that G-d decided to use the letter “bais” to create the world, it had nothing further to say. G-d asked the letter “alef” “Why do you remain silent?” The “alef” responded, “Master of the Universe, I have no power to say a word in Your Presence because every other letter has more value than I because my numerical value is only “one” while the others have a greater numerical value....” G-d said to the “alef,” “You are the leader like the King to all of them. You are “one” just like I am “one.” The Torah is “one” just as you are “one.” As it is stated “Anochi Hashem Elokecha – I am Hashem your G-d.”

Creation was expressed through the letter “bais” because the expression of this letter represents “Baruch Hashem – Hashem is blessed.” However the letter “alef” represents the “yichud Hashem – the oneness of G-d.” How do we join/reconcile both of these concepts?

The proper understanding of G-d’s Unity is the recognition that G-d is everything and there is nothing that is apart from Him. This concept is manifested through the acknowledgement, “Baruch Hashem – Hashem is blessed.”

Reb Chaim of Volozin z”tl in his work Nefesh HaChaim: “Baruch Hashem” is an acknowledgement and a recognition that everything emanates from G-d and He is the source of everything. Therefore we can understand why the world was created through the letter “bais.” The letter “bais” reflects the fact that everything in existence is G-d (yichud Hashem) and that Man has the ability to recognize this, namely through the declaration of “Baruch Hashem.”

During the reign of King David the Jewish people were afflicted with a plague and many perished. King David recognized that the plague was an indication that the Jewish people had failed in a spiritual matter and were being punished. He then enacted the laws of blessings which require every Jew to recite 100 blessings every day. Consequently the plague ceased.

The 100 blessings that every Jew comes upon each day is an acknowledgement that every aspect of our lives emanates from G-d’s blessing. When a Jew eats, drinks, awakens, etc. he recites a blessing. The Jew continuously thanks, recognizes, and acknowledges that everything in creation is G-d. Before King David enacted the recitation of 100 blessings a day, the Jew did not have the opportunity to be continuously cognizant of G-d’s role in existence. Because of this lack of continuous cognizance, the Jewish people were subject to plague. The essence of existence exudes G-d’s blessing, which is an expression of His unity.



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