

CHOCHMAH, TEVUNAH, AND DAAT

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Bereishis

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Chochmah, Tevunah and Da'at

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Today's Learning:

Arachin 4:4-5:1

O.C. 413:3-415:1

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Kiddushin 17

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Nazir 1

With gratitude to Hashem and prayers
for His continued blessing, we now begin
the twenty-third parashah cycle of Hamaayan.

King Shlomo writes in Mishlei (3:19-20), "Hashem founded the earth with chochmah / wisdom; He established the heavens with tevunah / understanding; through His da'at / knowledge, the depths were cleaved and the heavens dripped dew." Rabbeinu Yonah z"l (Spain; 1180-1263) relates these verses to our parashah. The world, he writes, was created with - i.e., for the purpose of - chochmah, tevunah and da'at. All of these refer to the study of Torah.

Each of the three terms that is used has a distinct meaning, and their placement in the verses is not coincidental, continues Rabbeinu Yonah. Chochmah, he writes, is the lowest form of learning, as it

refers to information that one receives from another. Tevunah refers to the information that one derives from analyzing the chochmah that he was taught. Finally, da'at refers to the fundamental ideas that a person discovers on his own once he has developed his own intellectual abilities. The verses borrow these three levels to refer to the creation of the earth, the heavens, and the functioning of the various elements of the universe, respectively. This indicates the relative importance of these three creations. Earth is the least important, the heavens second, and the actual functioning of the universe, most important.

Rabbeinu Yonah continues: We find another threesome in the three terms that the Torah uses to describe creation: briyah / creating, yetzirah / forming, and asiyah / making.

Yet another trio is the three types of content found in the Torah: laws, promises of reward and threats of punishment, and stories. The purpose of the first two is obvious, while the purpose of the third is so that we will follow the example of the tzaddikim mentioned in the Torah. (Drashot U'perushei Rabbeinu Yonah Al Ha'Torah)

"G-d saw that the light was good." (1:4)

Midrash Rabbah states: Rabbi Abahu said, "From the beginning of creation, G-d saw the deeds of the righteous and the deeds of the wicked. Therefore it says (Tehilim 1:6), 'Hashem knows the ways of the tzaddikim.' . . . However, I would not have known which G-d prefers - these [the deeds of the righteous] or these [the deeds of the wicked]. Therefore it is written, 'G-d saw that the light was good.' This teaches that He prefers the deeds of the righteous."

Many commentaries wonder: How could we not know whether G-d prefers the deeds of the righteous or the deeds of the wicked? R' Chaim Tirer z"l (1760-1818; rabbi of Czernowitz) explains:

The Arizal teaches that G-d had two reasons for creating the world. One reason was to demonstrate His *goodness*; the other, to demonstrate His *majesty*. R' Tirer writes: G-d's *majesty* can be revealed in two ways, either through His kindness to the righteous or through His retribution against the wicked. On the other hand, G-d's *goodness* is demonstrated primarily through the righteous, who deserve to experience that goodness.

Thus, the question posed by the above midrash may be understood as follows: Which of these reasons was primary? Did G-d create the world in order to be revealed through His retribution against the wicked or does He prefer to be revealed through His goodness to the righteous? To this the midrash answers, "'G-d saw that the light was good.' This teaches that He prefers the deeds of the righteous." For further support, the midrash brings the verse from Tehilim, "Hashem knows - i.e., He loves - the ways of the tzaddikim." (Sidduro Shel Shabbat 6:1)

"Hashem Elokim said, 'It is not good that man be alone'." (2:18)

Why did G-d create a feeling of loneliness in man? R' Itamar Schwartz shlita explains that this feeling was created as a tool to draw one close to G-d. Man is charged with developing a relationship with G-d in which he views G-d as his constant companion. In order to be motivated to develop such a relationship, man must first feel lonely. (B'lvavi Mishkan Evneh II p.97)

R' Eliyahu de Vidas z"l (Eretz Yisrael; 16th century) writes similarly in the name of R' Yitzchak of Akko z"l (1250-1340): Why did G-d create the emotion of love between a husband and wife? It is to be a stepping-stone towards loving Hashem. One who has never loved a spouse can never experience what it means to love Hashem, he concludes. (Reishit Chochmah: Sha'ar Ha'Ahavah, end of ch.4)

In general, sums up R' Yehuda Ashlag z"l (1886-1954), all character traits, feelings and emotions were created to be used in the service of G-d. In order that we may develop and practice those traits, etc., G-d created us as social creatures. This is the meaning of our Sages' teaching, "Man is obligated to say, 'The entire world was created on my behalf'." This is not meant as a selfish statement; to the contrary, it means that each of us must view all others as existing to receive our love, kindness, etc., all in the name of perfecting our own service of Hashem. (Hakdamah L'talmud Eser Sefirot No. 68)

"Hashem turned to Hevel and to his offering . . . Kayin rose up against his brother Hevel and killed him." (4:4-8)

How could G-d allow Hevel to be murdered shortly after G-d had accepted Hevel's sacrificial offering?

R' Yaakov Sakly z"l (Spain; 14th century) explains: G-d allowed this in order to teach us at the very beginning of the Torah that man's reward for his good deeds is not paid in this world, but in the World-to-Come. [Apparently, Hevel's reason for existence was to be the medium through which this lesson was taught.] Thus, right at the beginning of the Torah we have an answer to the age-old question: Why do the righteous suffer?

R' Sakly writes further: This lesson is what we refer to when we recite every day in the prayer Baruch She'amar: "Blessed is the One who pays a good reward to those who fear Him." We trust that G-d does repay man for every good deed. (Torat Ha'minchah: Drush 22)

From the Haftarah . . .

"I have taken hold of your hand; I have drawn you . . ." (Yeshayah 42:6)

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1784-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) writes: The Gemara (Sukkah 52a) teaches

that man's yetzer hara would overpower him every day if not for the fact that G-d comes to man's aid. Of course, continues R' Kluger, it appears to man as if he is fighting the evil inclination and performing mitzvot. However, that is not the reality; the reality is the G-d is doing it all. [More on this below.]

This is the meaning of our verse, R' Kluger explains: Although it is not within your ability to perform the mitzvot, "I have taken hold of your hand." Just as one draws something that appears to be what it is not, so "I have drawn you," says G-d. (Shema Shlomo)

If the foregoing is correct, then why are we rewarded for performing mitzvot and punished for sinning? Our Sages teach that: "Everything is in the hands of Heaven except fear of Heaven." Commentaries explain this to mean that we are rewarded or punished for the choices we make. However, whether our good choices result in the successful completion of mitzvot (and the contrary from bad choices) is indeed out of our control.

This Week in History, Halachah, and Minhag

24 Tishrei - 27 Tishrei 3415 (346 B.C.E.): The Sages and Prophets fasted and prayed for three days asking G-d to forever remove from the Jewish People the yetzer hara / temptation to worship avodah zarah / idols (see Nechemiah ch.9). The Gemara (Yoma 69b) relates that this prayer was answered.

R' Yehuda He'chassid z"l (Germany; died 1217) is quoted as tying the above event to the end of the era of prophecy. Once Jews were no longer tempted to worship idols, there was no need for prophecy. Chassidic sources explain that prophecy had to cease when avodah zarah was no longer a temptation in order to maintain a general balance between good and evil in the world, lest man's bechirah / free will be affected. (See sources quoted by R' Bezalel Naor shlita in Orot Ha'nevuah.) R' Tzadok Hakohen z"l (1823-1900; chassidic rebbe of Lublin) notes that the end of avodah zarah and prophecy coincides historically with scholars' increased reliance on the intellect. This includes the beginning of the development of the Talmud among the Jewish People and the heyday of Aristotelean philosophy in Greece. (Resisei Lailah p.81b)

29 Tishrei: In the time of the Bet Hamikdash, one who found a lost object was required to announce his find in Yerushalayim on the next three regalim / pilgrimage festivals (Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot) and for seven days thereafter. Thus, if one found an object between Sukkot and Pesach of last year, today would be the last day he would have to announce his find. (Luach Davar B'ito p.262) The purpose of the seven-day window is to give people a chance to go home, check their belongings to see if they are missing the type of object that was found, and return to claim the object. If the object was not claimed after this period, the finder must store it safely until Eliyahu Hanavi will come and identify the owner. (Rambam z"l: Hilchot Gezeilah Va'aveidah 13:8, 10)

Also, today is the 2,320th yahrzeit of Shimon Ha'tzaddik z"l, the kohen gadol at the time that Alexander the Great conquered Eretz Yisrael. (Luach Davar B'ito p.262)

30 Tishrei - 1 Marcheshvan: One should give extra tzedakah on Rosh Chodesh. If possible, one should feed poor Torah scholars at his table on these days. (Luach Davar B'ito p.272 citing Kaf Ha'chaim)

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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