

# THE PLAN

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshas Shemini

### The Plan

Midrash Rabbah teaches that just as a king does not build a palace without hiring an architect who brings plans to the construction site, so Hashem consulted a plan, i.e., the Torah, when He created the world.

R' Yehuda Ashlag z"l (1885-1954; Poland and Eretz Yisrael) asks: How can Hashem be compared to a mortal king? A mortal king needs plans in order to build a palace, but Hashem has no such need! Furthermore, who created the Torah if not Hashem? He explains:

Hashem created this world as a place where we can overcome challenges posed by the yetzer hara and thus earn eternal reward in the World-to-Come. In order for man to have free will (without which he would have no challenges), Hashem had to conceal His "Light." Indeed, the word "olam" / "world" comes from the root which means "concealment." When we say that Hashem looked in the Torah and created the world, we mean that the Torah is the plan He used to conceal His Light. Where is His Light concealed? In the mitzvot of the Torah! It is in this sense that Creation was the invention of something new ("yesh m'ayin"), i.e., He created the constriction of His Light, which was a new concept.

Viewed from this perspective, everything that was created during the Six Days of Creation is a deficiency, for it impedes G-d's Light, but it also is a potential source of blessing. When will this blessing be realized? At the end of 6,000 years when, say our Sages, the world as we know it will come to an end. Why? Because no later than that time our task of revealing the Light hidden in Creation will have been completed. Paralleling that seventh millennium, when the Light will be unconstricted, is the Shabbat, when nothing was created to constrict the Light. (Ma'amar Ha'Torah Ve'ha'Shabbat)

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"Va'yhi / It came to pass on the eighth day that Moshe summoned Aharon and his sons, and

the elders of Yisrael." (9:1)

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1784-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) writes: The Gemara (Megillah 10b) says that the word, "Va'ychi," always introduces trouble. This may explain why Moshe had to summon Aharon and his sons and the elders. Surely, on every other day, these righteous people came to Moshe eagerly awaiting the opportunity to learn Torah from him. But, we read in Mishlei (14:10), "The heart knows its own bitterness." Also, the Gemara (Megillah 3a) states that one's mazal [loosely translated, his subconscious] can sense things of which man is unaware. Perhaps, writes R' Kluger, Aharon and his sons and the elders did not come to Moshe on this day as they always did because they had an uneasy feeling arising from the fact that Aharon's two oldest sons would die later that day. If this is correct, it also would explain why Moshe had to tell Aharon (verse 7), "Come near to the Altar and perform the service." Perhaps Aharon was reluctant because of this uneasy feeling. (Imrei Shefer)

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"Aharon raised his hands toward the people and blessed them." (9:22)

R' Moshe David Valle z"l (1697-1777; Italian kabbalist) writes: Don't ask, "Do not the priestly blessings appear only later, in the book of Bemidbar?" He explains: First, we have been taught that the Torah is not written in chronological order. Second--R' Valle's preferred answer--when Aharon wanted to bless Bnei Yisrael, he attained ruach hakodesh / Divine inspiration and he recited with his own lips exactly the same blessing that would later be established for future generations.

R' Valle adds: The word in our verse which means "his hands" (plural) is written as if it were "his hand" (singular). Our Sages have derived a halachah from this [see below], which is of course true. The deeper meaning, though, is that the root of a man's soul is called "his hand." This is because a man's soul defines his "reach," i.e., his capabilities. When one wishes to bless his friend, he cannot bless him with more than he (the one giving the blessing) has. Likewise, here, Aharon blessed Bnei Yisrael from the very root of his soul, to the greatest extent of his ability. That is why the verse says "his hand." (Avodat Hakodesh)

What halachah is derived from the use of the singular form "his hand" instead of the plural "his hands"?

R' Meir ben Yekutiel Hakohen z"l hy"d (Germany; murdered in the "Rindfleisch massacres" in 1298) writes: This teaches that the kohen should elevate one hand, i.e., the right hand, slightly above the other. (Hagahot Maimoniot: Hilchot Tefilah 14:3)

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Pirkei Avot

"Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Yehoshua . . ." (1:1)

Why does this tractate begin with this information? R' Ovadiah Mi'Bartenura z"l (15th century; Italy and Eretz Yisrael) writes:

It seems to me that because this tractate is not explaining one of the laws of the Torah--rather it is all about midot / good character traits, a topic about which gentile sages have written also--the author of the mishnah wants to clarify that this tractate, too, is from Sinai, and the midot in this tractate are not the product of the individual sages' own thoughts.

R' Shmuel de Ozeda z"l (16th century; Eretz Yisrael) offers another reason: Our sages teach that Torah knowledge can exist only in a G-d-fearing person. It was the fear of G-d possessed by Moshe, Yehoshua and the other prophets and sages that allowed them to comprehend and transmit the Torah. In order to drive this point home, the chain of transmission is mentioned at the beginning of the tractate which speaks of good character traits. (Midrash Shmuel)

R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) writes:

There are two types of ethics: "Mussar Eloki" / Divine ethics and "Mussar Enoshi" / human ethics. They are different and have different goals. In particular, Mussar Eloki is meant to elevate a person and purify him, while Mussar Enoshi is simply a tool that allows societies to function.

R' Kook adds: Because Mussar Enoshi is utilitarian, a means to an end, it's possible for someone to be harmed by it [i.e., his needs or feelings might be sacrificed for the perceived greater good]. This is not so with Mussar Eloki, which, by definition, is pure. (Quoted in Sichat Avot)

Elsewhere R' Kook writes:

The Divine wisdom teaches us about midot / the Divine Attributes so that we will know that we must attach ourselves to His traits.

When we recognize that midot and Divine ideals cannot exist unless G-d exists, unless there is a Source for everything, then the ideals them-selves are elevated. If we don't accustom ourselves to recognize the need for "the flame to be united with the fuel," then we have not understood anything.

On the other hand, if we don't recognize that the reason for knowing the Divine Names and Attributes is so that we will know that we are able to attach ourselves to them, then we haven't understood about those Attributes. (Quoted in Beurei Ha'Rayah: Pirkei Avot p.7)

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Letters from Our Sages

This letter was written by R' Chaim Friedlander z"l (died 1986), the mashgiach of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. The letter is reprinted in Sifte Chaim: Pirkei Emunah V'hashgachah, p. 432. The letter is dated 26 Marcheshvan, 5746 (November 10, 1985). The identity of the recipient is unknown.

In whatever circumstances one finds oneself, it is possible to take advantage of the situation to serve Hashem. Even a condition of sickness, suffering and physical weakness is given to a person so that he can serve Hashem despite these limitations.

Strengthening one's prayer and one's faith and trust even a small amount in such circumstances is counted in Heaven as an enormous step, because [we are taught in Avot D'Rabbi Nattan 3:6], "One time with suffering is equivalent to one hundred times without suffering." My teacher and rabbi, the gaon and tzaddik R' Eliyahu Dessler zatzal explained in the name of his father zatzal (see Michtav M'Eliyahu III, p.14), that this is true of any kind of suffering. After all, our Sages said (Arachin 16a), "To what extent does suffering go? Even if one reaches into his pocket to remove three coins and he comes up with only two." In other words, when one has to reach into his pocket a second time, that should be viewed as Divinely-imposed suffering [and one is rewarded by Hashem for accepting this "suffering" and serving Hashem despite it]. If we add a little more suffering, then the reward may increase 100-fold. With a little more suffering, the reward increases another hundred-fold, i.e., to 10,000 times the original reward; with more suffering, another hundred-fold (i.e., 1,000,000 times), and so on.

If so, the reward for serving Hashem amidst suffering, when it requires extra effort, is beyond description. In such circumstances, the value in Heaven of a small amount of prayer, a small amount of Torah study, and a small strengthening of one's faith and trust is enormous. Under such conditions, one can accomplish in a short time what it ordinarily would take many years to accomplish.

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