

# AND WHAT A BEGINNING IT WAS!

*by Rabbi Pinchas Winston*

## Friday Night:

*In the beginning, G-d made the Heaven and the Earth. (Bereishis 1:1)*

What is the purpose of creation? What does G-d expect from this world He has created, and, from man for whom He has created it? Of all the philosophical questions one can ask, this is both the simplest and the most complicated -- it all depends upon how detailed you want to get. However, the more details you take into account, the more accurate your path in life will be.

To begin with, you have to be a *mentsch*, a Yiddish word for "man" in specific, but, which has taken on the general meaning of being an all-round nice and moral individual. It can apply to both males and females alike, but, as one can well surmise, it is also a term that can be subject to a very wide and varied interpretation. The road to international self-destruction has often been paved with people who might have referred to themselves as "*mentsches*."

Therefore, we will become a little more specific. Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, or, the "*Ramchal*" for short, wrote in the 1700s that:

"G-d's purpose in creation was to bestow of His good to another Š Since G-d desired to bestow good, a partial good would not be sufficient. The good that He bestows would have to be the ultimate good that His handiwork could accept. G-d alone, however, is the only true good, and therefore His beneficent desire would not be satisfied unless it could bestow that very good, namely the true perfect good that exists in His intrinsic nature ... His wisdom therefore decreed that the nature of His true benefaction be His giving created things the opportunity to attach themselves to Him to the greatest degree possible Š"

In other words, says the *Ramchal*, mankind and all of the physical universe was created as a means to bestow Divine good to man. Being perfect, as G-d is, the good He wanted to bestow is the most perfect good possible for man to receive, and what "good" can be more perfect than G-d Himself? Therefore, man was created with the capacity to experience G-d in the most sublime way possible, and the universe was structured in such a way as to facilitate that sublime experience.

However, one need not be an historian to know that so much of life on this planet has been anything but godly. Quite frankly, we live in a day-and-age when many people doubt the very existence of G-

d, or at least, His direct involvement in the daily affairs of man. This is why the Ramchal continues:

"For the intended purpose to be successfully achieved, means must exist through which this creature can earn perfection Š"

The key word here is "EARN." It seems that experiencing G-d is not an automatic aspect of daily, physical life. It appears that it is the result, or better yet, the "reward" for doing "something" that results in being in a position to be "attached" to Him. The Ramchal continues:

"Man was therefore created with both a yetzer tov (good inclination) and a yetzer hara (bad inclination). He has the power to incline himself in whichever direction he desires Š The Highest Wisdom decreed that man should consist of two opposites. These are his pure spiritual soul and his unenlightened physical body. Each one is drawn toward its nature, so that the body inclines toward the MATERIAL, while the soul leans toward the SPIRITUAL. The two are then in a constant state of battle Š" (Derech Hashem 1:2:1-1:3:2)

The Ramchal's explanation of the purpose of creation adds a whole new dimension to what it means to be a "mentsch." According to the Ramchal, a mentsch would be someone who uses his yetzer tov to channel the power of his yetzer hara in the direction of serving G-d, and thereby, earn spiritual perfection. The rest of Derech Hashem -- The Way of G-d -- is about doing exactly that in everyday life.

Deeper yet is the following explanation, Kabbalistic in nature:

" 'G-d has made everything for His own purpose.' (Mishlei 16:4); this does not mean that it serves Him a purpose or that it (creation) was done for His own good, G-d forbid. Rather, the deeper understanding is that it was all done in order to act as a way to reveal His Light and His Glory to those fitting to receive them, because the revelation of His Light and of His Glory, May His Name Be Blessed. For, it is this that is the true pleasure and brilliance, intended for those who are fitting to enjoy it; the ultimate pleasure in the World-to-Come, as it is taught: In the World-to-Come, there is no need to eat or drink Š Rather the Righteous sit with their crowns on their heads [which are the lights of the Torah and the mitzvos that they were fortunate enough to learn and perform in The World, which become crowns on their heads, each one according to his actions]. (Brochos 17a). This is why it refers to "their crowns," as if to say, the crown each one had prepared for himself, and they will take pleasure from the sparks of the Divine Presence, as it says: They saw G-d, and ate and drink Š (Shemos 24:11) This refers to the light of the Shechinah itself, for all those who merit to see it, and this itself is the pleasure of the World-to-Come, as it says, "G-d has made everything for His own purpose" Š that is, for the benefit of the Righteous Š (Leshem Shevo v'Achlamah, Bi-urim, Drushei Igulim v'Yoshar, 1:1.)

In other words, and, in simpler terms, G-d made creation as a vehicle to hide Himself, in order that man should reveal Him. A mentsch is someone who expends energy and uses his or her life to reveal G-d to mankind within creation. It is easy to do. All you have to do is act in a way that says: I

believe in G-d, and my actions are motivated by my belief in Him, "Him" being the One Who gave the Torah at Mt. Sinai and commanded us to live by it.

The catch, of course, is the yetzer hara, who challenges our every moral move, and turns the simple into the complicated. But, overcoming that yetzer hara and letting the light of G-d into creation is the very source of all our reward in the World-to-Come, which is why G-d made all of THIS in the first place.

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## Shabbos Day:

*G-d sent him from the Garden of Eden to work the earth from which he was taken. (Bereishis 3:23)*

According to Pirkei d'Rebi Eliezer, which seems to be the prominent opinion, that was Motzei Shabbos. And, with respect to Motzei Shabbos, the Talmud writes:

Two things G-d thought to create erev Shabbos, but He didn't until Motzei Shabbos. Motzei Shabbos, The Holy One, Blessed is He, put knowledge into Adam HaRishon like Above, and, he brought two stones and ground them together and brought forth light. (Pesachim 54a)

This, of course, is one of the reasons we light a Havdallah candle Motzei Shabbos, to recall the extra knowledge that G-d gave Adam HaRishon upon leaving the Garden of Eden for having eaten from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil against G-d's command. Perhaps, this is why the word the Talmud chose for "fire" is not the typical "aish," but, "ohr," which means "light." G-d wasn't just giving Adam HaRishon a way to keep himself physically warm, but, more importantly, spiritually "warm."

In fact, we hold in our hands each Motzei Shabbos a power sign of world rectification. For, you may have already taken note of the fact that we bring Shabbos in with candle light, and, send the Shabbos Queen off with candle light as well, with one, very important exception: Erev Shabbos, we light at least two SEPARATE candles, and, Motzei Shabbos, we light ONE candle with combined wicks. Why the difference, and what's the connection?

The answer lies in a short little, usually unnoticed, and often unsaid prayer in the siddurim that says an awful lot with so little:

(I do this mitzvah) for the sake of unifying The Holy One, Blessed is He and His Divine Presence, in fear and in love, to unify the Yud-Heh and Vav-Heh completely, in the name of the entire Jewish nation.

Entire Kabbalistic libraries have been written to discuss this idea, but, in short, it means that the purpose of mitzvos is to make it clear to us and the world that nature has no intrinsic existence of its own, but, is merely a veil for the hand of G-d. When a person perceives the just opposite, he is said to separate G-d from His Divine Presence, or, Yud-Heh from the holy Tetragrammaton Name from

its second half, Vav-Heh.

Kabbalistically, the first two letters alludes to a high-level, clear revelation of G-d's Presence in creation; the last two letters alludes to lower levels of revelation that make it more difficult to see the hand of G-d, at least while they are separate from their holier counterpart.

On the other hand, when a person is real with the reality of G-d, and makes it apparent from the way he lives, he is said to unify the Presence of G-d, and, the two pairs of two letters of G-d's Holy Ineffable Name. This is the ultimate Kiddush Hashem -- Sanctification of G-d's Name -- something which a Jew is supposed to perform through life, and, when necessary, through death as well.

Very few mitzvos perform this very act of unification better than Shabbos itself (and Sh'mittah, for that matter, which is the Shabbos of the land which just began this last Rosh Hashanah). The six working days of the week, on the other hand, cause just the opposite, making spirituality very difficult to maintain on a momentary basis.

Hence, at the start of Shabbos, we begin with two, separate candles, symbolizing the toll the working week has had on our G-d-consciousness. During the six profane days of the week, we usually have difficulty being real with the reality of G-d in all that we do and participate in.

However, after having immersed ourselves within the enveloping holiness of Shabbos for some 26 hours, we are expected to have risen out of the mundane reality of "peirud" -- the world of separation and profane matters. At that point, we should be ready to begin the week with a clearer vision of G-d's unity, signified by the single candle with at least two intertwined wicks.

This is also the reason why there is very strong custom to light two new Shabbos candles for the Melave Malkah meal from the Havdallah candle before extinguishing it after Havdallah. In doing so, not only are we bringing light to the Melave Malkah, but, we are insisting that the light of G-d's unity, symbolized by the Havdallah candle, follow us into the world of peirud, to allow us to survive and keep our head spiritually above the waters of weekly confusion.

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## **SEUDAH SHLISHI:**

*Adam lived for 930 years, and then died.* (Bereishis 5:5)

As the posuk says, Adam died at the ripe old age of 930 years. The Midrash says that he was supposed to have lived until the age of 1,000 years, but, that he sacrificed seventy of those years to Dovid HaMelech, whom was destined to die at birth. Instead, because of Adam's generosity, Dovid HaMelech instead lived until the age of seventy years -- exactly. Hence, the name "Adam," spelled, aleph-dalet-mem, is considered to be a made up of the first letter of the three names: Adam, Dovid, Moshiach.

Hence, in this short, three-letter name of the first man, we have an allusion to all of world history. Remarkable, isn't it? Adam HaRishon at the beginning of history, Dovid HaMelech at the middle of history, and, Moshiach at the end of history! Not just that, but, in this explanation lies one of the fundamental missions of mankind throughout history, ever since Adam mistakenly ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil: to rectify the soul of Adam HaRishon, which became damaged as a result of the sin. In other words, "sparks" of Adam HaRishon's soul have come back over history acting as the soul of various people to achieve rectification through their lives and decisions.

At first, there was Adam's own sons, Kayin and Hevel. According to the Chida in Seder HaDoros, it says:

Š Chanoch took the Neshamah of Adam HaRishon, and therefore became an angel. Eliyahu took the sod Ruach of Atzilus of Adam HaRishon; Kayin and Hevel took the Nefesh to rectify them Š

Later on, Avraham received Adam's Nefesh to rectify it, Yitzchak received the Ruach, and, Ya'akov the Neshamah itself. And, even though these are only three people, the truth is, there are countless sparks that required fixing up through the rest of us. According to the Alshich, the part of Adam's soul that became the basis for Dovid HaMelech's life was hidden away in S'dom, to protect it from the Satan, who would never have suspected it was in such a terrible place as that.

In fact, Avraham may have known that, which is probably why he did not resist when Lot chose to leave his camp and take up residence in S'dom. Someone had to go down there and free Dovid's spark, and, it wasn't going to be Avraham. The plan worked, Lot barely escaped with his life, and, his two daughters, through whom Moav was born, the people of Rus who created the lineage of Dovid HaMelech.

That's what life is all about in This World: Tikun Neshamos -- Rectification of the Souls, ours personally, and, Adam's in general. When that is done, then so is history as we know it. This is what the Talmud means when it says that the son of Dovid won't come until ALL the Neshamos are out of the body (Yevamos 62b). It is another way of referring to all the souls having their rectification, either through suffering in This World, or through reincarnation, or, both. And, when that fails, there is always Gehinnom Š

But why wait? Let's fix it now. There many not be, there probably isn't much time left. With Moshiach's arrival goes free-will's departure (Succah 52a), and the final chance to do very much in the way of tikun.

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## **MELAVE MALKAH:**

In this psalm we return to the age old central issue of trust in G-d, or, "bitachon" as it is known in Hebrew. In fact, in Israeli society, the Minister of Security, responsible for the security of Israeli

citizens, is called the "Sar HaBitachon," and, at his disposal is the Mossad, Shin Beit, and just about any other army and spy organization Israel has in its military arsenal.

However, this is not the kind of bitachon to which the Midrash refers when it writes, "One who trusts in G-d will be enveloped by chesed; even an evil person who trusts in G-d will be surrounded by chesed" (Midrash Tehillim 32). The Ramban echoes these words in his landmark work on these topic, "Sefer Emunah v'Bitachon." The bottom line is: Nothing stands in the way of one with bitachon.

What does trust in G-d mean? It means many things to many people, but, to the Torah, it is another way of referring to the well-known (but often difficult to implement concept): All is for the good (Ta'anis 21a). In other words, even though in the SHORT-RUN the situation may look grim, or, even impossible, in the LONG RUN, good will absolutely triumph over evil. Absolutely. And, when it does, those who believed in this will be around to eternally enjoy this reality.

However, it also means more than that. It can and very often mean that even in the short-run impossible situations can have fantastically and dramatically wonderful conclusions because of trust in G-d, for the "good guys."

Let's face it: G-d can do anything He wants to, whenever and wherever He wants to -- that's principle #1. Principle #2 is, life is one big test, for everyone, but, especially for spiritually-sensitive people who have potential to trust in G-d, in spite of the direction of society around him, and, the circumstances within which he finds himself at the moment.

There are many ways to describe the purpose of creation, as we have discussed above. But, one practical way of understanding it is in terms of our willingness to stick with G-d at all moments of our lives, especially the difficult and trying ones. This implies relationship, and, the more we trust G-d, the more we desire that relationship and depend upon it.

Pass the test, remove the obstacle, witness the miracle.

Jerusalem -- mountains surround her, and G-d surrounds His nation, from now and forever. (2)

In other words, Jerusalem may appear impenetrable because of its natural defense system, tucked away in mountains. History reveals otherwise, and, we are witnessing just how vulnerable Jerusalem can be, G-d forbid. Jerusalem's ability to defend herself is dependent upon G-d's Presence enveloping the Jewish people, who, have to be willing to be enveloped by Him.

For, the rod of evil will not come to rest upon the portion of the righteous, so that the righteous will not stretch their hands into sin. (3)

The prophet says:

"It shall come to pass that he who is left in Tzion and he who remains in Jerusalem shall be called 'holy,' everyone in Jerusalem is written to life." (Yeshayahu 4:3)

This is why the Sforno says that Dovid HaMelech, in this psalm, is writing about the Jews destined to be saved at the time of the "Ingathering of the Exiles," or, "Kibbutz Golios" as it is called. According to the Zohar (Midrash Ne'elam, Toldos), that may have begun as early as 1990 Š That's right, Nineteen-Ninety.

Something is going to happen at sometime to "weed out" the negative influences from Jerusalem, to leave it pure for the pure.

Do good, G-d, to good people, to the upright in their hearts. But, those who turn to their crookedness, G-d will lead them with the workers of sin. (4-5)

The Radak, concurring with the Sforno, says that in the future, G-d will expel from the ranks of those Jews who remained loyal to G-d and Torah, those who trusted in Him until the very end, all those who acted perversely. Many prophets speak about this, including Zephaniah 3:11-13. And, only then, can there truly be:

Peace upon Israel. (5)

And the fulfillment of the original purpose for creation.

Amen, v'kein yehi Ratzon bimheirah b'yameinu.

Have a great Shabbos Bereishis,

Pinchas Winston

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