THE CONDITION OF CREATION

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

FRIDAY NIGHT:

In the beginning, G-d created the Heaven and the EarthŠ (Bereishis 1:1)

BEREISHIS: In the beginning.

But not really, as Rashi explains, because the correct word for that interpretation would be 'b'rishonah.' Therefore, elucidates Rashi: BERESHIS, that is, B-REISHIS, "for the sake of 'Reishis'" - Torah and the Jewish people, both of which are called 'Reishis' - G-d made Heaven and the Earth, and EVERYTHING ELSE for that matter.

While we're at it, 'Bereishis' (bais-raish-aleph-shin-yud-tav) can also be broken into two words, 'bara' (bais-raish-aleph) and 'shees' (shin-yud-tav) which, in Aramaic (there are a few Aramaic words in the Torah) means, "He made six." Indeed He did, as the Ramban and other commentators point out, for at the very first moment of creation, G-d created, in potential, all that would EVER be necessary for the SIX days of creation, and the SIX millennia that would follow them.

That is because at that very moment of 'Tikun Olam' - World Rectification - G-d 'built' the SIX sefiros of Chesed, Gevurah, Tifferes, Netzach, Hod, and Yesod, the spiritual DNA for our six thousand years of history. That is the Sod of the very first word of the Torah. If you want to know the other 69 interpretations of this SIX-letter word, look at the beginning of the Holy Zohar.

There is something equally mysterious that Rashi says on this seemingly non-mysterious first verse of the Torah:

IN THE BEGINNING: Rebi Yitzchak said: The Torah should have begun with, "This month shall be for you the first of the months" (Shemos 12:1), which is the first commandment given to the Jewish people. Why does it begin with creation? Because of [the posuk], "He declared to His people the strength of His works, in order that He might give them the heritage of the nations" (Tehillim 111:6). For, should the peoples of the world say to Israel, "You are robbers, because you took by force the lands of the seven nations," Israel can reply to them, "All the earth belongs to The Holy One, Blessed is He; He created it and He gave it to whom He pleased. When He wanted to, He gave it to them, and when He wanted to, He gave it to us." (Rashi)

Maybe the problem today is that Rashi was never translated into Arabic. On the other hand, Rashi has since been translated into English, French, Spanish, and even Russian, and they're still yelling at

us from all four corners of the earth, "Stop! Thief!" Maybe we should send a Sefer Bereishis to all the members of the United Nations, with Rashi. Would it help?

I find it to be a remarkable stroke of Hashgochah Pratis that the key issue towards the end of history is the basis of the very first Rashi, implied from the very first posuk about creation. For thousands of years the only issue was, do the Jewish people have a right to survive at all? However, though there are still plenty of hard-core anti-Semites still out there who vote "NO!" (one e-mailed me last week asking for my vote to help him re-implement the 'Final Solution'), the world at large seems primarily focused on our right to Eretz Yisroel, if not the whole land, then at least parts of it.

Perhaps being forced to give back key sections of Eretz Yisroel is a more 'civilized' form of Amalek's Final Solution. After all, everyone knows how much more vulnerable an already vulnerable Israel will be once the Land is carved up like a Thanksgiving turkey and served up to the Arab nations (that's right, Arab nations, because the Palestinian people are just one thread attached to a sleeve that reaches back to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, etc.).

After all, going back a little more than half a century, we find the British ignoring the mandate of the League of Nations to implement a Jewish homeland, and instead handing the land over to the Arabs. Previously, the land had been barren of any humans, until Jews came and began settlements at the risk of their lives. Jewish success led to Arab jobs, and an influx of Arab immigration, but that didn't stop the British from turning back the clocks and pretending as if the Arabs had always been there. And, when they left the country, they also left all of their artillery - in the hands of the Arabs. Meanwhile, Harry S. Truman imposed a boycott on the floundering Jewish settlement, barring the sale of any weapons to Jews defending THEIR land. Seems fair, no?

How did we survive? How have we ever survived? Miracles. However, the screaming and accusations are not letting up; just the contrary, they're becoming so constant and loud that we are being forced to hand over land that really belongs to us, just to buy off the rest of the worldŠ as if that can ever be done.

A lot of good Rebi Yitzchak's commentary is to us!

SHABBOS DAY:

There is a similar idea in the Talmud that seems to work along the same lines as Rebi Yitzchak's, and with great success:

The Africans summoned Israel before Alexander of Macedonia, claiming that the land of Canaan belonged to them, as it is written, "The land of Canaan according to its borders" (Bamidbar 34:2), and that Canaan was their ancestor. Gevihah ben Pesisa said to the Chachamim, "Permit me, and I will enter into judgment with them before Alexander of Macedonia. If they defeat me, then you can say, 'You merely defeated a simpleton from amongst us!' If I succeed, then you can say, 'The Torah of Moshe has defeated you!' " They gave him permission and he went to argue with them.

He asked them, "From where does your evidence come?"

They said, "From your Torah."

He told them, "In defense, I will also bring evidence from the same source. It says, 'And he said, 'Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brothers'. (Bereishis 9:25) Now, to whom does the property of a slave belong, if not to his master? Not only this, but I summon you before the king for the many years you have not done any service for us!"

King Alexander said to them, "State your argument against him."

They said, "Give us three days," and he granted it to them. ,However, they could find nothing to reply, so they left their fields which were sown, and their vineyards which had been planted. That year happened to be a Sh'mittah year. (Sanhedrin 91a)

If only it was so simple today! However, there is still a question to ask here on Gevihah ben Pesisa's argument, namely, why did he not use Rebi Yitzchak's argument instead of the one he himself proposed?

After all, Rebi Yitzchak' argument states that even though Eretz Yisroel may once have belonged to Canaan and his descendants, it no longer did since G-d gave it to the Jewish people, His right as Creator of the world. Gevihah's argument only went so far as to say, "Even if it was your land, and even STILL is, it is ours by virtue of the fact that you are our slaves, and the property of slaves belongs to their masters!" - an argument that today would not wash with the League of Arab Nations.

A second question might be, why did Gevihah offer the Chachamim a back door out in the event that Alexander didn't accept his argument? That itself could be taken as an admission of weakness regarding the Jewish people's right to Eretz Yisroel, or, at least, the futility of trying to convince gentile leaders of the validity of the Jewish claim to Eretz Yisroel through Torah.

The answer to these questions is in the first Rashi quoted above, about how the word 'Bereishis' really means "for the sake of Reishis," which is Torah. For, the underlying meaning of Rashi's words is that creation was built upon a condition, that condition being that creation exists for the sake of Torah. If not, if we don't fulfill our part of the bargain, then G-d doesn't have to fulfill His, and creation tends to take on a life of its own, subject, seemingly, only to the laws of nature.

This requires more discussion.

SEUDOS SHLISHIS:

In other words, Rashi is saying, Rebi Yitzchak's words, though always true, only helps when the Jewish people are fulfilling the mandate of creation, living by Torah and being the light unto the nations they were redeemed from Egypt to become. When that is the case, then all the pieces fall into place - without a single spear being thrown as should have been the case in Yehoshua's time, or

a single shot being fired, as should, ideally, be in our time.

(For all we know, the SIX-Day War represented an aspect of this idea, for historical reasons we cannot yet appreciate. Perhaps this was why SO few Jews were SO successful against SO many well-equipped and extremely determined enemies, in SO short a time - SIX days in all.)

After all, how many Jews in power today would even think of presenting the Torah as a realistic document to decide the dispute? Why not? Because they know they would be laughed away from the negotiating table? Why? Because we would look like the biggest hypocrites of history if we stood behind a document that our very lives contradictŠ a document that we ourselves accept as being what it truly is: G-d's opinion about EVERYTHING for all of history!

Thus, the loss of our Torah idealism has resulted in the loss of the historical ideal, and everything is forced to follow a pattern that resembles a G-dless world far more than it does a Torah world. Bad guys succeed, good guys get battered, and truth just about disappears from the ideological landscape - just as the Talmud predicted it would over a thousand years ago! (Sanhedrin 97a)

Now we can appreciate Gevihah's argument and his fail-safe approach to the discussion.

Greek times were less than ideal for the Jewish people. True, there were some great Torah scholars at the time, but there were also large amounts of Jews who knew little or no Torah at all. True, there were some converts to the Jewish people, but there were also large amounts of Jews going in the opposite direction, even pursuing the Greek lifestyle. It was not a good time for the Jewish people and Torah, and certainly the condition for making creation was not being fulfilled.

Hence, Gevihah, knowing the reality and state of the Jewish people and the world at the time, could not count solely on Torah logic and reason to win his argument. Therefore, he provided the Chachamim with a simple 'out' from any disaster he might not be able to avoid, or even create.

Nevertheless, he decided to test the waters of Divine Providence. Therefore, he asked the Africans first, "From where does your evidence come?" Once he heard their answer, that Torah was the basis of their argument, then he took it as a Divine sign that, however bad the situation was, there was still enough of a merit for the Jewish people to use Torah as the 'document' to maintain a claim to Eretz Yisroel.

Nevertheless, this is why Gevihah did not rely upon Rebi Yitzchak. (Obviously, he did not see the comments of Rebi Yitzchak or Rashi, since they came after his time. However, we can assume the idea itself pre-dated both of them, and was a part of the Midrashic tradition going back to Moshe Rabbeinu's time, if not earlier.) For, had the Jewish people been holding on THAT level, then, not only would Gevihah be able to maintain the right of the Jewish people to Eretz Yisroel, but no one would even have challenged it in the first place!

MELAVE MALKAH:

Adah gave birth to Yaval" (Bereishis 4:20)

I chose this d'var Torah, not so much because it will really mean that much to most readers, but because it is a phenomenal example of how something can seem so insignificant in the world of Pshat, yet so much in the world of Sod. And that is no small matter, but a fundamental of fundamentals of Torah and life in this world.

Who was Yaval? He was a descendant of Kayin, about whom we no very little other than the fact that "he was the first of those who dwell in tents and breed cattle." Why should the Torah spend much time talking about someone so seemingly insignificant, a real nobody, apparently, in the annals of history?

Rabbi Chaim Vital reveals something the Written Torah does not:

The level of Kayin in Zehr Anpin is Kayin himself, the son of Adam HaRishon. The level of Kayin within the partzuf of Ya'akov is Yaval, the grandson of Kayin, as it says, "Adah gave birth to Yaval" (Bereishis 4:20). Therefore, Yaval worked with bronze and metal because he came from the Gevuros of Kayin which come from Imma (Binah), and which is called "Yovel," the "fiftieth year." Therefore, he was called "Yaval." The level of this Yaval is hinted to in the posuk, "along a brook (yuval) it spreads its root" (Yirmiyahu 17:8), because within him are all the roots that are within the Kayin of Zehr Anpin. This Yaval must be rectified, lest Moshiach come quickly in our time, and this is the sod of "gifts (yovilo) to the Awesome One" (Tehillim 76:12). This Yoval will be rectified by Moshe Rabbeinu in the future, b'sod the ibur that will be in him. For, in Moshe there are also some sparks from the root of Kayin, even though his root is from Hevel, and specifically in the last generation close to the time of Moshiach's arrival, which is called in the name of "Bais Ya'akov;" that generation is called "Bais Ya'akov." Therefore, this Yoval, which is in the partzuf of Ya'akov, is being rectified now by Moshe Rabbeinu, as we have mentioned. This is the sod of, "G-d was angry with me because of you" (Devarim 3:26), whose head-letters spell "Yoval." (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Chapter 36)

It is talking about the system of the Sefiros, and their subsystems of Sefiros, which are the spiritual mechanisms that make all of creation work. And, somehow, a very important part of that system has a part called 'Yaval' (or 'Yoval'), and it possesses spiritual roots of Kayin, which come from the side of the system based upon a light that constricts the light of G-d, called 'Gevuros.'

Because of its central role within the overall system, it needs rectification, a high-powered rectification, one that only Moshe Rabbeinu himself can carry out, and will carry out when he reincarnates into Moshiach. Furthermore, though we were unaware of it, this whole rectification process represents a very central undercurrent of history, effecting creation to this very day, perhaps a major reason for all that is going on around us, especially the Gevuros part.

Isn't Torah deep?

This is important to know, especially as we head into the month of Cheshvan, G-d willing, the month

in which the world was flooded in Noach's time. According to tradition, the rain fell from Heaven for 40 days and nights to symbolize the Written Torah, which was given to Moshe Rabbeinu on Mt. Sinai over 40 days and nights.

The waters surged from below the earth's surface for 150 days symbolizing the Oral Law, the part of Torah that comes from G-d but spoken by Torah scholars who apply the law in every new situation and who reveal aspects of Torah previously known and unknown. This requires the level of the 'Fifty Gates of Understanding' on the levels of soul, Nefesh, Ruach, and Neshamah. Fifty times three is 150, and together they made a VERY deep Flood.

If only they had come to learn Torah from Noach instead of mocking him, as he followed the command of G-d and continued to build the Ark, up in the mountains where floods never occurred. However, it is bizarreness that makes direct Divine Providence stand out so much, so that we can notice and change for the better.

That was one of the redeeming qualities of Noach, and will be one of the redeeming qualities of those who survive the War of Gog and Magog, if one becomes necessary. For, it is through learning and understanding the depths of the water of Torah that we can hear G-d's message, and respond appropriately.

Have a great Shabbos, and a great month of Cheshvan, PW

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