

שמיני

THE EIGHTH DAY OF CREATION

The *Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 3:9)* reveals that at the time of creation Hashem desired to unite with and dwell among His righteous ones (*Peirush Maharzu ibid, Yefei To'ar ibid.*). The purpose of creation was for Hashem to meld with His nation. This wish was realized at the dedication of the *Mishkan* on the eighth day of its consecration. At that time, the *Shechinah* established Its residence among mortals; the seat of Divine power was shifted from the celestial spheres of the heavens to the *Kodesh Hakedashim* here on Earth. Hashem's joy at that time was so great that it paralleled the delight He exhibited at creation.

The *Gemara (Megillah 10:)* arrives at the same conclusion by comparing the Torah's usage of similar expressions to describe these two events. The *pasuk* detailing the dedication of the *Mishkan* begins:

ויהי ביום השמיני

And it was on the eighth day (*Vayikra 9:1*).

While at creation, the Scripture reads:

ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום אחד

And it was the evening, and it was the morning, the first day (*Bereishis 1:5*).

The parallel wordage alludes to a parallel joy.

Each day's creation ends with an identical concluding sentence:

ויהי ערב ויהי בקר

And it was the evening, and it came to pass the morning.

The narrative of the seventh day merits a different ending:

...כי בו שבת מכל מלאכתו אשר ברא אלקים לעשות

. . . For on it He abstained from all His work which Hashem created to make (*Bereishis 2:3*).

The concluding words "to make" seem superfluous; the sentence reads extremely well in Hebrew without that last word. The *Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 11:6)* indicates that the seemingly unnecessary word is designed to teach mankind a significant lesson. Hashem created His world to perfection, yet He left room for mankind to labor towards a certain type of improvement. Hashem wants man to perfect *himself*. We are to raise ourselves up from the mundane and strive towards a spiritual perfection. Hence, the extra word "to make" means Hashem left man room to remake himself.

The result of that remake, that conscious spiritual elevation, is "the eighth day," at which time Hashem realized His dream for His creation. Mankind, specifically *Klal Yisrael*, was deemed

worthy of being joined with the *Shechinah*. Hence, in a sense, it was the exalted eighth day of creation, its crowning glory and completion. It was the much-anticipated day on which the purpose of creation was finally achieved, and it resulted in Hashem's unrestrained joy.

There is an additional connection between the "seven" of the seven days of creation and the "eight" of the eighth day of the dedication of the *Mishkan*. The Maharal (*Chidushei Aggados, Sotah* 11:) explains that the number seven signifies the mundane, the system instituted at creation; while the number eight represents the spiritual, the super-natural. Since creation was accomplished in seven days, all activity pertaining to nature revolves around the number seven. The spiritual ascension of *Klal Yisrael* which culminated in Hashem's occupation of the *Mishkan* is represented by the number eight. The *hakamas hamishkan* was performed on the "eighth day" to indicate that it was the spiritual conclusion of the seven natural days of creation.

This relationship can now be appreciated on a much deeper level. There are two major concepts which must be understood relative to the creation of the world: *beriah yeish mei'ayin* (creation ex-nihilo) and *tzimtzum* (contraction or withdrawal). Creation ex-nihilo means that Hashem created all that exists in creation from nothing. The building blocks of nature were originated by Hashem, but prior to that act there existed absolutely nothing. After creation, everything within the creation is constructed from the original building blocks. The act of creating something out of nothing involved one additional step. That "nothing" also had to be arranged, because prior to creation Hashem occupied all space for infinity, so there was no room for even "nothing" to exist. In essence, Hashem had to contract Himself so that the space for that "nothing" could come into existence. (See Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag: *Talmud Eser Sfiros*, for a more comprehensive discussion of this very difficult topic).

The space had to be independent of Hashem. The *bechirah* (free will) of humanity could only be effectively operative in a realm outside of the direct presence of Hashem. For if Hashem were to concurrently also occupy that space, His presence would be too overwhelming for *bechirah* to manifest itself (*Nefesh Hachaim* 3:7). Without *bechirah* there would be no purpose in creation.

Once the space was available, Hashem had only to desire that "matter" into existence. Hashem's thoughts came into existence (as we understand existence), only because He wished them to do so. These are the building blocks of nature. In essence, all existence (as we understand existence), all of nature, all of the universe, is but a figment of Hashem's imagination (so to speak). If Hashem were to take His mind (so to speak) off of the Universe, it would cease to exist. This is true of the galaxies, of the Milky Way, of our solar system, of each individual, of each plant, leaf, ant, and microbe. Hashem is aware of, and is constantly supervising the existence of each entity in creation. In making the statement "He renews in His goodness each day continuously, the work of creation" (*Yotzeir Or*, Liturgy), the *Anshei Keneses Hagedolah* —Men of the Great Assembly— meant to underscore the paramount significance of Hashem's daily attention to each detail of creation.

Our Sages (*Chagigah* 13•) seek to describe the unfathomable vastness of the Universe. Astronomers also testify to the unimaginable expansiveness of what seems to be an ever-expanding universe. If Hashem's interest is primarily focused on *Klal Yisrael*, and the rest of the universe merely serves as a backdrop to *Klal Yisrael*, why was it necessary to create such a colossal universe? Could not a small solar system suffice? Or, perhaps even a single sun with a solitary planet? Why all this pomp and ceremony? The answer is obvious; Hashem did all this

just to impress us with His greatness. If Hashem underwent *tzimtzum* — contraction — by merely a small amount in order to effect such a vast undertaking, it does not take much imagination to begin to comprehend the actual greatness of Hashem. It is simply too mind-boggling for human beings to have any substantive comprehension of this issue. It is also important to understand that this *tzimzum* involved a certain inherent *chilul Hashem*, profanation of the Holy Name.

There are several Midrashic references to the concept of “*chalelo shel olam*” — “His space for the world.” The “nothing zone” which resulted from Hashem’s *tzimzum*, shares a common root with the word “*chileil*” — “to profane.” The fact that Hashem had to step back from His inhabited space is a *chilul Hashem*. Anything Hashem had to do which deviated, or backtracked, from His original plan is *chilul Hashem* (See *Devarim Rabbah*, *Re’eih* 1:4; *Midrash Tehillim* 62:3; *Otzar Hamidrashim*, Eizenstien, p. 280, 12; *ibid.* p. 542; *Batei Midrashos II*, *Beraisa Demazolos*, entry beginning “*Chalelo*”).

In minimizing Himself, Hashem is compromising His glory. By being forced to cut back on His space, Hashem benevolently gives up some of His Majesty. Once Hashem’s plan for creation was in effect, any change or deviation from the plan is again compromise and *chilul Hashem*. The compromise might be for the ultimate benefit of mankind; nevertheless, it is a retreat from the master-plan, with resultant *chilul Hashem*. *Rabbeinu Bechaya* (*Bereishis* 1:4) offers several examples.

On the first day of Creation, Hashem created the light. Upon reflection, Hashem decided that the created light was too magnificent for mankind. So Hashem minimized the available light for *Olam Hazeih* and stored the glorious radiance as a reward for the righteous in *Olam Haba*. This represented a deviation from Hashem’s original master-plan, an unplanned change, a *chilul Hashem*.

On the second day of Creation, Hashem arranged the waters and the firmament. Upon reflection, Hashem decided to separate the waters into upper waters and lower waters. This represented a deviation from Hashem’s original master plan, an unplanned change, a *chilul Hashem*.

On the third day of Creation, Hashem brought forth the grass, the herb, and the fruit tree. The original plan called for the tree to have the same taste as its fruit. The tree rebelled and refused to yield a taste. Hashem yielded. This represented unplanned change and *chilul Hashem*.

Similarly, on the fourth day of Creation, Hashem set the two great lights into the firmament. The original plan called for the sun and moon to be of equal size. The moon justly pointed out that “Two kings cannot utilize the same crown” and was ordered to downsize itself.

On the fifth day of Creation, Hashem created the great sea-giants (*taninim*). The original plan called for them to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas.” Upon reflection, Hashem elected to slaughter the female, for if they were to procreate, the world could not continue.

On the sixth day of Creation, Hashem created man in His image. Man was to fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over every living thing that moves on the earth. Man was to exercise his *Bechirah* and thereby sanctify the Glorious Name. Man sinned.

¹. *Harav* Zelig Epstein Sh’lita agreed with the use of this principle. My Rebbe, *Harav* Avigdor Miller Sh’lita, a premier *ba’al Dikduk*, also confirmed that these two different words which share a common root do indeed convey the same meaning.

All the above changes listed by *Rabbeinu* Bechaya illustrate a digression from design. A form of contraction, a *chilul Hashem*. Rashi (*Bereishis* 1:1) points out that Hashem initially indicated that *Midas Hadin* —the Attribute of Strict Justice— is the ideal state of the world, meaning that man should be treated exactly as he deserves, according to his deeds. However, because man is not virtuous enough to survive such harsh scrutiny, Hashem added *Midas harachamim* —the Attribute of Mercy— to creation, so that judgment would be tempered with mercy. A retreat from the original plan, a *chilul Hashem*. Again, at the end of *Parsha Bereishis*, Rashi (*ibid.* 6:6) expresses a similar idea in regard to mankind’s spiritual decline: “The Mind of Hashem was reversed from the Attribute of Mercy to the Attribute of strict Justice.”

Although *Midas Harachamim* represents kindness to mankind, it is still a disgrace to Hashem. Rashi (*Vayikra* 20:17) points out that “*chesed*” — “kindness” — can mean “*cherpah*” — “shame.” Hashem was willing to undergo all sorts of shame, if it resulted in an act of kindness to His creation. For example, if it is immoral for a brother to marry his sister, how then could Hashem permit Kayin to do so? Hashem permitted this marriage as an act of kindness so that the human race would flourish.

עולם חסד יבנה

The world is built with kindness (*Tehillim* 89:3).

Hashem allowed Himself to be minimized, compromised, shamed, and disgraced for the benefit of His beloved creation, Man. The Maharsha (*Rosh Hashana* 31a) intimates that this process of diminution took place over several steps, which resulted in The Divine Presence residing over the Ark-cover.

The greatest demonstration of kindness to mankind in general, and to *Klal Yisrael* in particular, is Hashem’s decision to permit the *Shechinah* to reside in the *Mishkan*. The *Shechinah*, which originally occupied all of infinity, and was forced to undergo various states of humiliation and degradation, was now united with the created. It occupied the small space between the *Keruvim* above the *Aron* in the *Kodesh Hakedashim*.

ושכנתי בתוך בני ישראל והייתי להם לאלקים

“I shall rest My Presence among the children of Israel, and I shall be their G-d”
(*Shemos* 29:45).

Hashem’s intention was to elevate the mundane creation (represented by “seven”) to the spirituality of *kidush Hashem* —sanctification of the Divine (represented by “eight”). Accepting Hashem as G-d is the greatest *kidush Hashem* possible. The act of *kidush Hashem* is designed to correct the many acts of *chilul Hashem* which occurred up to this point. Through this concept of restoration, mankind must reverse the profanation of the Name which occurred in creation. Hence,

ויהי ביום השמיני

And it was on the eighth day (*Vayikra* 9:1)
signifies *Kidush Hashem* of the highest order.

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