



הרב הראשי הרב מרדכי מלכא שליט"א נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, דרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, ת"ת דרך המלך,
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
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עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

Parashat Bereishit

The Pinnacle of Creation

Our *parasha* states, "And G-d said, 'Let us make man in our image and form, and he will rule over the fish in the sea and the animals, and in all the land, and over every crawling thing that crawls on the ground.'"

One could ask why the creation of man differed from that of all the other creations. For when describing the creation of all the other elements of creation, the Torah uses the singular expression, for example, "And Hashem said, 'Let there be light.'" Yet by the creation of man, the Torah uses the plural expression, "Let **us** make man." Why is this so?

Answer of the Midrash

Rashi explains that Hashem utilized the plural expression because even though He created man alone, and by using the plural expression He opened the door for heretics to falsely claim that Hashem had a partner in creation, Heaven forbid, He nevertheless did not refrain from doing so. The reason for this is because Hashem wished to teach mankind proper conduct and humility, that even a greater individual should seek the council of someone less distinguished than he. But if Hashem would have used the singular expression, we would not have been able to learn this lesson. The Midrash (*Bereishit Rabbah* 8) states that when Moshe Rabbeinu was writing the Torah, he was writing about each day of creation. When he got to the *pasuk* of "Let us make man," he said, "Master of the World," why are you opening the door for heretics to deny?" Nevertheless, Hashem said, "Write anyways; all those who wish to err will err." Hashem then said, "Moshe, will I not be creating both greater men as well as lesser men? Someone of a greater stature will be unwilling to ask a lesser man for permission to act. He will say, 'Why should I request permission from someone less distinguished than me?' So the lesser one will say, 'Learn from your creator who created the heavens and earth, but when it came time to create man, He sought the council of the ministering angels.'"

A contradiction Between the Words of Our Sages

This is one way of understanding the Torah's intention, but I humbly believe that there is another way as well. Let us begin by quoting the *pasuk* mentioned by the Torah at the conclusion of the creation (ibid. 1:31), "And G-d saw all that He had made and, behold, it was very good; and it was evening and it was morning, the sixth day." We see that Hashem testified that the creation was complete and lacking nothing. Indeed, David Hamelech has said, "From my flesh I can see my G-d." In other words, when man contemplates that wonders of creation, he will be astonished by the marvelous wisdom contained within the human body. This is why we recite the blessing of *Ashar yatzar et ha'adam be'chachma*, Who has fashioned man with wisdom," after tending to our bodily needs. This is as we see, that science examines and analyzes every limb of the human body to learn about illnesses and their cures. There is a different department dedicated to the research of each different limb, but they are still far away from understanding the creation.



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True Story

Someone close to Rav Shach developed a heart condition and had to undergo surgery. Rav Shach went to visit him and upon arriving at the hospital was greeted by the hospital staff, led by a noted professor. Rav Shach asked him how many years he had studied illnesses related to the heart. He replied that he has studied all of the medical research conducted on heart illnesses for decades. "That being the case," said Rav Shach, "I have a question. After all of your research and scientific knowledge, if you would be given the opportunity to create man's heart, would you change it or try to improve it in any way?" The professor was taken aback by the question, and after giving it some thought, replied that it was impossible for there to be a better heart than the one man presently has. A heart the size of a human fist, which works continuously from the moment man is born until he passes away – there is no better "motor" in the world.

Questions:

1 – The commentators ask how Shlomo Hamelech could say in *Kohelet* (1:2), "It is all futile [i.e., everything in this world]." Rashi, citing the *Pesikta Zutrati* notes that the futility of the world is hinted to by Shlomo in this *pasuk* seven times, corresponding to the seven days of the week and the creations that were created, ultimately to return to dust. But did Hashem not say that everything He created was very good? How then could Shlomo say that it was all futile?

2 – Furthermore, we find that our Sages also imply that man's being created was not a positive thing. The *Gemara* (*Eiruv* 13b) relates an argument between *Bet Shammai* and *Bet Hillel* that continued for two and a half years. One side argued that it was better for man not to have been created than to have been created. The other side argued that it was better for man to have been created than not to have been created. They took a vote and it was decided that it was better for man not to have been created than to have been created. However, they concluded that now that man has been created, he should *yemashmesh bema'asav*, feel out his actions. Others say he should be *yefashfesh bema'asav*, investigate his actions. It sounds from here that our Sages are saying that man's creation was a negative thing. How could this be? Didn't Hashem say the opposite?

The Question of the Taz

3- Furthermore, the Taz writes in *Orach Chaim* (46:4) that in *birkat ha'shachar*, the morning *berachot*, we praise Hashem for not creating us as gentiles. Why do we not stress the positive? Let us praise Hashem for creating us as Jews! The answer is because it was ruled that it was better for man not to be created. From the Taz's explanation it sounds like everyday a Jew recites a blessing which implies that the creation is seriously lacking!

The Purpose of Man is to Make Himself



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I believe that the intention of the Torah is to teach us an important principle, namely, for what purpose man was created. On the one hand, man was created at the height of perfection, bearing Hashem's testimony that the human body was fashioned with unfathomable wisdom. On the other hand, as far as man's spiritual side is concerned – his character traits, *derech eretz*, Torah study, and mitzvah performance – he is born severely lacking, and it is up to him to perfect his spiritual nature. Therefore, even though a person is born with a body that is perfectly designed by Hashem, if he does not work on his *middot* and exert effort to fulfill the Torah and mitzvot, perform good deeds and act with *derech eretz*, that very same body can destroy the world just like Hitler *yimach shmo*. On the other hand, when man does put in the effort, he can be a partner in building the world and become the very crown of creation. According to this, we can understand that when the Torah refers to the creation as "very good" and perfect, it is referring to the physical creation. Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai, on the other hand, were referring to the spiritual aspect of man, which is man's job to perfect throughout his life. Given man's innate physical desires there are no shortage of trials in this area, and there is more of a chance at failure than success. Therefore Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai concluded after two and a half years that man would have been better off not having been created, but now that he was, he should feel out or investigate his actions.

Now it is understood that all of this is hinted to in the creation of man. There Hashem used the plural expression of "Let **us** make man," and this refers to each and every individual until the end of time. It was if Hashem was saying, "I will fashion the body, but you must fashion man's spiritual component." Only then can an individual fulfill his purpose in the world and "rule over the fish in the sea and the animals," for then he has been transformed into the crown of creation. This is as Rashi points out that the word *urdu* [ורדו], "and rule," has a double connotation. That is, if man is worthy, he can rule over the entire creation, but if not, he descends [ירידה], and the creations and animals rule over him.

Words of Mussar

We have learned that man creates himself with every good deed that he does, and thereby perfects himself. All the more so, does this apply when a Jew studies Torah, which we are taught is equal to all of the mitzvot. Furthermore, we find that Hashem said that even though sinners forsook Him, if they would not have left the Torah, its light would have brought them back to the proper path. The Torah has the power to refine man's character traits and change his nature. By doing so, he becomes the crown of creation.

Much to our dismay, we are living through a period of time when Jews in Eretz Yisrael are constantly in fear, while the gentiles fear nothing. Neither an army or police force can protect us. This is meant to stir us to remember the lesson taught to us in our *parasha*, that we must improve



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our deeds and character traits. We must increase love amongst Jews and our fulfillment of Torah and mitzvot. If we do so, Hashem will cause our enemies to fear us, and they will fall beneath us. Then Hashem will hasten our redemption, speedily in our days, *amen*.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rav Mordechai Malka