Points to Ponder

Berashis 5781

**בְּרֵאשִׁ֖ית בָּרָ֣א In the beginning (1:1)** – Why did Hashem create this world? **Rav Schachter Shlita** noted that the Chochmei HaKabbalah say He created the world either to be meitiv (see beginning of מסילת ישרים), or to create a people so that He could be Molech(rule) over something. However, Rav Schachter would respond with the comments of **Rav Simcha Zelig, The Dayan of Brisk** who didn’t like this discussion -- you can’t discuss what motivated God to do something. Humans are motivated to do things because they’re missing things. You can’t say what motivated God since it implies he’s missing the ability to do something. All you can say is that it was His Ratzon.

**וְהִנֵּה־ט֖וֹב מְאֹ֑ד And it was VERY good (1:31)** – The Midrash notes that Rav Meir explained that the VERY good was the creation of the notion of death. How could death be considered VERY good? **Rav Soloveitchik ztl** explained that the author of the comment was Rav Meir who lived an incredibly tragic existence. Lest one think that Rav Meir thought this world to have a dichotomy of leadership – good and evil – he did not think so. He noted that even something as foreign to goodness as death, can have a good element to it. Sometimes we just don’t understand how – or why.

**עַל־כֵּן֙ יַֽעֲזָב־אִ֔ישׁ אֶת־אָבִ֖יו וְאֶת־אִמּ֑וֹ Therefore man should leave his parents (2:24)** – The Talmud (Sotah 2a) notes that making matches is as tough for Hashem as the splitting of the Yam Suf. But can one say that Kriyas Yam Suf was “hard” for Hashem? **Rav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** explained that creating the Shidduch requires the efforts of maintenance and straightening the course of the couple. That is not guaranteed and requires as much attention as maintaining the world while breaking the rules of nature for Kriyas Yam Suf.

**וְלֹ֥א תִגְּע֖וּ בּ֑וֹ Do not touch it (3:3)** – Chava knew the truth. How could she fib to the Nachash and ultimately get trapped by her own lie and ultimately sin? The **Steipler ztl.** suggested that it was her responsibility to think about why her belief (that touching was a problem) didn’t pan out as truth. Just because her belief system didn’t pan out, she needed to check why before throwing it all away and eating from the tree. Sin often stems from people seeing or hearing about things that shouldn’t or couldn’t happen and did. But if we bothered to check into it, we would understand why it is that Hashem’s ways are correct.

**וְק֥וֹץ וְדַרְדַּ֖ר תַּצְמִ֣יחַ לָ֑ךְ You will grow thorns and thistles (3:18)** – The Talmud (Pesachim 118a) notes that man was afraid that both he and the animals would be competing to eat the same foods. Why was this such a big deal? **Rav Belsky ztl.** explained that man was worried that there would be no objective difference between man and animal in the future as a result of sin. Man would compete with animals and would strive in life only as far as the animals do – to score their next meal. To that Hashem told him that he would eat by the sweat of his brow – that his distinguishing nature would be in the intellectual efforts he would put forward to sustain himself.

**וַיִּ֤חַר לְקַ֨יִן֙ מְאֹ֔ד Kayin was VERY upset (4:5) – Rav Nisson Alpert ztl**. compared this to 3 kids in a class with a teacher. One listens to the teacher and the others don’t. But only one of the non-listeners is punished and taken to a lower class. That one curses the teacher and becomes despondent. We are the students and at times we are in our rightful seats and at other times we get kicked out. But one thing we need to be mindful of, is not giving up on ourselves.

**כָּל־יְמֵ֤י אָדָם֙ אֲשֶׁר־חַ֔י The days of Adam that he lived (5:5)** – What is added with the words “that he lived”? **Rav Wolbe ztl.** explained that without Torah there is no life. So what sustained man and allowed him not to succumb to his Yetzer Hara? It was in discovering new realities with which to connect to Hashem. However, this system didn’t work after Adam until Avraham came along and reset the growth potential of man.

Haftara: **Machar Chodesh – וַאֲנִ֕י שְׁל֥שֶׁת הַחִצִּ֖ים צִדָּ֣ה אוֹרֶ֑ה Look the arrows are on this side of you, get them and then come (Shmuel Alef 20:21) – Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** noted that the test can also be interpreted homiletically. If man wishes to shed the Divine role that Hashem has selected for him than he can come to town and live a normal life in peace and pleasure. However, if man if I tell the lad that the arrows are far away, that you might partake a great vision, but you will need to travel far and enter steep valleys and ascend tall mountains to achieve those faraway horizons – then start on your journey because you will have been sent by Hashem on it.