



Midrash - Parashat Bereisheet

- I. The midrash for *Parashat Bereisheet* is focused around helping us to understand the details of the Creation narrative.
- II. Why does the Torah begin with the letter (ב) Beit? (1:10)
 - A. Just as the beth is closed at the sides but open in front, so you are not permitted to investigate what is above and what is below, what is before and what is behind.
 - B. To teach you that there are **two worlds**.
 - C. Because it connotes blessing (*berakah*). And why not with an alef? Because it connotes cursing (*arur*).
 - D. Just as a beth has two projecting points, one pointing upward and the other backward, so when we ask it, 'Who created thee?' it intimates with its upward point, 'He who is above created me.' And if we ask further, 'What is His name?' it intimates to us with its back point [to the Aleph, representing "Adonai"]: 'The Lord is His name.'
- III. Why was the world created? (1:4)
 - A. R. Banayah said: The world and the fullness thereof were created only for the sake of the Torah, "The Lord for the sake of wisdom [i.e. the Torah] founded the earth" (Prov. 3:19).
 - B. R. Berekiah said: For the sake of **Moses**: And He saw the beginning [i.e. the Creation] for Himself, for there a portion of a ruler [sc. Moses] was reserved (Deut. 33:21).
 - C. R. Huna said in R. Mattenah's name: The world was created for the sake of three things:
 - 1. Challah (Num 15:20)
 - 2. Tithes (Deut 18:4)

3. First-fruits (Exo 23:19)
- IV. Was anything created before the heavens and the earth? (1:4)
- A. The Torah (Prov 8:22)
 - B. Throne of Glory (Psa 93:2)
 - C. The creation of the Patriarchs was contemplated (Hos 9:10)
 - D. Israel was contemplated (Psa 74:2)
 - E. the Temple was contemplated (Jer. 17:12)
 - F. The name of **Messiah** was contemplated (Psa 72:17)
 - G. Repentance (Psa 40:2–3)
- V. Torah as the instrument of Creation:
- A. R. Oshaya commenced [his exposition thus]: Then I was by Him, as a nursling (אָמוֹן — *amon*); and I was daily all delight (Proverbs 8:30). ‘*Amon*’ means tutor; ‘*amon*’ means covered; ‘*amon*’ means hidden; and some say, ‘*amon*’ means great. ‘*Amon*’ is a tutor, as you read, As an *omen* (אָמוֹן — nursing father) carrieth the sucking child (Numbers 11:12). ‘*Amon*’ means covered, as in the verse, *Ha'emunim* (they that were clad-i.e. covered) in scarlet (Lamentations 4:5). ‘*Amon*’ means hidden, as in the verse, And he concealed (*omen*) Hadassah (Esther 2:7). ‘*Amon*’ means great, as in the verse, Art thou better than *No-amon* (Nahum 3:8)? which is rendered, Art thou better than Alexandria the Great, that is situated among the rivers? Another interpretation: ‘*amon*’ is a workman (*uman*). The Torah declares: ‘I was the working tool of the Holy One, blessed be He.’ In human practice, when a mortal king builds a palace, he builds it not with his own skill but with the skill of an architect. The architect moreover does not build it out of his head, but employs plans and diagrams to know how to arrange the chambers and the wicket doors. Thus God consulted the Torah and created the world, while the Torah declares, IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED (1:1), BEGINNING referring to the Torah, as in the verse, The Lord made me as the beginning of His way (Proverbs 8:22).
 - B. Wisdom, in the form of *amon* (i.e. the Torah), was with Hashem at Creation. The Torah was both the blueprints by which the world was created, and the

Master Builder Hashem used to create the world.

1. This corresponds well to John 1, which says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” **Yeshua** is the Divine representation of God, Torah made flesh and the instrument by which the world was created.

VI. The Messiah was present at Creation (2:4):

- A. AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD HOVERED: this alludes to the spirit of Messiah, as you read, And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him (Isa. 11:2). In the merit of what will [this spirit] eventually come? [For the sake of that which] HOVERED OVER THE FACE OF THE WATERS, i.e. in the merit of repentance which is likened to water, as it is written, Pour out thy heart like water (Lam. 2:19)

VII. Days of Creation

A. Day 1: The Light of Creation (3:5–6)

1. The five expressions connected with the word אור (light) found in the Creation account represent five types of light which correspond to the themes of each of the books of Torah:
 - a) The light of Creation
 - b) The light of **Redemption**
 - c) The light of Repentance
 - d) The light of the Holy Temple
 - e) The light of the Torah and the commandments
2. It was taught: The light which was created in the six days of Creation cannot illumine by day, because it would eclipse the light of the sun, nor by night, because it was created only to illumine by day. Then where is it? It is stored up for the righteous in the Messianic future, as it says, Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of the seven days (Isa. 30:26).

B. Day 2: Division of the Waters (4:6–7)

1. Why is 'that it was good' not written in connection with the second day?
R. Johanan explained, and it was also thus taught in the name of R. Jose b. R. Halafta: Because on it the Gehenna was created, [as it is written,] For Toftah [i.e. Gehenna] is ordered from yesterday (Isa. 30:33), which signifies a day to which there was a yesterday but not a day before yesterday. R. Hanina said: Because in it schism was created, [as it is written,] AND LET IT DIVIDE THE WATERS.
2. AND GOD CALLED THE FIRMAMENT HEAVEN-SHAMAYIM (1:8). Rab said: [Shamayim is a compound of] *esh* (fire) and *mayim* (water). R. Abba b. Kahana said in Rab's name: The Holy One, blessed be He, took fire and water and beat them up together, and from them the heaven was made.

C. Day 3: Gathering of the Dry Land (5:8)

1. AND GOD CALLED THE DRY LAND ERETZ-EARTH (1:10). Why ERETZ? Because she conformed (*ratzethah*) to His will (*ratzon*).

D. Day 4: Creation of the Luminaries (6:1)

1. AND LET THEM BE FOR SIGNS: this refers to the **Sabbaths**; AND FOR SEASONS: to the three pilgrimage festivals; AND FOR DAYS: to the beginnings of the months; AND YEARS means the sanctification of the years.

E. Day 5: Creation of the Sea Creatures (7:4)

1. AND GOD CREATED THE GREAT SEA -MONSTERS-TANINIM (1:21) R. Phinehas said in R. Idi's name: Taninam is written, referring to Behemoth and Leviathan which have no mates.

F. Day 6: Creation of the Land Creatures & Humans (8:1, 4, 5/12)

1. AND GOD SAID: LET US MAKE MAN, etc. (1:26). R. Johanan commenced [his discourse]: Thou hast formed me behind and before, etc. (Ps. 139:5) ... R. Jeremiah b. Leazar said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, created Adam, He created him an hermaphrodite, for it is said, Male and female created He them and called their name Adam (Gen. 5:2). R. Samuel b. Nahman said: When the Lord created Adam He

created him double-faced, then He split him and made him of two backs, one back on this side and one back on the other side.

2. R. Berekiah said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create Adam, He saw righteous and wicked arising from him. Said He: 'If I create him, wicked men will spring from him; if I do not create him, how are the righteous to spring from him?' What then did the Lord do? He removed the way of the wicked out of His sight and associated the quality of mercy with Himself and created him, as it is written, For the Lord regardeth the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked *tobed* (תִּבְדָּה) - 'shall perish' (Ps. 1:6): what does '*tobed*' mean? He destroyed it (*ibbedah*) from before His sight and associated the quality of mercy with Himself and created him.
3. All our Rabbis say the following in the name of R. Hanina, while R. Phinehas and R. Hilkiyah say it in the name of R. Simon: *Me'od* (מְאוֹד – 'very') is **identical** with *Adam* (אָדָם); as it is written, And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was good-*me'od* (Gen. 1:31), i.e. and behold Adam was good.

G. Day 7: Sabbath (9:14; 11:1, 4, 10)

1. AND THERE WAS EVENING, AND THERE WAS MORNING, THE SIXTH DAY-**HA**-SHISHI (1:31). R. Judan said: This intimates the extra hour which we add from the profane to the sacred, and in it the work of creating the world was finished.
2. AND GOD BLESSED THE SEVENTH DAY (2:3). The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich (Prov. 10:22): this refers to the Sabbath, as it is written, AND GOD BLESSED, etc. And grief addeth nothing thereto (ib.): this refers to mourning,¹ as you read, The king grieveth for his son (II Sam. 19:3).
3. [AND GOD BLESSED THE SEVENTH DAY, AND HALLOWED IT.] He blessed it with tasty dishes. Our Teacher [i.e. Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi] made a meal for Antoninus on the Sabbath. Cold dishes were set before him; he ate them and found them delicious. [On another occasion] he made a meal for him during the week, when hot dishes were set before him. Said he to him: 'Those others I enjoyed more.' 'These lack a certain

condiment,' he replied. 'Does then the royal pantry lack anything?' he [Antoninus] exclaimed. 'They lack the Sabbath,' he [Rabbi] retorted; 'do you indeed possess the Sabbath?'

4. R. Phinehas said in R. Oshaya's name: Although you read: BECAUSE THAT IN IT HE RESTED FROM ALL HIS WORK WHICH GOD CREATED TO MAKE, He rested from the work of [creating] His world, but not from the work of the **wicked** and the work of the **righteous**, for He works with the former and with the latter. He shows the former their essential character, and the latter their essential character. And how do we know that the punishment of the wicked is called work? Because it is said, The Lord hath opened His armoury, and hath brought forth the weapons of His indignation, for it is a work that the Lord God hath to do (Jer. 50:25). And how do we know that the bestowing of reward upon the righteous is called work? Because it is said, Oh how abundant is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that take refuge in Thee, in the sight of the sons of men (Ps. 31:20)!

VIII. Miscellaneous

- A. R. Jose b. R. Hanina said: Whoever elevates himself at the cost of his fellow man's degradation has no share in the World to Come. How much the more then [when it is done at the expense of] the glory of God! (1:5)
- B. R. Abba of Serungayya said: 'And the light dwelleth with him' (Daniel 2:22) alludes to the royal Messiah. (1:6)
 1. This connects well with John 1:4-5, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."
- C. GENERATIONS (TOLEDOTH). All toledoth found in Scripture are defective, except two, viz. These are the toledoth (generations) of Perez (Ruth 4:18), and the present instance. And why are they defective? R. Judan said in R. Abun's name: The six [which they lack] corresponds to the six things which were taken away from Adam, viz., his lustre, his immortality [lit. 'life'], his height, the fruit of the earth, the fruit of trees, and the luminaries. (12:6)

- D. WHEN THEY WERE CREATED--BEHIBBARAM (Gen 2:4). R. Joshua b. Karhah said: BEHIBBARAM (בהבראם) is identical in lettering with *beabraham* (באברהם): i.e. for the sake of Abraham, whom He was one day to raise up. (12:9)
- E. R. Hiyya b. Abba said: It [rain] is as important as **resurrection**. R. Abba, son of R. Hiyya, said: The Sages too inserted it [the prayer for rain] in the blessing of the resurrection of the dead, for 'hand' and 'opening' are used in connection with both. 'Hand' in connection with the one [resurrection]: The hand of the; Lord was upon me (Ezek. 37:1); and 'hand' ' in connection with the other [rain]: Thou openest Thy hand and satisfiest every living thing with favour (Ps. 145:16). 'Opening' in connection with the one [rain]: The Lord will open unto thee His good treasure the heaven to give the rain of thy land (Deut. 28:12'.); 'opening' in connection with the other [resurrection]: Behold, I will open your graves (Ezek. ib. 12). (13:6)
- F. IT IS NOT GOOD (Gen. 2:8). It was taught: He who has no wife dwells without good, without help, without joy, without blessing, and without atonement. 'Without good ':IT IS NOT GOOD THAT THE MAN SHOULD DWELL ALONE.' Without help': I will make him a help meet for him. ' Without joy ': And thou shalt rejoice, thou and thy household (Deut. 14:26). 'Without a blessing ': To cause a blessing to rest on thy house (Ezek. 44:30). ' Without atonement ': And he shall make atonement for himself, and for his house (Lev. 16:11). (17:2)