

Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi z"l (1210-1263; Spain) introduces his commentary to this week's *Parashah*, which describes the creation of the world, with the verses (*Mishlei* 3:19-20), "Hashem founded the earth with *Chochmah* / wisdom; He established the heavens with *Tevunah* / understanding; through His *Da'at* / knowledge, the depths were cleaved, and the heavens dripped dew." R' Yonah writes: Just as *Chochmah*, *Tevunah*, and *Da'at* are mentioned in connection with the creation of the world, so they are mentioned in connection with the building of the *Mishkan* / Tabernacle (*Shmot* 35:31). This is because everything *Hashem* created in the world is represented in some way in the *Mishkan*, which is described as an "*Olam Kattan*" / mini-world. Likewise, we read about a person who conducts his life wisely and conquers his *Yetzer Ha'ra* / evil inclination, thus building his "house," i.e., himself (*Mishlei* 24:3): "Through wisdom a house is built, and it is established through understanding; through knowledge, its chambers become filled with all valuable and pleasant treasures."

R' Yonah continues: We can explain the verse with which we opened to be saying that *Hashem* created the world for wisdom, understanding, and knowledge--i.e., for the Torah. Similarly, our Sages comment on the Torah's first verse: "*Bereishit* / In the beginning, He created . . ."--*Hashem* created the world for the Torah, which is called "*Reishit*" (*Mishlei* 8:22). Also, He created it for *Yisrael*--the human who perfects himself--who also is called "*Reishit*" (*Yirmiyah* 2:3). (*Drashot U'perushei Rabbeinu Yonah Al Ha'Torah*)

Shabbat

It is a well-established custom to sing *Zemirot* on *Shabbat*. R' Aharon Levy *shlita* (Yerushalayim) identifies the following sources for this custom:

- We read (*Esther* 1:10), "On the seventh day, when the heart of the king [Achashveirosh] was merry with wine." The *Gemara* (*Megillah* 12b) asks rhetorically: "And before then, was his heart not merry with wine?" The *Gemara* answers that the verse is teaching us the following: That day was *Shabbat*, when the Jewish People eat and drink and then recite *Divrei Torah* and sing *Zemirot*. In contrast, Achashveirosh and his friends spent the day arguing about unseemly topics such as who had the prettiest wife.
- *Midrash Tehilim* (ch.92) teaches: The Jewish People honor *Shabbat* with food, drink, and clean clothes, as it is written (*Yeshayah* 58:13), "If you proclaim the *Shabbat* an *Oneg* / a delight, the holy one of *Hashem*, *Mechubad* / honored one." Not only that, continues the *Midrash*, when *Shabbat* enters, they welcome it with songs and melodies, as it is written (*Tehilim* 92:1), "A psalm, a song for the *Shabbat* day."
- R' Yehuda He'chassid z"l (1150-1217; Germany) cites (in *Sefer Chassidim* § 1147) the response given by Rabbeinu Meshulam z"l to heretics who did not keep any lit candles in their homes on *Shabbat* because they took literally (contrary to our Sages' tradition) the verse (*Shmot* 35:3), "You shall not burn fire in any of your dwellings on the *Shabbat* day." He said: It is written (*Bereishit* 2:3), "*Elokim* blessed the seventh day." However, one would not know in what way *Hashem* blessed this day except by contrasting it with the curses uttered by Iyov, who cursed the day of his birth with darkness (*Iyov* 3:6). This implies that light is a blessing from G-d. Indeed, whatever curses Iyov uttered, the opposite is a blessing that applies to *Shabbat*. Iyov said (*Iyov* 3:7), "Let there not be song"; therefore we know that one should sing songs on *Shabbat*. (Azamer B'shvachin p.61)

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Brian and Chaya Rozen, on the *yahrzeit* of Chaya's mother
Menucha bat Shlomo a"h (17 Tishrei)

"But of the Eitz Ha'da'at Tov Va'ra / Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad, you must not eat, for on the day you eat of it, you shall surely die." (2:17)

Rabbeinu Nissim ben Reuven Gerondi z"l ("Ran"; Spain; 1320-1376) writes: The decree of death in our verse is not a punishment for eating from the Eitz Ha'da'at. After all, were death the punishment for eating the fruit, why would Adam have been cursed with a different punishment (3:17): "Accursed is the ground because of you; through suffering you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall sprout for you . . . By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread . . ."? Rather, death is a natural consequence of eating from the forbidden tree.

R' Nissim explains: The soul is eternal, while the body is naturally subject to deterioration over time, eventually leading to death. Therefore, the possibility of living forever (rather than dying) is dependent on prioritizing one's soul over one's body, which includes making intellectually correct choices rather than pursuing what looks pleasing in the moment. We read about the Eitz Ha'da'at (3:6), "The woman perceived that the tree was good for eating and that it was a delight to the eyes," i.e., Adam and Chava were attracted by the tree's appearance, by its aroma--in short, by the fact that it was physically pleasing. When a person makes decisions on that basis, he prioritizes his temporal body over his soul. He makes himself dependent on the physical world, with the consequence that he cannot live forever.

(Derashot Ha'Ran #1)

"Hashem Elokim said, 'It is not good that man be alone; I will make him a helper corresponding to him'." (2:18)

R' Don Segal *shlita* (Yerushalayim and Brooklyn, N.Y.; a leading contemporary teacher of *Mussar*) writes in the name of R' Shraga Moshe Kalmanowitz z"l (1981-1998; *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Mir Yeshiva in Brooklyn, N.Y.): The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 59b) says that Adam sat in *Gan Eden* and angels roasted meat and poured wine for him! With what was "a helper corresponding to him" meant to help him?

R' Kalmanowitz answered: Adam need a "helper" in order to perfect his *Middot* / character traits. He needed someone for whom he could do *Chessed* / kindness, someone to whom he could bring joy and give encouragement, and someone to forgive when that person wronged him. He could not accomplish these things if he remained alone.

R' Segal adds: The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 37a) teaches, "Every person is obligated to say, 'The world was created for me'." This is not telling a person to imagine that the world was created for his selfish wants. Rather, the *Gemara* is teaching us to think: "Every person is someone from whom I can learn. Every person is someone for whom I can do *Chessed*."

(Chovat Ha'adam Al Iggeret Ha'Ramban p.28)

"Bereishit / In the beginning of Elokim's creating the heavens and the earth." (1:1)

Pirkei Avot (5:1) teaches: "The world was created with ten *Ma'amarot* / statements." The *Gemara* (*Megillah* 21b) clarifies: Although the word "*Va'yomer*" / "He said" appears only nine times in the Torah's account of Creation, the word "*Bereishit*" is itself a "*Ma'amar*," thus making a total of ten *Ma'amarot*. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R' Yonasan David *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshiva Pachad Yitzchak in Yerushalayim) explains: *Hashem* did not need to "speak" at all in order to create the world. However, He created the world with the intention that his creations would be aware of Him and would recognize His glory; therefore, He needed to create a way to reveal His "thoughts" to the world, a way by which we may attain some understanding of His Will and thereby "connect" with Him. The resulting creation is the concept of "*Amirah*" / "speech," and it is to this that the *Mishnah* refers when it teaches that *Hashem* created the world with *Ma'amarot* / statements.

R' David continues: The Torah could not, however, have begun with "*Va'yomer*." Before *Hashem* could "speak," He had to create a mechanism through which *Amirah* / speaking could take place. That mechanism is the letters of the *Aleph-Bet*, and having the first *Amirah* be the word "*Bereishit*"--rather than beginning with "*Va'yomer*"--hints to the creation of something that preceded speech--i.e., the letters.

(Menachem Tziyon II 1:9-12)



"Elokim saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good; and there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." (1:31)

The *Mishnah* (end of Tractate *Tamid*) lists the Psalms that the *Levi'im* would sing in the Temple each day, and which we recite as the *Shir Shel Yom* each morning. The *Mishnah* identifies the Psalm for the sixth day of the week as (*Tehilim* 93), "*Hashem* has reigned, He has donned grandeur . . ."

R' Moshe ben Maimon z"l (*Rambam*; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt) explains: The sixth day is when Creation was completed and man was created. Then, one could recognize the Creator's greatness and say, "*Hashem* has reigned, He has donned grandeur." [Until here from *Rambam*]

R' David Cohen *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of the Chevron Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) elaborates: One can only be called a "king" if there is someone who recognizes his status. Thus, only after the creation of man, the creation capable of recognizing that *Hashem* is king, could it be said that "*Hashem* has reigned." This, writes R' Cohen, is why we read (*Zechariah* 14:9), "*Hashem* will be King over all the Land." In the future, when all of the nations recognize *Hashem*, then it will accurate to say that *Hashem* is King over the whole world.

(Be'urei Chochmah p.27-28)