
פרשת בראשית

פרק א פסוק א

א בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱ-לֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

רש"י

וְלֹא אָמַר בָּרָא י-הוּוֹה, שֶׁבְּתַחֲלָה עָלָה בְּמַחְשָׁבָה לְבָרֵא אוֹתוֹ בְּמִדַּת הַדִּין וְרָאָה שֶׁאֵין הָעוֹלָם מְתַקְנִים, וְהַקָּדִים מִדַּת רַחֲמִים וְשִׁתְּפָה לְמִדַּת הַדִּין וְהֵינּוּ דְכָתִיב (ב:ד) בְּיוֹם עֲשׂוֹת י-הוּוֹה אֱ-לֹהִים אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם:

מושג

שֶׁבְּתַחֲלָה עָלָה בְּמַחְשָׁבָה לְבָרֵא אוֹתוֹ בְּמִדַּת הַדִּין וְרָאָה שֶׁאֵין הָעוֹלָם מְתַקְנִים, וְהַקָּדִים מִדַּת רַחֲמִים וְשִׁתְּפָה לְמִדַּת הַדִּין

Translation:

At first, Hashem thought to create the world with the attribute of judgment, but He saw that the world could not exist as such, so He put the attribute of mercy first.

Explanation:

Even though the Torah seems to be telling us that the world was created במדת הדין, this is not actually so as it was only a thought of G-d's to create the world thus.

However, Hashem realized that mankind could not survive on the level of דין, and therefore the world was created with both מדת הרחמים and מדת הדין. However, the Torah tells us of Hashem's initial plan, as Hashem's thoughts create a reality.¹ There was thus a creation of מחשבה and a creation of מעשה. These two creations are reflected in the two beginnings of the Jewish year. One beginning is in תשרי, which reflects the creation through Hashem's thoughts, a creation of דין, resulting in the יום הדין. The second is the actual physical creation of the world which took place in ניסן the first month, in which the מדת הרחמים is present, resulting in יציאת מצרים.

In addition, the Torah tells us of Hashem's thought to create with דין as this instructs us as to the ideal world and also teaches us that our thoughts and intentions should be perfect, able to survive even on the level of דין.

Looking in the Pasuk:

Rashi is bothered by the fact that at first the Torah tells us that the world was created with the name אלקים which refers to מדת הדין and later we are told that it was created with the name ה' אלקים which refers to also מדת הרחמים. Rashi, combining two different Midrashim², answers that Hashem first thought to create the world only with דין but saw that the world could not exist so He added מדת הרחמים. The fact that the Torah tells us that the actual creation was done with the attribute of ה' אלקים teaches us that מדת הרחמים was placed first.

¹ See Note #2

² See Note #1

NOTES

1. While Rashi's commentary is widely quoted and assumed to be an explicit דבר הז"ל, this is not the case. In fact, no such exact source exists. There are two possible sources for Rashi's commentary. The first is a מדרש רבה (יב:טו) which teaches:

ה' א-להים, למלך שהיו לו כוסות ריקים אמר המלך אם אני נותן לתוכן חמין הם מתבקעין, צונן הם מקריסין, ומה עשה המלך ערב חמין בצונן ונתן בהם ועמדו, כך אמר הקב"ה אם בורא אני את העולם במדת הרחמים הוי חטייה סגיאינן (יהיו חטאיו מרובים), במדת הדין היאך העולם יכול לעמוד, אלא הרי אני בורא אותו במדת הדין ובמדת הרחמים, והלאי יעמוד.

While this Midrash does mention the fact that the world could not exist on דין alone, and that Hashem therefore combined דין with רחמים, it does not mention that which Rashi comments regarding Hashem's initial thoughts to create the world בדין. Rashi felt compelled to add this fact and did not suffice with the מדרש רבה alone, as it does not explain why the Torah says בראשית ברא אלקים. According to the מדרש רבה the Torah could have just as easily have written ה' בראשית ברא, as Hashem considered, and ultimately rejected both דין alone and רחמים alone. The words בראשית ברא אלקים force the understanding that there was some sort of creation only with דין.

The second possible source is a מדרש ילמדנו³ which teaches:

בראשית ברא אלקים: למשפטים עמדו היום (תהלים קיט:צא) במשפט בראת הכל, שנאמר בראשית ברא אלקים, כשברא הקב"ה את עולמו בראו במדת הדין, שנאמר בראשית ברא אלקים, ולא עמד עד ששיתף עמו מדת רחמים, שנאמר ביום עשות ה' אלקים ארץ ושמים.

Here we do find the idea that Hashem created the world במדת הדין and later added הרחמים, however this מדרש seems to teach that Hashem actually did create the world במדת הדין and this initial creation was not only a thought of G-d's as Rashi writes.

We might propose that Rashi did not wish to explain as did the מדרש ילמדנו - that Hashem created the world במדת הדין and had to recreate combining also מדת הרחמים - as this would infer some sort of 'mistake' on Hashem's part. Rather, Rashi borrowed the idea of Hashem *thinking* to create במדת הדין from the מדרש רבה and used it to explain that the Torah wrote בראשית ברא אלקים not because the world was actually created בדיון but because Hashem thought to create it בדיון.⁴ In short, Rashi combined elements of the two Midrashim to form his commentary.

The final point in Rashi, that Hashem placed רחמים before דין appears in neither of the above sources. Rashi added this point to answer an obvious question. If indeed the initial creation was with מדת הדין and only later Hashem added מדת הרחמים why does the Pasuk which speaks of this combined creation say ביום עשות ה' אלקים, placing מדת הרחמים before מדת הדין? To explain this Rashi comments that the Pasuk reflects the fact that Hashem placed מדת הרחמים before מדת הדין.

2. To understand the musag, we must begin by explaining that Hashem relates to His creation with two different attributes, מדת הדין, the attribute of judgment and מדת הרחמים, the attribute of mercy. The Torah uses a different name for G-d when describing each attribute. The name י-הוה refers to מדת הרחמים while אלקים refers to מדת הדין.⁵ The Midrash which Rashi quotes is bothered by the fact that at first the Torah tells us that the world was created with the name א-להים, by the attribute of judgment, and later the Torah tells us that Hashem created the world with the name י-הוה א-להים, using both attributes. Which was it? The Midrash answers that at first Hashem thought to create the world with judgment alone, meaning that man would survive only if he was absolutely deserving of life. But Hashem saw that man could not be held to such a lofty standard if he was to survive, so Hashem 'recreated' the world with both attributes and put the attribute of mercy first.

³ The מדרש ילמדנו is often connected to the מדרש תנחומא.

⁴ In the following note we will explain that Hashem's thought was in itself a type of creation. We might therefore propose that when the מדרש ילמדנו says that Hashem created the world בדיון they refer to this type of creation.

⁵ This is why the Torah refers to a בית דין as אלהים. (See Rashi וידבר ד"ה כ:א)

However, one might ask, if indeed the world was created with both attributes why does the Torah tell us בראשית ברא אלקים if in truth it never happened? Why would the Torah write something that was only a thought of G-d's as if it really happened? In short, what relevance do G-d's thoughts have if they were not realized? To answer we must seek to understand what we mean when we say that Hashem thought to do something but did not.

The Gemara (ר"ה י:) mentions a debate between R' Eliezer, who was of the opinion that the world was created in Tishrei, and R' Yehoshua, who claimed that it was created in Nisan. Rabbeinu Tam⁶ (ר"ה כז. ד"ה כמאן) is bothered by the fact that the famous paytan R. Eleazar Hakalir⁷ seems to have written some poems agreeing with the opinion of R' Eliezer and others agreeing with the opinion of R' Yehoshua. Rabbeinu Tam answers that both are true. He explains that in fact there were two creations; one when Hashem thought to create, and the second when the act of creation took place. The creation of the world in *thought* was in Tishrei while the *actual* creation was in Nisan.

Using the Midrash quoted above, we can propose that the creation of Tishrei, the creation of thought, refers to the initial *thought* of G-d to create the world במדת הדין. This would explain why יום הדין is on the first day of Tishrei, because it is the day when Hashem thought to create the world through מדת הדין. (This would also explain why we consider the first day of Tishrei to be ראש השנה, the beginning of the year, even though Tishrei is the 7th month of the year.) However, the actual creation, the creation which added in מדת הרחמים, took place in Nisan, which is why it is the first month. Therefore, the exodus from Egypt was in Nisan, as the redemption from Egypt was the result of מדת הרחמים, as the Jewish people were not yet worthy of redemption⁸.

We may now explain that the argument between R' Eliezer and R' Yehoshua (שם) regarding the month of redemption (Tishrei or Nisan) is also not truly an argument. Rather, if we are fully deserving of redemption then it will take place in Tishrei, the month of judgment. However, if we require G-d's attribute of mercy to gain redemption then it will take place in Nisan.

From the above we understand that when we say that Hashem thought to create the world with מדת הדין it was more than what we might consider a passing thought. The thoughts of Hashem create a reality, the creation of an ideal world⁹ in which we are able to survive on the level of judgment. Every Tishrei that reality is reawakened which, in turn, brings about the Day of Judgment.

The Sfas Emes¹⁰ adds an interesting insight as to the relevance of Hashem's initial thought to create the world through מדת הדין:

אמנם כך הוא באופן זה ברא הבורא יתברך להיות רצון ומחשבת האדם לעשות הכל על פי מדת הדין ממש כרצונו יתברך הגם כי בפועל אי אפשר לעשות ממש כרצונו יתברך מטעם שעולם העשיה אין בו האשלימות, וצריך להשתתפות מדת הרחמים. (שפת אמת על התורה בראשית שנת תרל"ח)

According to the Sfas Emes, man's thoughts, or intentions are judged through מדת הדין while his actions are judged through מדת הרחמים. We live in a world in which many factors act to inhibit our ability to serve Hashem with perfect actions, but this does not affect our requirement to serve Him with perfect intentions! The world of intentions was thus created במדת הדין and only the world of action, of עשיה, was created with the addition of מדת הרחמים. With this insight we might now

⁶ R' Yaakov ben Meir - 12th century- renowned Tosafist, grandson of Rashi.

⁷ Date lived subject to debate.

⁸ Also interesting to note is the fact that when Moshe says to G-d that the people will ask מה שמו, what is His name (meaning by what attribute will they be worthy of redemption), Hashem tells Moshe to answer אהיה, which, explains the Ramban, is a variation of הוהוסייהיה.

⁹ See גור אריה.

¹⁰ R' Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter (1847 – 1905), Rebbe of [Gerrer Chasidim](#).

explain why the Pasuk which speaks of the combined creation reads ביום עשות ה' אלקים; in the world of עשיה we need מדת הרחמים.

3. Questions for further thought:

1. Why did Hashem 'partner' the attribute of mercy with that of judgment? Why not create the world only with mercy?
2. It is interesting to note that in the Pasuk that speaks of the initial creation the Torah tells us that Hashem created את השמים ואת הארץ, putting the שמים first. However, in the Pasuk which speaks of the combined creation the order is reversed, ביום עשות ה' אלקים ארץ ושמים. Would the fact that the first פסוק refers to the creation בדין cause it to put שמים first, while the later פסוק which refers to creation ברחמים cause it to put ארץ first?¹¹ Why would this be so?

¹¹ To highlight the possible connection between the two consider the following:

The גמרא (חגיגה יב.) actually mentions that the contradiction in Pesukim led to an argument between בית שמיא and בית הלל which was created first:

תנו רבנן: בית שמיא אומרים: שמים נבראו תחלה ואחר כך נבראת הארץ, שנאמר בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ. ובית הלל אומרים: ארץ נבראת תחלה ואחר כך שמים, שנאמר ביום עשות ה' אלקים ארץ ושמים. אמר להם בית הלל לבית שמיא: לדבריכם, אדם בונה עלייה ואחר כך בונה בית? שנאמר (עמוס ט') הבונה בשמים מעלותיו ואגדתו על ארץ יסדה. אמר להם בית שמיא לבית הלל: לדבריכם אדם עושה שרפרף ואחר כך עושה כסא? שנאמר (ישעיהו ס"ו) כה אמר ה' השמים כסאי והארץ הדם רגלי.

It is well known that בית שמיא represented מדת הדין while בית הלל represented מדת הרחמים. This would explain why בית שמיא would focus on the initial creation while בית הלל would focus on the second. Also of note is the fact that בית שמיא compares the creation of the world to a chair and footstool, whereas בית הלל compares it to a two story building. According to בית שמיא earth is a footstool, while according to בית הלל it is the first story of a building.

בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים וכו'

ולא אָמר בָּרָא י-הוה, שְׁבַתְחֻלָּה עָלָה בְּמַחְשָׁבָה לְבָרָא אוֹתוֹ בְּמִדַּת הַדִּין וְרָאָה שְׂאִין הָעוֹלָם מְתַקְנִים, וְהַקְדִּים מִדַּת רַחֲמִים וְשִׁתְּפָה לְמִדַּת הַדִּין וְהִינּוּ דְכָתִיב (ב:ד) בְּיוֹם עֲשׂוֹת י-הוָה אֶ-לֵהִים אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם:

ה' אלהים, למלך שהיו לו כוסות ריקים אמר המלך אם אני נותן לתוכן חמין הם מתבקעין, צונן הם מקריסין, ומה עשה המלך ערב חמין בצונן ונתן בהם ועמדו, כך אמר הקב"ה אם בורא אני את העולם במדת הרחמים הוי חטייה סגי אין (יהיו חטאיו מרובים), במדת הדין היאך העולם יכול לעמוד, אלא הרי אני בורא אותו במדת הדין ובמדת הרחמים, והלואי יעמוד. מדרש רבה

בראשית ברא אלקים: למשפטים עמדו היום (תהלים קיט:צא) במשפט בראת הכל, שנאמר בראשית ברא אלקים, כשברא הקב"ה את עולמו בראו במדת הדין, שנאמר בראשית ברא אלקים, ולא עמד עד ששיתף עמו מדת רחמים, שנאמר ביום עשות ה' אלקים ארץ ושמים. מדרש ילמדנו