
פרשת בראשית

פרק א פסוק טז

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱ-לֹהִים אֶת-שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים אֶת-הַמְּאֹר הַגָּדֹל לְמַמְשָׁלֶת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת-הַמְּאֹר הַקָּטָן לְמַמְשָׁלֶת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים:

רש"י

הַמְּאֹרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים. שְׁנַיִם נִבְרְאוּ, וְנִתְמַעְעָטָה הַלְּבָנָה עַל שֶׁקִּטְרָגָה וְאָמְרָה, אֵי אֶפְשָׁר לְשְׁנַיִ מְלָכִים לְשִׁשְׁתָּמְשׁוּ בְּכֹתֵר אֶחָד:

מושג

אֵי אֶפְשָׁר לְשְׁנַיִ מְלָכִים לְשִׁשְׁתָּמְשׁוּ בְּכֹתֵר אֶחָד.

Translation:

It is not possible for two kings to share one crown.

Explanation:

According to the Midrash, Hashem created the moon as a necessary balance to the sun so that people would not see the sun as a solitary power and decide to give it divine status. The moon, however, looked at itself as an equal to the sun, as two kings, leading it to wonder how the two could share a single crown.

Hashem, after failing to convince the moon to reduce itself, forced the moon to do so and adopt its secondary role. It is possible that Hashem did this by taking away the light of the moon and reduced it to reflecting the light of the sun. This caused the moon to appear to shrink at times and to even disappear at the end of the month. Interestingly, Hashem asks the Jewish people to bring a קרבן on His behalf every ראש חודש as an atonement for the hurt felt by the moon¹.

Looking in the Pasuk:

The Pasuk seemingly contradicts itself, as the beginning of the Pasuk tells that there were two large luminaries², while the end of the Pasuk speaks of one large luminary and one that was small. In addition, the word שְׁנַיִ infers the two originally were equal. The Midrash answers that a change took place in which one of the large luminaries was made small.

¹ See Notes 1

² See Notes 2

NOTES

1. Rashi's commentary is based on the גמרא in (ס:) which teaches:

רבי שמעון בן פזי רמי, כתיב: (בראשית א') ויעש א-להים את שני המאורות הגדולים וכתב: את המאור הגדול ואת המאור הקטן! אמרה ירח לפני הקב"ה: רבש"ע, אפשר לשני מלכים שישתמשו בכתר אחד? אמר לה: לכי ומעטי את עצמך. אמרה לפניו: רבש"ע, הואיל ואמרתי לפניך דבר הגון, אמעיט את עצמי? אמר לה: לכי ומשול ביום ובלילה, אמרה ליה: מאי רבותיה, דשרגא בטיהרא מאי אהני (נר בצהריים אינו מאיר – רש"י)? אמר לה: זיל, לימנו בך ישראל ימים ושנים, אמרה ליה: יומא נמי, אי אפשר דלא מנו ביה תקופותא, דכתיב (בראשית א') והיו לאותות ולמועדים ולימים ושנים, זיל (לכי), ליקרו צדיקי בשמיד: (עמוס ז') יעקב הקטן שמואל הקטן, (שמואל א' י"ז) דוד הקטן. חזייה דלא קא מיתבא דעתה (לא מיושבת דעתה), אמר הקב"ה: הביאו כפרה עלי שמיעטתי את הירח והיינו דאמר ר"ש בן לקיש: מה נשתנה שער של ראש חדש שנאמר בו (במדבר כ"ח) [לחטאת] לה' (בכולהו רגלים כתיב ושער חטאת אחד ולא כתיב בהו לה' – רש"י) אמר הקב"ה: שער זה יהא כפרה על שמיעטתי את הירח.

The above argument that takes place between Hashem and the moon is very difficult to understand. It seems that the moon is indeed pointing to a design flaw which led to two celestial bodies being created with the very same purpose, leading the moon to ask, "How can two kings use the same crown?" Hashem tells the moon to reduce itself, which leads the moon to wonder why it is being punished for pointing out a flaw in creation.³ Hashem does not directly answer the moon but instead tries to somehow placate it by offering compensation. But, the question remains: Why did Hashem create an untenable situation?

It is interesting to note that Hashem tells the moon *עצמך* while the words *מיעטי את עצמך* seem more appropriate. What did Hashem mean when he said *עצמך*?

The (פרשה ו) tells us that in truth Hashem only needed to create the sun. However He realized that if He was to create only one light in the heavens then the nations of the world would certainly make it into an עבודה זרה. He therefore created the moon to act as a competitor to the sun so that it would weaken the perception of the sun being a singular power and thus minimize sun worship:

רבי עזריה בשם רבי חנינא אמר לא נברא להאיר אלא גלגל חמה בלבד, א"כ למה נבראת לבנה אלא מלמד שצפה הקדוש ברוך הוא שעתידין עובדי כוכבים לעשותן אלהות אמר הקב"ה מה אם משהן שנים מכחישין זה את זה עובדי כוכבים עושין אותן אלהות, אלו היו אחד על אחת כמה וכמה!

The moon, however, did not understand that its role was to serve but instead saw itself as a king⁴; לכי. To this Hashem answers that the moon should realize that it has a lesser importance; מיעטי. Hashem basically is telling the moon that the purpose of all creation is to serve Hashem, not to act as a king. And, this was certainly true of the moon which was specifically created to minimize idolatry and not to supply light. To highlight its secondary role, Hashem took away the moon's light, reducing the role of the moon to simply reflecting the light of the sun. (In addition, by doing so Hashem caused the moon to appear to shrink and even disappear every month, a true מיעוט הלבנה). Thus, the term *עטי את עצמך* perfectly reflects the answer Hashem gave the moon.⁵

³ Hashem's attempt to placate the moon also needs explanation as does Hashem's need for atonement for reducing the moon. There are those who understand the entire גמרא as a metaphor to כלל ישראל (represented by the moon), arguing for equal footing with the nations of the world (represented by the sun). See the מהרש"א on the גמרא.

⁴ Even the term used by the Midrash (see footnote 5), and quoted by Rashi, שקטרגה הלבנה, that the moon accused G-d, points to an arrogant attitude on the part of the moon.

⁵ It is still difficult to understand why Hashem seeks to placate the moon and when He fails to do so, and is compelled to forcefully reduce the moon, He requires atonement. The answer is that obviously Hashem does not have to answer to anyone, certainly not to inanimate objects. As always the Midrash is teaching us a lesson in מידות טובות. The story of the גמרא illustrates to us an episode in which the moon misunderstands its role and is wounded by a perceived injustice. Even though no real injustice took place, Hashem still goes out of His way to placate the injured party. When this

(I would like to add here a beautiful and extremely powerful idea that I heard. There is an interesting difference between a כתובה and a גט. In the כתובה we write the month as חודש and in a גט we use the term ירה. The commentators explain that by a כתובה we look at this new marriage by referring to the Pasuk (דברים כד:ה) *גַּרְשׁ יִרְחָה* while by גירושין we reference the Pasuk (שם לג:יד) *יִרְחָה*. Therefore, at a marriage we use the term חדש and at a divorce we write ירה. However, there is a deeper meaning. I would like to propose that the name ירה was the name of the moon before it was reduced and the name חדש refers to the moon after it was reduced (for only after it was reduced, and lost its own light, did it disappear and renew – חדש - itself each month). When the moon looked at itself as a king it was called ירה, but after it realized it was there to serve others it was known as חודש. This is the message we send to the couple. If their relationship is one of ירה when each feels they are the king, and are there to rule and be served, then such a relationship will end in divorce. But if they relate as the חודש, each there to help the other, each reducing itself for the other, such a relationship will succeed.)

2. There are Midrashim⁶ which learn from the fact that the Torah writes שני מאורות that the two were equal. This is based on several instances in which the גמרא understands the word שני to be teaching us that the two are equal. For example, since the Torah writes that on יום כפור we are to take שני שעירים the גמרא (יומא סב:) learns that the two שעירים must be identical. Therefore, here too we can understand from the fact that the Torah told us שני מאורות that the two lights were identical.

This observation would answer a point raised by the אבן עזרא, who claims that there is actually no contradiction at all! He claims that when the beginning of the Pasuk called them both גדולים that was only in relation to the stars, but not in relation to each other, which would allow one to be larger than the other as written at the end of the Pasuk. However, the word שני, which infers they were equal, does prove the contradiction.

Other Midrashim do not mention the word שני and are only bothered by the fact that at first the Torah calls them both גדולים and later calls one a קטן. Rashi here, who does not add the word שני into his דיבור המתחיל, understood thus as well. (Rashi in חולין clearly writes that the contradiction is only because of the word גדולים and קטן.)

Questions for Further Thought:

- a. We know that the Jewish calendar is based on the cycles of the moon and not the sun. Does the role of the moon as explained above help you understand why this might be so?
- b. Can you think of other examples in which there seems to be a change from the original creation? And, if G-d knows they will be changed why does He create them in the original fashion?

proves impossible, Hashem feels the need for atonement. This provides a powerful lesson to anyone who may hurt another even though the damage was either unintended or even the result of a misconception on the part of the injured party. It is still incumbent on the damaging party to seek reconciliation and even seek atonement for his actions.

⁶ מדרש כונן: והיו שניהם שוים ושקולים כאחד, היינו הא דכתיב ויעש אלקים את שני המאורות הגדולים, שניהם היו גדולים עד שקטרגה הלבנה ואמרה... בראת שמש וירח צריך שיהיה אחד גדול מחבירו.