

וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לָרָקִיעַ שָׁמַיִם 8 And God called the firmament "heavens";
וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר and it was evening and it was morning
יוֹם שֵׁנִי: פ a second day.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים 9 And God said
יִקְוּ הַמַּיִם מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם "The waters below the heavens shall pool
אֶל־מָקוֹם אֶחָד to one place
וְתִרְאָה הַיַּבֶּשֶׁה and the dry-land shall be seen";
וַיְהִי־כֵן: and it was so.
וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לַיַּבֶּשֶׁה אֲרֶץ 10 And God called the dry-land "earth"
וְלַמְקוֹה הַמַּיִם קָרָא יָמִים and the pooling of the waters he called "seas";
וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב: and God saw that it is good.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים 11 And God said
תִּדְשֵׂא הָאָרֶץ דֶּשֶׂא "The earth shall sprout a sproutage
עֵשֶׂב מִזְרִיעַ זֶרַע herbs that seed seed
עֵץ פֶּרִי עֹשֶׂה פְרִי לְמִינוֹ fruit trees that make fruit each after its kind
אֲשֶׁר זֶרְעוֹ־בּוֹ which has its seed within it
עַל־הָאָרֶץ upon the earth";
וַיְהִי־כֵן: and it was so.

*The third day:
land, sea & plant life*

the faint glimmer of divine consciousness it possessed would be even further dimmed, and it would not be possible for man to reconnect it to its source. And if such were the case, why would God want a world? For it is solely for this end that the world was created.

-R. YECHIEL MICHEL OF ZLOTCHOV

1:8

"Heavens (shamayim)"

Sham (שָׁם) means "there"—something distant from us. *Shamayim* (שָׁמַיִם) implies a multiplicity of "there's, something that is equally distant from us in every direction—in other words, a sphere.

The Torah does not describe the creation of heaven as an entity unto itself, but rather speaks of the creation of "the heavens and the earth." For "the heavens" has meaning only in relation to the earth—the point that is at the center of the sphere. -IBN CASPI; SFORNO

The universe is a sphere, not only physically but spiritually as well. Each creation is equally close to the encompassing Divine, and each yearns for its Source with an equal passion—creating a perfect equilibrium in the whole of creation. -OHR HA-CHAYIM

"A second day"

Why does it not say "and God saw that it is good" on the second day, as it does on each of the other days of creation? Said *R. Chanina*: Because on that day divisiveness was created.

Said *R. Tavyomei*: If a division that is for the sake of constructing and civilizing the world lacks "good," how much more so if its purpose is strife and confusion...

-MIDRASH RABBAH

The work of the waters was not completed until the third day (see verses 9-10), and something that is incomplete has not attained its full goodness. This is why it does not say "that it is good" on the second day. On the third day, the phrase appears twice: once for the completion of the work of the second day, and a second time for the work of the third day itself (the bringing forth of vegetation from the earth, described in verses 11-12).²⁴

-R. SHMUEL IN MIDRASH RABBAH
-RASHI

²⁴ *Ibn Ezra* takes this even further: according to his reading, verses 9-10 refer back to the events of the second day, and the creations of the third day begins with verse 11. In other words, the continents and the seas were formed on the second day, and only the plants on the third.

The two explanations cited above are inter-related. The third day of creation corresponds to the third millennium,²⁵ when God gave the Torah at Sinai, thereby rescinding the "decree" separating heaven from earth. So while the creation of divisiveness on the second day was for a positive purpose—to provoke the yearning of the "lower waters" to rise upwards, a striving that drives all positive achievement—the goodness in this creation could not be seen until the "third day," when the mandate and tools to surmount the great divide of spirit and matter were granted.

-THE REBBE

1:9

"The waters... shall pool to one place"

"Water" is a synonym for wisdom. While there are many and diverse wisdoms, they all ultimately express a single truth. For the purpose of all the waters of the world is to "gather in one place"—to bespeak the oneness and unity of the Creator. -R. NATHAN OF BRESLOV

²⁵ See fig. 15 on pages 70-71.

וַתוֹצֵא הָאֲרֶץ דָּשָׁא 12 And the earth brought out a sproutage
 עֵשֶׂב מִזְרִיעַ זֶרַע לְמִינֵהוּ herb that seeds seed after its kind
 וְעֵץ עֹשֶׂה־פְּרִי אֲשֶׁר זֶרְעוֹ־בוֹ and trees that make fruit that has its seed within it
 לְמִינֵהוּ each after its kind;
 וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב: and God saw that it is good.
 וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר 13 And it was evening and it was morning
 יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי: פ a third day.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים 14 And God said
 יְהִי מֵאֲרָת בִּרְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם "There shall be luminaries in the firmament of the heavens
 לְהַבְדִּיל to separate
 בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה between the day and the night;
 וְהָיוּ לְאֹתוֹת וּלְמֹעֲדִים and they shall be for signs and for seasons
 וּלְיָמִים וּשְׁנָיִם: and for days and years.
 וַיְהִי לְמֵאוֹרֹת בִּרְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם 15 And they shall be for luminaries in the firmament of the heavens
 לְהָאֵיר עַל־הָאָרֶץ to give light upon the earth";
 וַיְהִי־כֵן: and it was so.

1:14

"For signs and for seasons"

The year, month, week, day, and hour are not arbitrary measures, but integral components of time as formed by its creator. Thus the *Baal Shem Tov* taught that it is preferable to perform two mitzvot on two different days than to do both on the same day, so that two different time-entities are elevated by their participation in a Godly act.

-TZEMACH TZEDEK

Reading this verse, we are struck by how different our own perspective can be than the higher perspective of the Creator. A human observer would assume that the primary function of the sun, moon and stars is to yield light, and the fact that these are used to measure and categorize time is secondary. But the Torah describes their first function to be "for signs and for seasons and for days and years," and only subsequently speaks of their role as sources of illumination.

-CHAFETZ CHAYIM

1:16

"The great luminary... and the small luminary"

First it says, "God made the two great luminaries." But then it says, "the great luminary... and the small luminary." How are these two verses reconciled?

Originally, the sun and moon were equal in size and luminescence. But then the moon complained: "Can two kings wear the same crown?"

Said God to the moon: "Go diminish yourself."

Said the moon: "Because I have said a proper thing, I must diminish myself?"

Said God: "You shall rule both by day and by night."

Said the moon: "What does a lamp accomplish at high noon?"

Said God: "The people of Israel will calculate their dates and years by you."

Said the moon: "But they will calculate the seasons by the sun."

Said God: "The righteous shall be called by your name—Jacob the Small, Samuel the Small, David the Small."

Still the moon was not appeased. So God said: "Offer an atonement for my sake (the he-goat offered in the Holy Temple on the new moon³³) for having diminished the moon."

-R. SHIMON BEN PAZI IN TALMUD

The whole of creation is comprised of suns and moons: spirit and matter, male and female, teacher and student... nothing in our

³³ See Numbers 28:15.

NOTES

1:14

SIGNS (אוֹתוֹת ~ othoth) • **omens** -Rashi; *Nachmanides*; *Chizkuni* • **moments** -*Ibn Ezra* • **hours** -*Radak* • the **Shabbath** -*Midrash Rabbah* • signs by which to **navigate** -*Hirsch*; *R. Meir Meiri*
SEASONS (מֹעֲדִים ~ mo'adim) -*Onkelos*; *Saadia Gaon*; *Radak*; *Nachmanides* • **hours** -*Ibn Ezra* • **appointed times, festivals** -*Midrash Rabbah*; *Rashi*

1:15

LUMINARIES (מֵאוֹרוֹת ~ me'oroth) • spelled "deficiently" without a ו as if related to the word "plague" (מַעֲרָה ~ me'airah), a reference to the prevalence of croup in children on Wednesdays -*Jerusalem Talmud*; *Rashi* • a reference to the fact that all suffering is time related -*Keli Yakar* • to the "deficiency of the moon" (see commentary to 1:16) -*Raavad II*; *Tur*

world is created or accomplished without a giver/receiver dynamic.

As God created them, both are "great luminaries." From the Creator's perspective, the recipient's contribution is equal to that

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים 16 And God made
 אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים
 אֶת־הַמְּאֹרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים לְמִשְׁלַת הַיּוֹם
 וְאֶת־הַמְּאֹרֹת הַקְּטָנִים לְמִשְׁלַת הַלַּיְלָה
 וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים:

וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים 17 And God put them
 בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם
 לְהָאִיר עַל־הָאָרֶץ:
 לְהָאִיר עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

וּלְמַשֵּׁל בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה 18 And to rule in the day and in the night
 וּלְהַבְדִּיל
 בֵּין הָאֹרֶךְ וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ
 וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב:
 וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב:

וַיְהיֶיךָ עֶרֶב וַיְהיֶיךָ 19 And it was evening and it was morning
 יוֹם רְבִיעִי: פ
 a fourth day.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים 20 And God said
 יִשְׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם
 שָׂרָץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה
 וְעוֹף יְעוּפֹף עַל־הָאָרֶץ
 עַל־פְּנֵי רָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם:
 "The waters shall swarm
 a swarming of living creatures;
 and the bird shall fly upon the earth
 upon the face of the firmament of the heavens."

*The fourth day:
 sun, moon & stars*

of the giver. But from the luminaries' own perspective, there are "great luminaries" and "small luminaries." The givers of the world are motivated by a sense of greatness and self-perpetuation, and its recipients are driven by a sense of neediness and insufficiency.

Indeed, it is the moon, not the sun, who complains about the status quo, and the moon, rather than the sun, who must diminish herself. The sun is perfectly comfortable in his role as a "great luminary"; it is the moon who intrinsically possesses the sense of dissatisfaction that makes her a recipient.

God speaks to the moon about the greatness in smallness: how unlike the giver, the recipient illuminates also when its light is invisible; about the unique qualities of lunar time, where diminution and extinction give rise to rebirth and renewal; about the righteous who achieve true greatness by virtue of their humility and perpetual sense of inadequacy.

But the moon is not satisfied. She cannot be, for if she could fully sense her greatness, she would not be a recipient.

NOTES

1:16

GREAT... SMALL (גָּדוֹל / קָטָן ~ gadol / katon) - R. Shimon ben Pazi in Talmud; Rashi • greater and lesser - Saadia Gaon; Rashbam; Radak

1:20

SWARM (יִשְׂרְצוּ ~ yishretzu) • also spawn - Ibn Ezra; Nachmanides; Ohr ha-Chayim

A SWARMING (שָׂרָץ ~ sheretz) refers to • legless or short-legged creatures - Rashi • creatures categorized by perpetual movement - Onkelos; Nachmanides

CREATURE (נֶפֶשׁ ~ nefesh) • lit. soul

BIRD (עוֹף ~ of) • lit. flying creature, a category that includes flying mammals and insects

So God acknowledges that he must atone for the moon's malaise. For it is only because God desired a creative world—a world in which new realities are born out of the giver/recipient partnership—that its moons experience want and discontent.

Only in the messianic age, when creation attains its ultimate perfection, will the greatness of receiving be revealed. In the words of Isaiah, "The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun."

- THE REBBE

"And the stars"

Having diminished the light of the moon, God appeased her with her entourage of stars.

- R. ACHA IN MIDRASH RABBAH; RASHI

In the daytime, the light of the sun overwhelms all other celestial luminaries. Not so the moon, whose diminished light allows the stars to also shine and for mankind to benefit from them. Such is the way of the righteous: to withhold much of their own light so as to allow others to shine.

- CHATHAM SOFER

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים 21 And God created
 אֶת־הַתַּנִּינִים הַגְּדֹלִים
 וְאֵת כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר שָׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם לְמִינֵהֶם
 וְאֵת כָּל־עוֹף כָּנָף לְמִינֵהוּ
 וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב:
 וַיִּבְרַךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר 22 And God blessed them, to say;
 פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ
 וּמִלְאוּ אֶת־הַמַּיִם בַּיָּמִים
 וְהָעוֹף יִרְבַּ בָּאָרֶץ:
 וַיְהיֶיֶרֶב וַיְהיֶיֶקֶר 23 And it was evening and it was morning
 יוֹם חֲמִישִׁי: פ

The fifth day:
 fish & birds

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים 24 And God said
 תוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה לְמִינָהּ
 בַּהֶמָּה וְרֶמֶשׂ וְחַי־אָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ
 וַיְהיֶיכֶן:
 "The earth shall bring out living creatures each after its kind
 cattle and crawling thing and land animal after its kind;"
 and it was so.

1:21

"The great sea-creatures"

This is the *leviathan* and its mate. God killed the female and preserved it for the righteous in the World to Come, since if they would reproduce, the world could not withstand them. -RAV YEHUDAH IN TALMUD; RASHI

A land animal derives its nourishment from the earth, yet this relationship is not consistently obvious. A sea creature, on the other hand, is wholly immersed within its source of sustenance. By the same token, there are individuals who are "land creatures," leading lives that are ostensibly disconnected from their source. And then there are those who live their entire lives as "fishes of the sea," wholly submerged within the divine reality.

-R. SCHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI

Metaphorically, the male represents the point of potential, and the female represents the circle—the development and actualization of the particulars implicit in the point.

Therein lies the allegorical meaning of the midrash that the female of the *leviathan* was "preserved for the World to Come." The higher consciousness which the "great sea-creatures" represent (see previous citation) is beyond the capacity of our current reality to assimilate; if

NOTES

1:21

SEA-CREATURES (תַּנִּינִים ~ taninim) • large sea animals -Rashi • the *leviathans* -Targum Yonathan; Rashi • sea monsters -Nachmanides • angels -Recanati • whales -Kaplan • spelled with only one ' to indicate that only one of them survived (see commentary) -Tur

1:24

CATTLE (בְּהֵמָה ~ beheimah) • usually refers to all four-legged domestic animals (in contrast to חַיָּה ~ chayah, wild animals), though sometimes used generically as the equivalent of beast or animal; see following note for specific meaning in this verse

ANIMAL (חַיָּה ~ chayah) • also used more specifically to indicate a four-legged wild animal. In this verse • beheimah connotes animals (to be) domesticated by man, and chayah, wild animals -Ibn Ezra • beheimah connotes herbivores, and chayah, carnivores -Nachmanides • beheimah connotes kosher animals, and chayah, non-kosher animals (see Genesis 7:2, Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14) -Avraham ben ha-Rambam

we were fully cognizant of the consummate, all-embracing truth of the divine reality, we would cease to exist as autonomous beings (in the words of the midrash, "the world could not withstand them"). Nevertheless, we are capable of at least a general, abstract awareness of this higher truth, which exerts a subliminal influence on our daily lives. Today, we only have access to its "male" aspect; yet the "female" fullness of this truth has also been imbued in the created reality, and awaits full realization in the World to Come, when—in the words of Isaiah—"The world will be filled

with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea," and every created thing will be a "great sea-creature." -THE REBBE

1:22

"God blessed them"

While other animals were given various skills and devices to escape their predators, the fish's primary defense against extinction is its prodigious fertility. -MALBIM

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים 25 And God made
 אֶת-חַיֵּית הָאָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ the the land animal after its kind
 וְאֶת-הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ and the cattle after its kind
 וְאֶת-כָּל-רֶמֶשׂ הָאָדָמָה לְמִינָהּ and all that crawls the ground after its kind;
 וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב: and God saw that it is good.
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים 26 And God said
 נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם "Let us make man
 בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדֹמוֹתֵנוּ in our image, after our likeness;

The sixth day:
land animals

Fish were the first living creatures to be created, and the only animals not to be corrupted in the generation of the Flood.³⁴ This is why fish is traditionally served as the first course of the Shabbat meal.

-R. MENACHEM MENDEL OF VORKA

1:24

"The earth shall bring out living creatures"

All the works of creation were created in their full stature, fully mature, fully formed.

-R. YEHOSHUA BEN LEVI IN TALMUD
-RASHI

God created a mature, fully developed world, with everything that man requires to begin fulfilling his mission and purpose already in place (just as Adam and Eve themselves were created not as newborn infants, but as mature adults). Hence there is no real contradiction between the Torah's account of creation and the scientific estimate that the universe is many billions of years old.

-MAAYANAH SHEL TORAH

"The earth shall bring out living creatures" also alludes to the resurrection of the dead in the World to Come, when those interred in the earth will emerge as living beings.

-BEREISHITH RABBATHI

1:26

"Let us make man"

When Moses was transcribing the Torah and he reached the verse, "Let us make man..." he said: "Master of the Universe! Why are you leaving an opening for the heretics (to claim that there is more than one god)?" Said God to him: "Write it thus, and whoever wants to err, let him err." -R. SHMUEL BAR NACHMAN IN MIDRASH RABBAH

NOTES

1:26

LET US MAKE (נַעֲשֶׂה) ~ na'aseh) • according to *Saadia Gaon*, God is employing the royal "We"; but most commentaries follow the midrashim that explain the plural as indicating a divine "consultation," either internal or with some element of creation—see commentaries to this verse • also **man has been made** (see midrash on p. 71) -*R. Huna of Ziporin in Midrash Rabbah*
MAN (אָדָם ~ adam) • i.e. **human** (as opposed to אִישׁ ~ ish, which usually means "man" in the sense of "male"—cf. verse 23) • also the proper name of the first man, **Adam**
 Related to • **earth** (אֲדָמָה ~ adamah) -*Midrash Rabbah; Radak* • **blood** (דָּם ~ dam) -*Shaloh*
 • **to resemble** (דָּמָה ~ damah), indicating the formulation of the human soul in the divine image -*R. Menachem Azariah da Fano; Shaloh* • has the same letters as the word **very** (מְאֹד ~ me'od) indicating man's norm-shattering potential -*Midrash Rabbah; R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi*
IMAGE (צֶלֶם ~ tzelem) • also **mold** -*Rashi*

With whom did God consult when he said "Let us make man"?

R. Yehoshua says: He consulted with the heavens and the earth.

R. Shmuel bar Nachman says: He consulted the works of the each of the six days of creation.

R. Ami says: He consulted his own heart.

R. Chanina says: He consulted the angels.

R. Yehoshua of Sichnin says: He consulted the souls of the righteous.

-MIDRASH RABBAH

God said to the Torah, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."³⁵

-PIRKEI D'R. ELIEZER

Since man was created in the likeness of the angels, and they would envy him, God consulted with them. From here we learn God's humility: even though it leaves an opening for heretics, the Torah did not hesitate to use the plural "us" to teach proper conduct and the trait of humility.

-RASHI

Man is unique in that he is comprised of both a mortal body, which resembles the earth from which it was made, and an immortal Godly spirit. Thus God says, "Let us make man"—I, together with the earth that I have created, for he shall resemble us both.

-R. YOSEF KIMCHI; NACHMANIDES

God invited all elements of creation to participate in the creation of man, since it is through man that all else is elevated or debased.

-R. MORDECHAI YOSEF OF IZHBITZA

The prophet Isaiah declares, "Your people are all righteous." So when the midrash states that God consulted with the souls of the righteous, this implies that God consulted with each individual soul whether it should be created!

This gives us a deeper appreciation of the principle of "free choice": it is not only that we are free to choose how we behave in any given situation, but also the question of whether or not we should be sent down to this world to be placed in that situation—that, too, is our choice.

-THE REBBE

³⁴ See commentary to 7:22.

³⁵ The human body has 248 organs and 365 veins, mirroring the Torah's 248 positive commandments and 365 prohibitions.