



Yesodos m' ha Sedra

LESSONS IN HASHKAFa & HALACHA FROM THE PARSHA

In memory of R' Shmuel Shmelka ben HaRav Moshe Kizelnik z"l



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- Rabbi David Lewin

פרשת בראשית תשע"ח

APPRECIATING DIFFERENT TRUTHS

When the Ribono shel Olam wanted to create man, He consulted with the Heavenly beings. Chesed and tzedek were in favor because people would do chesed and give tzedaka. However, Emes (truth) protested, claiming that people are full of falsehoods. Sholom also challenged Hashem's desire to make man because people fight with each other. To solve this battle in the Heavens, the medrash tells us that Hashem took truth and "threw it down to earth". When the malachei ha'shareis challenged Hakadosh Boruch Hu for getting angry at Emes, He responded that truth should rise up from the earth.

The entire exchange begs explanation. Both emes and sholom challenged Hashem's desire to Create man. Although getting rid of one of them would certainly give Him the majority vote that He needed, why did Hashem choose to get rid of truth more than peace. Furthermore, why did and what does it mean that He threw Emes down to the earth and that it should rise from there?

HaRav Yaakov Kaminetsky zt"l explains that technically, truth is absolute. Indeed the Maharal understands the in its purest form, the definition of truth is absolute accuracy. People however, are different. No two people look alike, and no one thinks the same. This, challenged Emes, means that people are full of lies, for is there is only one truth, one a single individual can be right and millions of people are wrong. This can only cause disputes and so sholom argued that man is full of machlokes. So Hashem took truth and threw it down to this world, and in doing so redefined truth as being somewhat relative. As long as people search for truth, their differences and inaccuracies aren't a contradiction to Emes. As long as we can appreciate this, we can understand that other people think differently. Then it's no longer right and wrong, but just different. This greatly minimizes machlokes, and so there was no longer any challenge to Hashem's desire to create man.

Based on this, we can understand the words of the gemara (Eiruvin 21b) that when Shlomo HaMelech instituted netilas yadayim a Heavenly voice proclaimed that his wisdom gladdens the heart and answers sharp complaints. What was so special about this decree over other Rabbinic prohibitions. Really, netilas yadayim is problematic. It is predicated on the concern that the person touched tumah. If he did, however, he would need to immerse his whole body in a mikvah. Purifying one's hands alone, is insufficient. In doing so, Shlomo HaMelech speed that Emes isn't absolute. The truth of Torah really isn't in shomayim after all, once again quieting down the truth's complaint against creating man.

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Halachic Discussion

VAYECHULU & THE BERACHA OF M'EIN SHEVA

Chazal instituted that every Friday night after shemoneh esrei, the paragraph of vayechulu is repeated by the entire congregation together. While it is true that mekubalim tell us that this is because one should say vayechulu three times, the primary reason why this was instituted was because when yom tov comes out on shabbos, 'vayechulu' isn't said as part of shemoneh esrei. So that it should always be recited, Chazal mandated that it be said every Friday night right after shemoneh esrei.

Since by reciting 'vayechulu' we testify that Hashem created the world, it should be recited standing and out loud, just as testimony is said in beis din. Many poskim write that since it is testimony, the entire congregation should recite it together. The Taz goes so far as to ban an individual who was still davening from reciting it later by himself. The Biur Halacha writes that since ideally testimony is to be recited by all witnesses in unison, he even encourages one to daven faster so as to be able to recite 'vayechulu' together with everyone else.

If one was not able to recite 'vayechulu' together with everyone else, the Mishna Berura recommends reciting it together with at least one other person so that there will be two witnesses. Although this is the Mishna Berura's own chidush (as the Taz and others only insist one reciting it as a congregation), and the Chazon Ish and others took issue with it, the prevalent minhag is that individuals do seek out another person to join them in reciting 'vayechulu'. If one cannot find someone else to join him, he may say the pesukim himself with the intention that he is reading pesukim of the Torah and not, to testify "on Hashem's behalf".

Following the repetition of 'vayechulu', Chazal instituted the beracha of "m'ein sheva", which is a condensed version of the shabbos shemoneh esrei. The purpose of this enactment was to allow time for latecomers to arrive and finish davening so that no one would be left alone to return home in danger, as their shuls were situated in desolate areas. Even though the reason no longer applies, the decree remains in place and every shul recites this beracha on Friday night. However, since it was only enacted for places where there would be regular minyanim, one who makes a casual minyan (i.e. not regularly) does not recite it. The minyan need not take place in a shul with a sefer Torah, and is therefore recited in any minyan that it held every Friday night in someone's house. That which the poskim write that if there is a sefer Torah, likely refers to the case where a minyan was established for a short period of time (such as a yarchei kallah set up in a hotel for several days). Then, although the minyan is only temporary, since there is a sefer Torah, there is some semblance of a 'minyan kavua' for a short period of time.

This beracha is really a condensed version of chazaras ha'shatz and must be recited by the chazan out loud in its entirety. Indeed, the prevalent custom in which the entire tzibur recites "Magen Avos... zecher l'maaseh Bereishis" was not part of the original enactment and indeed the custom of the Vilna Gaon and the old minhag Yerushalayim was that it should only be recited by the shaliach tzibur. Accordingly, the chazan should wait for the tzibur to finish their recitation of it before beginning "Magen Avos..." and the Mishna Berura frowns upon one who doesn't do so, since the entire tzibur should hear the beracha in its entirety, just like the Chazan's repetition of shemoneh esrei.