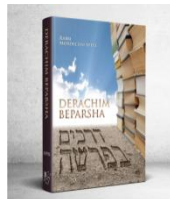


דרכים בפרשה בראשית

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והיו למאורת ברקיע השמים להאיר על הארץ ויהי כן

and they shall serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth.” And it was so

During the time that Rav Yisroel Salanter zt”l spent in Paris, it happened once that R’ Yisroel ordered a cup of coffee in a really upscale and posh hotel. The price of the coffee was many more francs than it would have cost in a regular coffee house. Surely, there must be a good reason to justify the high price, considering that the actual cost was only a few cents. It was then that the owner of the hotel would teach R’ Yisroel a life-changing lesson. He pointed out the surrounding atmosphere; there were beautiful upholstered couches, hanging tapestries, expensive crystal, live music, and waiters all around, set against a backdrop of landscaping that was manicured to perfection. All of this cost a lot of money, not to mention the expense of the rent being paid. The owner concluded that “when you came in for a cup of coffee, you weren’t just purchasing the cup of coffee, but rather the entire experience, which all contributes to a more enjoyable cup of coffee.”

Reflecting on this, R’ Yisroel would look at the entire world through a different lens. Take a glass of water, for example. While drinking the water, one enjoys at that moment the ground he stands on, the air he breathes, the beautiful blue skies with the chirping birds flying by, creating the background music, and of course the landscaping of the world.

When we make a bracha saying thank you to Hashem, the *shehakol* takes on a new meaning, because it literally does include everything.

Taking this thought a step further, we can picture a scene of bumping into the architect of the hotel. We may compliment him on the fine job. The architect would smile and say, “if only you would have seen what went into this project.” The project first began with a vision and a belief in it. There were developers, architects and investors, planners, construction crews, designers and a whole lot more that a regular passerby is unaware of. The finished project is the culmination of an incredible amount of work from numerous teams coming together to make it happen.

The gemara in Mesechta Chagiga 12b states: תניא רבי יוסי אומר: אי להם לבריות שרואות ואינן יודעות מה רואות עומדות ואינן יודעות על מה הן עומדות - *It is taught in a baraisa: Rabbi Yosi says: “Oy” to them, the creations, who see and know not what they see; who stand and know not upon what they stand.* על מה עומדת על הארץ - *Upon what does the earth stand? Upon pillars.* העמודים - *These pillars are positioned upon water,* על המים - *the waters stand upon the mountains,* ההרים - *the mountains upon the winds,* ברוח - *the winds upon the storm,* הסערה - *The storm hangs upon the arm of Hakadosh Boruch Hu.*

Rebbi Yosi is adding a *ruchniyus* dimension to the creation which a regular eye will not notice. This gemara can be explained on many different levels (see Maharsha, Ben Yohoyada and Maharal- Be’er Hagola Be-er 6). Touching on a few points, the pillars that the world stands upon can refer to the Mishna in Avos: הוא היה אומר על שלשה דברים העולם עומד על: התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים - *three pillars of Torah Avodah and gemilus chasodim*. Mayim of course refers to the Torah, as the gemara states אין מים אלא תורה. The הרים - mountains may refer to the tzadikim of every generation that can correctly interpret the Torah (based on R”H 11a, B”M 59b and Temurah 16a). The ruach and se’oro (winds and storms) can refer to the different generations and times one lives in and the spirits and attitudes of those times, with the ability to hold steadfast to the Torah and not sway.

All of this and so much more than meets the eyes is a part of the creation which one may see and perhaps never notice without the guidance of the Torah.

The Ben Yehoyada comments regarding the philosophers that look at the world through their own eyes and come to various conclusions based on what they see. He notes that the word אי is the gematria of 17, the same as טוב. Hashem gave each person *seichel* which is called טוב, but due to their failures and inability to see, they change it to אי.

The perception in the world of a believing Jew typically is that we are close-minded people. The truth is that it is the exact opposite. “They” look at us as if we are close minded because we are stuck in our old ways, stubbornly unwilling to change our ideals and modernize. Our failings seem to be that we don’t look at the full picture, but rather through our narrow lens. Our approach to science and all else comes from the Torah and seems ancient when it is compared to what the open-minded university professors are selling. On the other hand, the approach of, “there is a whole world out there to consider” seems to show just how open they truly are.

However, if one is truly a ma’amin that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is *hakol yachol* and that the Torah is our guide, suddenly for him the picture becomes a lot different. The one that claims that we need to open our eyes and look at everything out there is still limited to what his own eyes can see and perhaps to where his own imagination can take him. But the one that has true faith in HaShem knows that the possibilities are endless because HaShem is *bilti mugbal*-- limitless. Furthermore, perhaps scientifically I cannot see the latent world which the gemara teaches us about, but as a ma’amin, I know it is there. Therefore, when one chooses to believe in HaShem, he is actually opening himself up to more possibilities than the one that needs all to make sense based on science and history and all else.

The Ribono Shel Olam put so much into the creation for us to enjoy and be guided properly. It is our task to realize this, appreciate it and make the best of it.

מרדכי אפפּעל, Good Shabbos,