





אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֵם עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: ג וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אֹר וַיְהִי-אֹר: ד וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאֹר כִּי-טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ: ה וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים | לְאֹר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קִרְיָ לַיְלָה וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד: פ

מִן קִדְמָה יִי מְנַשְׁבָּא עַל אִפִּי מַיָּא: ג וַיֹּאמֶר יִי יְהִי נְהוֹרָא וַיְהוּה נְהוֹרָא: ד וַיְהוּה יִי יְהִי נְהוֹרָא אֲרִי טַב וַאֲפֹרֶשׁ יִי בֵין נְהוֹרָא וּבֵין חֹשׁוּכָא: ה וַקְרָא יִי לְנְהוֹרָא יִמְמָא וְלַחֹשׁוּכָא קִרְיָ לַיְלָלָא וַיְהוּה רְמִשׁ וַיְהוּה צִפְרָ יוֹמָא חָד:

על פני תהום. על פני המים שעל הארץ: רוח אלהים מרחפת. כסא כבוד עומד צאיר ומרחף על פני המים ברוח פיו של הקדוש ציון הוא וצמאמרו, כיונה המרחפת על הקן. אקוב"טיר צלע"ז: (ד) וירא אלהים את האור כי טוב ויבדל. אף ציה אנו צריכין לדברי אגדה. ראה שאינו כדאי להשתמש צו רשעים והדלילו לצדיקים לעתיד לבא. ולפי פשוטו כך פרשהו, ראהו כי טוב ואין נאה לו ולמשך שיהיו משתמשים בערצויאל, וקבע לזה תחומו ציום ולזה תחומו צלילה: (ה) יום אחד. לפי סדר לשון הפרשה היה לו לכתוב יום ראשון, כמו שכתוב בשאר הימים שני שלישי רביעי. למה

could not accept the possibility that physical matter was created by a spiritual Being. Aristotle likewise believed that matter predated creation. They insisted that God could be only a יוצר, a fashioner of preexisting matter, and not a בורא, the Creator of matter itself.

Religiously, it matters greatly whether or not one accepts the notion of ייש מאין, because it suggests that God is Omnipotent, that He is the Master of the universe, which He directs in accordance with His will. Creation is an assurance of His enduring involvement with the universe and with man in particular, whose very existence depends on His continuous support. To deny the concept of ייש מאין is to posit a dualism, allowing for the eternal existence of something besides God. Such a limited God is not, however, the God of Israel, whose existence predates everything.

Although man cannot create *ex nihilo*, the spiritual message behind the story of Creation is that man too must be creative. Man must conquer disease, control rivers, and alleviate misery. Man must also educate; education is creativity *par excellence*: an undisciplined child, comparable to the formless תהו ובהו, is transformed into a spiritual personality. A moral principle follows from this article of faith; the Creation narrative challenges man to create. (*Reflections*, 1:26, 34)

וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְהוֹ וּבְהוֹ - Now the earth consisted of formless matter. The Midrash states, "Rabbi Abahu said 'Now the earth consisted of formless matter,' we learn that the Holy One Blessed Be He created worlds and destroyed them (*Bereishis Rabbah* 3:7). These worlds were fashioned out of תהו ובהו, the hyle, this potential, but then perished to make place for new worlds to be born. Between the destruction of previous worlds and the fashioning of this one, there is hidden the awesome mystery of what is known in Kabbalistic literature as שְׁבִירַת הַכֵּלִים, *the shattering of the vessels*. The world is conceptualized here as a vessel, a receptacle for God's Presence, the *Shechinah*. The world exists only because God resides in it, and when each of these worlds rebelled against His Presence, the vessel was emptied and automatically broken—hence the term שְׁבִירַת הַכֵּלִים. The worlds which were born and collapsed are called תוֹלְדִים דְּתְהוֹ, a reference to the fact that these worlds reverted to the primordial state of formlessness, to the תהו which became the basis for our own world. (*Boston*, 1974) At first glance, this Midrash seems almost absurd. When man builds something, he may be dissatisfied with his initial design, destroy it and start over. Why would omniscient God need to engage in such experimentation, building worlds and then destroying them? This Midrash speaks to the imperative of וְהָלַכְתָּ בְּדַרְכֵי יְיָ, and you shall walk in His ways (*Deut.* 28:10). Just as God builds and destroys, so must we. *Parashas Bereishis* not only challenges man to be a creator, but it challenges man, when

of God was hovering over the face of the water\*. 3 And God said\*, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 And God saw the light that it was good,\* and God separated between the light and between the darkness. 5 And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night, and it was evening and it was morning, one day\*. 6 And

necessary, to rebuild as well. For example, Rabbi Akiva taught Torah to twenty-four thousand students who perished within a short period. The Talmud describes the result of this catastrophe as *vehaya ha'olam shamem*, the world became desolate (*Yevamos* 62b). Yet Rabbi Akiva persevered until he restored the glory of Torah to its former splendor, engaging in *imitatio dei*, emulating God, who created worlds after they were destroyed. Our history is replete with worlds created and destroyed: Jewish communities and Torah scholarship in Babylonia, the Byzantine empire, Spain, Poland and Germany. Following the destruction of one world, a new one was born. Our survival, our ability to persevere in the face of hardship and to rebuild, are founded upon this Midrashic principle. The saga of Jewish history is implied in this Midrash. (*Darosh Darash Yosef*, pp. 30-31)

וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֵף עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם - *and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water.* In speaking of God, Scripture never neglects to emphasize the dynamic aspect; God is identified with ceaseless movement, whether in the sense of continuous activity, like the creation of, or eternal vigilance over, the universe, or locomotion. God comes and goes, visits the world and departs. The Divine spirit is dynamic, restless. The word רוח denotes both *spirit* and *wind* for a simple reason: wind symbolizes motion, activity, speed—phenomena that are indispensable for a living being. (*The Emergence of Ethical Man*, pp. 49-50)

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים - *And God said.* The word וַיֹּאמֶר here does not refer to speech; God would not have spoken to the void of nihilism (nothingness). Rather, the term is used here to indicate the creative act of God, which is identical with His will. Only in man is there a dichotomy between thought, often expressed through speech, and realization; to the Master of the universe will and action are one. (*Family Redeemed*, p. 99; *Yemei Zikaron*, p. 217)

וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאוֹר כִּי טוֹב - *And God saw the light that it was good.* Rashi comments that God recognized that the world did not deserve to use the originally created light, and He therefore reserved it for the righteous of the eschatological era (see *Chagigah* 12a). He thus maintains that the אור discussed here does not refer to the electromagnetic phenomenon of light. The light referred to in this verse was something that was “too good” for mankind at that time, so God reserved it for the future. This light will be the source of illumination for the righteous in the age of redemption, as mentioned in Isaiah: “Arise! Shine! For your light has come, and the glory of God has shined upon you” (*Is.* 60:1). Even now, however, each person is endowed with some degree of this metaphysical illumination. God implanted this אור in the inner recesses of each person, and He affirms in our verse that this spiritual light is good—that something inherently redeeming resides in the human personality. The Kabbalah portrays man’s inner light as נִיצוּצוֹת, *sparks*, which can never be completely extinguished. In the world to come, this clear light will emerge from out of the darkness that envelops it, and all the hidden potential within the heart of each person will emerge. (*Noraos Harav*, 16:119; *MiPeninei Harav*, p. 346)

וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בקָר יוֹם אֶחָד - *and it was evening and it was morning, one day.* Evening is referred to as עֶרֶב, since it denotes עֲרֻבָא, *confusion*. Man often gropes in the darkness, sensing