

פרשת בראשית, a new cycle for the year. The Kotzker Rebbe was very sharp and incisive, and had a lot of very interesting insights in life. One of the דברי מוסר that he had was that he advised people to always wear a jacket with pockets on both sides. He said that in the two pockets, he should have two different slips of paper. On one side he should have a piece of paper that says בשבילי נברא העולם. And in the other pocket, he should have the phrase, אנכי עפר ואפר. An interesting contradistinction to put us in our place. I found a very interesting insight in פרשת בראשית.

הקדוש - וְכָל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה, (2:2) it says By שבת. The question is that there's a סתירה completed his work on יום השביעי, and he rested on יום השביעי. The question is that there's a סתירה in the pasuk. It says that Hashem finished his work, and exactly in the same pasuk it says וַיִּשְׁבֹּת, he rested with his work. Did Hashem work or did He rest? The answer that's always given is, and I'll quote it now verbatim from (י"ט) - Since we cannot determine precisely when that moment when שבת comes in, we have to perforce add on from חול to קודש; קודש ב' כחוט השערה; וְעַתָּה וְעַתָּה וְעַתָּה, נִכְנָס בּוֹ כְּחוֹט הַשְּׁעָרָה; and therefore He knows precisely the way that time is running, Hashem created time, and therefore He knows exactly when שבת starts and when שבת ends. This בראשית רבה appears to be pointing out man's deficiencies, man's limited view of the world, man's inability to be as precise as הקדוש ברוך הוא.

The changes the meaning of this בראשית רבה just a drop. I'm going to say the words again: בְּשֶׁר - A man does not know his moments, his minutes, or his hours. The מדרש is telling us we have no control over our lives; we don't know how long our lives will last. We have no control at all over one of the most basic aspects of life, which is time. That is man's limitation. Look how little we are, look how imprecise we are, look how humble we should be because of this fact of knowing so little about even every moment of the day. That's what the מדרש is telling us. When שבת comes in, we should glorify and magnify הקדוש ברוך הוא's greatness as מלך מלכי המלכים, especially when we look at it from the point of view that we are unable to do that at all. So, אנכי עפר ואפר, the famous saying about עפר ואפר is dirt, it has no past. אפר is ashes, has no future. אבינו was saying, I have no past and no future. I am nothing. Therefore, if we recognize our humility and our true station in life, we will be better people.

Let's go to another pasuk. The pasuk says when הקדוש ברוך הוא was preparing to create אדם הראשון that he had a conference with the מלאכים. And He said (1:26), וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֱדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדֹמוֹתֵינוּ וַיִּרְדּוּ בְּדָגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם, וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל הָרֶמֶשׂ עַל הָאָרֶץ. In (ס' ע"ב) it brings down this pasuk and says the following rather startling observation: לִימָא - when a person ties his shoes in the morning; - Hashem, you have made for me all that I need. The וילנא גאון again asks, what does all of the things that we need have to do with putting on our shoes? Is the very fact that we put on our shoes fulfilling all of our requests and our needs?

Everything - תְּמַשְׁלֵהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ כָּל שֶׁתָּה תַּחַת רַגְלִי: תהלים (8:7) answers with the famous pasuk in (8:7) that is in creation is under man's dominion. The pasuk tells you that we have a שליטה. We take a seed, we can crush it up, make it into food, or we can plant it and we can make it into plants, and we can eat that. We can take the plants and feed them to our בהמות. We can take the בהמה and we can use it. We can use the בהמה as food. We can use the בהמה as a source of milk. And we can use the leather of the בהמה to make a shoe. That is the purpose of Man. Man's purpose is to be שולט in the world for one reason and one reason only, because הקדוש ברוך הוא said so. הקדוש ברוך הוא says, you rule the world, we have to do that job as part of our responsibility that Hashem gives us.



The וילנא גאון has an amazing insight that he quotes from the sefer אמרי נועם. Why do we say שְׁעֵשָׂה לִי כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה בְרָאשִׁית? Because this ממשלה, this rulership of the world, we already got this from מעשה בראשית. That's what the פרשה is telling us.

בשבילי נברא העולם. On the one hand, yes, אנכי עפר ואפר. But Hashem also told us that we rule the world. If we rule it properly, Hashem will let us continue ruling the world. It is our job, our function, in exactly the same way as it is our job to remain humble as we do it. Let's try to work on both of these things and see if we can pull it off. Not an easy task, but it's doable only because the Torah says so.

