

Perek Chapter 5

(prepared but not delivered at Sackett Lake)

1. Theme: *Loneliness, Aloneness*. בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם.

All commentators point out that there are only 9 such expressions (ויאמר אלקים), whereas our Mishnah mentions 10. Their answer: בראשית נמי מאמר הוא. This is best explained by the Ramban to the very beginning of בראשית, that God first created the חומר, the Greek *hyle* or unformed matter, from which He then created all else יש מי, etc.

However, there is one alternative opinion that is most illuminating:

אבות דר"נ, נ"ב, פ' לו: המאמר העשירי הוא "ויאמר אלקים לא טוב היות האדם לבדו"

This interpretation places man's social persona in the very structure of creation. Man's proclivity and need for companionship--family, society, community--is inscribed in the nature of reality...

2. עשרה דברים נבראו ע"ש ביה"ש.

a) *Miracles*. The 10 items are, by and large, miraculous. Placing them in the process of the original creation, albeit at the very end, is a rationalistic interpretation worthy of a Maimonides!

b) *Transitions*. וי"א אף המזיקין. The late R. Jos. Lookstein's interpretation--that in times of transition all the demons have free rein..

c) *Burying Moses*. וקבורתו של משה. The פשט is unexceptional: since no one knew his burial place (the language of this Mishnah is identical with the Scriptural verse), someone must have prepared it for him, and that was God who--again to blunt the overtly supernatural nature of miracles--created it at the end of the original Six Days. However, one can (at least homiletically) offer another explanation. Note that both the Torah and the Mishnah use the word קבורתו, when the exact word for burial-place is קבר. Hence, it is not the קבר but the קבורה that is significant: like the מזיקין (see above), in times of transition people act in a manner that is equivalent to burying Moses, i.e., destroying his teachings...

d) *Technology*. וי"א אף צבת בצבת עשוי'. I.e., the original

tongs. This is a speculation about the origins of tool-making or technology itself. The Sages had a highly appreciative view of the original tool-makers (as do modern anthropologists) and attributed this talent (the original "tongs") and hence the origins of technology itself, to the original creation of the world. Thus, technology is as old or older than the *human* race; it derives from the transition between the creation by God alone, and the creativity that homo sapiens undertakes upon the given world.

3. *Friendship*. כל אהבה שתלויי' בדבר... ושאינה תלויי' בדבר זו אהבת דוד ויהונתן. We normally take the expression "תלויי' בדבר" as a generalized reference to any ulterior motive. However, in this particular context דבר refers to sexual interests ("דבר דבר" ... מעריות), and therefore the love of David and Jonathan is clearly non-sexual in nature. Thus, the error in the calumny by Shulamith Aloni (or was it Yael Dayan?) asserting that Scripture approves of the homosexual relationship of David and Jonathan (!ועפרא בפומהון).