

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Beresheet	17 Oct., 2020	29 Tishrei 5781	Gen. 1:1-6:8	1Sam. 20:18-42	John 1:1-17

It is written (Gen. 4:26), “And to Seth, to him also a son was born. And he called his name Enosh. Then it was begun to call on the Name of YHWH” (ISR).

There are several English translated versions, “Then it was begun to call on the Name of YHWH.” In NIV, ESV, NKJV, JPS 1917, “At that time people began to call on (or ‘to proclaim’) the name of LORD”, or similar.

Let’s look at the verse in Hebrew, “אָז הוּחַל, לְקַרֵּא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה” (*az hu-chal, lik-ro be-shem ha-shem*). The Artscroll version says “Then / it became profaned / to call / in the Name / of Hashem.” Or HaChaim says, “Then to call in the Name of Hashem became profaned.”

The Midrash¹ asks why the verse stops its continuation of genealogy after mentioning Enosh as previous verses did. Abba Kohen Bardela answers that the three generations (Adahm, Seth, and Enosh) were created in the Divine image and likeness.

Regarding Adahm, the Scripture explicitly states that Hashem created him (Gen. 1:26-27) in His image. With Seth, it states (Gen. 5:3), “and [Adahm] begot a son in his own likeness, after his image.” And Enosh, the sages conclude that Enosh was born in the image and likeness of Seth with superfluous word “also.”

After the birth of Enosh, people began to rebel against Hashem and consequently they forfeited the privilege of producing offspring in the Divine image and likeness. Instead, their faces became transformed. The Zohar explains that when a person angers Hashem through sinful behavior, the image of Hashem departs from him.

The Midrash lists four ways in which the world deteriorated during Enosh’s times. What are four things changed for the worse in the days of Enosh? First, the mountains became rocky, i.e., they became hard as rock and could no longer be plowed or worked (Rashi, Eitz Yosef).

Second, a corpse began to putrefy. Eitz Yosef explains that originally, people died by something resembling a Divine kiss, which served to protect the deceased from maggots and decay. Beginning in the days of Enosh, however, it was the Angel of Death who would cause their deaths, as a result of which the corpses would putrefy and be devoured by worms.

Third, people’s faces became like those of apes, meaning they lost the lofty stature with which Adahm was created. The difference between them and Adahm was equivalent to the distinction between man and an ape (Tiferes Tzion).

Fourth, they became prey for demons. The word חוּלִין (*chul-lin*) means ‘profane’ or ‘mundane’ or ‘secular’. As ‘profane’ is readily accessible to all, as opposed to that which is *kadosh* (holy), so too, during the days of Enosh people became accessible to demons. As long as man possessed the Divine image, the demons

¹ Beresheis Rabbah §6

distanced themselves from him. But once he lost the Divine image, he fell prey to the demons. This is alluded in our verse *הוֹחַל* (az *hu-chal*) which the Midrash interprets as “profaning,” meaning that man became “profane.”

Rambam explains idol worship began and developed when people felt that they should honor the heavenly bodies, [stars, moon, sun, etc.] as Hashem’s emissaries to the world, just as it is proper to honor the ministers of a ruler. Eventually, this trend spread and people became more and more corrupted, until worshipers forgot about Hashem and assumed that all powers were vested in whatever representation they chose to worship.

What caused this to happen to them? They would say, “What is the difference between one who bows down to an image of an earthly creation and one who bows down out of respect to a distinguished person?” They believed that just as one is permitted to bow to a person as a sign of respect, he is also permitted to bow to an image that represents any of the celestial bodies, since they are appointed by Hashem to manage the affairs of the world.

This error occurred because they did not appreciate the Divine image with which a person was endowed, which resulted in their equating man to the celestial bodies. Since they did not appreciate the Divine image, Hashem withdrew it from them, allowing them to fall prey to demons.

“Then it was begun to call...” translated in many versions, did the translators intentionally misled us? The Midrash² expresses *הוֹחַל* (*hu-chal*), translated as “begun.” This translation follows Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, and Sforino. Rashi translates it as ‘profane.’ Now, R’ Simone said: In three places in Scripture a form of this expression is used to connote ‘rebelliousness.’ One is in our verse, “Then it was begun [*הוֹחַל*] (*hu-chal*) to call in the Name of Hashem.” Second, “And it came to pass when Man began [*הִחֵל*] (*he-chel*) to increase upon the face of the ground” (Gen. 6:1). Lastly, “And Cush begot Nimrod. He began [*הִחֵל*] (*he-chel*) to be a mighty man on earth” (Gen. 10:8).

The Midrash now explains subtle difference of its words and meanings. The root word *חלל* carries two possible interpretations. It can be either an expression of ‘beginning’ or of ‘profaning.’ The three verses listed above use various forms of this root. In all three places, the plain meaning of the verse suggests that it is an expression of ‘beginning.’ The Midrash considers this expression as superfluous, as it is unnecessary to tell us that the practice under discussion was ‘begun.’ Therefore, it will expound them all as expression of ‘profaning,’ meaning that the people referred to in the verse ‘profaned’ the Name of Hashem; hence these expressions have a connotation of rebelliousness against Hashem.

In our verse, the word *הוֹחַל* (*hu-chal*) is being interpreted to mean ‘was profaned,’ and the word *לִקְרָא* (*lik-r*), translated as ‘to call,’ is interpreted as if it were written *לִקְרָא*, ‘by calling’, so that the verse is saying: “Then [Hashem’s Name] was profaned by [their] calling [their idols] with the Name of Hashem.”

In Beresheet 6:1: The Midrash says that the word *הִחֵל* (*he-chel*) means ‘profaned,’ and the word *לָרֹב* (*la-rov*), translated as ‘to increase,’ is interpreted instead to mean ‘substantially,’ so that the verse means: “And it

² Ibid, §7

came to pass when Man profaned [Hashem's Name] 'substantially'," i.e., man rebelled against Hashem in great numbers.

In Beresheet 10:8, the Midrash interprets the verse to mean, "He profaned [Hashem's Name] through being a mighty man on earth," i.e., through the powerful methods of persuasion that he employed to influence people to worship idols.