

Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

A JEW BY CHOICE

A *ger* has the ability to make a *kiddush Hashem* that a Jew from birth cannot. A *ger* forsakes his family, his way of life, the world he knows. He chooses to abide by the Torah's restrictions and responsibilities. He gives the rest of us a new appreciation for the beauty of Torah life that we sometimes take for granted.

We see a similar effect in *baalei teshuvah*. Like *geirim*, they abandon the world they know for Torah and *mitzvos*, perhaps giving up fame, fortune, or success. Alan Stuart Veingrad was a star football player whose team won the Super Bowl. He is now Shlomo Veingrad and lectures about his return to Yiddishkeit. Uri Zohar was a secular Israeli movie star. Rabbi Yom Tov Glaser was once a thrill-seeking surfer, climber, and skydiver; today he is a disciple of the Rebbe of Pinsk-Karlin. And there are many more.

Rambam points out that the Torah is even stricter about treating *geirim* than parents. We must honor and revere our parents, but nowhere in the Torah are we required to love them. The Torah instructs us, however, to "love the convert," just as we are commanded to love Hashem Himself.

The *navi* Yeshaya teaches that in the era of Mashiach, a massive upheaval will take place. Klal Yisrael will no longer be despised and degraded, tormented and oppressed by the other nations. On the contrary, they will recognize that the Jewish people possess the most valuable commodities on earth—the Torah and *mitzvos*—and will flock to the Jews like a rushing river to absorb their teachings and gain closeness to the Shechinah (Yeshayah 2:2-3).

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gem

OF THE WEEK

THE WORLD COMPLETED

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

Not only the Makkos but also their cessation was a striking sign of Hashem's omnipotence. Even the greatest revelation of His power would not be enough to convey to the nations the idea of the G-d of Israel. At most, it would present Him as the highest power, the most forceful of all forces. In the Jewish conception, Hashem's creations do not escape His control. It was through the ending of the plague at G-d's command, its differentiation between Egypt and Goshen, that G-d revealed Himself. No other power can control elemental forces once they have been released.

This is why we celebrate the last day of Creation, Shabbos. The non-Jewish world celebrates the first day, Sunday. The universe as a result of natural forces can explain the Sunday of Creation, but it cannot explain the Sabbath. Why has the creation of new creatures ceased if the same creative forces of nature still exist? That is why G-d established the Sabbath, the Shabbos with which Creation ceased, and not the days of Creation, as a monument to the Creator.

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powerful
PRAYER

PESUKEI DEZIMRA:
LOVE AND DEVOTION



The main part of davening begins after Barchu. However, Pesukei Dezimra sets a mood of *simcha shel mitzva* and a seriousness of mind before we begin communicating with our Creator. David Hamelech used to praise and give thanks to Hashem all the time, describing His greatness and the privilege of speaking with Him. He composed Sefer Tehillim as an expression of love and devotion to Hashem, and states time and time again how dependent we are for everything in our lives. Most of Pesukei Dezimra are taken from Tehillim or from the words of David in Divrei Hayamim.

Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom



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TEFILLAH WITH HEART (PART II)

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

In a commentary on the siddur, Iyun Tefila offers an enlightening reason that the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah authored the Siddur at that particular time.

Although the Second Beis Hamikdash had recently been rebuilt, it was not at all equal to the first. The Jewish nation no longer dwelt exclusively in the land of Israel as they had before. Previously, most of the nation would gather in the Beis Hamikdash three times a year, creating a deep sense of unity and closeness. Since the Churban, they had been exiled across 127 provinces of the Persian empire, with most living too far away to ever visit. There was a growing concern that these scattered communities would slowly drift apart. But with the advent of a standardized *siddur*, with everyone reciting the same *tefillos* every day, three times a day, a Jew in Bavel or Persia would feel bound to his brother in Yerushalayim or anywhere in the world.

How else was the second Beis Hamikdash inferior to the first? It was missing five vital things. The Shechinah was not present, since this Beis Hamikdash was built under the authority of Persia, and the Shechinah dwells only in the tents of Shem. In the first Beis Hamikdash, flames descended from Heaven to consume the sacrifices, but now they did not. The *aron* and *kappores* were missing, having been hidden before the Churban. There was no *kohen gadol* with *ruach hakodesh*, and no *urim v'tumim* to convey messages from Heaven. With a lower degree of *kedushah* in this Beis Hamikdash, less inspiration was gained by entering it.

Another difference between the first and the second Batei Mikdash was the expectation of permanence. Shlomo Hamelech built the first Beis Hamikdash with the hope that it would be eternal, a *beis olamim*. The *chachamim* knew that the second Beis Hamikdash would not be eternal from the start. They knew it would someday be destroyed. But we still have the Siddur, and it has remained with us for almost 2,000 years since that destruction.

The Anshei Knesses Hagedolah wove into the *tefillos* all the basics of the Jewish faith: the Oneness of Hashem, His infinite wisdom and power, *hashgachah* and mercy. In our davening, we describe the glory of Hashem's miracles in the past, His signs and wonders, and the future that awaits us with the coming of Mashiach. Our Siddur is a portable Beis Hamikdash for those who use it wisely.

To be continued. 


The stopping of creation is a greater proof of a Creator than the existence of heaven and earth. Why have natural forces ceased to function? Why has the cause ceased producing the effect?

This teaches us that the present Sabbath was preceded by purposeful creative activity, and that the universe is not the result of blind nature, but of a Creator endowed with supreme wisdom, free will, and unlimited power.

This all-powerful, limit-setting *dai!* attesting to the Creator is inscribed not only on creation as a whole, but in the details. Our Sages take us through the spheres of creation and show us the many different kinds within and between species. These, too reveal the Creator's hand, setting measures and limits.

Look at the heavens: there is a planet that completes its orbit in 12 months, and there is a planet that completes it in 88 days, and another in 248 years. Look at the earth—how varied are the different species of plants, and yet how regular are their laws! Everything in heaven and on earth testifies to *vayechulu*, the ending of creation. A free almighty Will rules over us, restraining us within limits, making us what we are.

Vayechulu! Everything is limited in size and purpose, everything has received its allotted measure of material and energy, and has been assigned its time of development and its own kind. Were it not for the Creator, Who assigns purpose and measure through His Will and sovereign power; had only the blind forces of nature prevailed—the world would never have materialized.

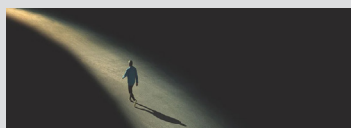
Thus, *vayechulu* attests to the creation of the world by a free, wise, and almighty G-d. 

Based on the commentary of Rav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.




wonder WORLD

GLOW IN THE DARK



How do light and dark affect us?

In this week's *parsha*, we discover the impact of *choshech*. Darkness can influence our mood and thought processes. It can enhance introspection and creativity, but too much leads to isolation and anxiety. For some people, low daylight in the winter even leads to depression.

Unlike humans, many animals thrive in darkness. Owls have exceptional night vision and silent flight to hunt in the dark, while bats use echolocation to navigate and find prey. Some organisms, like certain fungi and deep-sea creatures, produce their own light through bioluminescence. This helps them survive in the dark depths of the ocean. 

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