

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter I: Bereisheet (Gen. 1:1-6:8)

Essay 7. A teaching of proper behavior and humility.

**מדרש** ילקוט על פסוק נעשה אדם וכו', [ר' שמואל בר נחמני בשם ר' יוחנן] אומר בפעם שנהיה משה פותב התורה הנה פותב מעשה כל יום ויום, כיון שהגיע לפסוק נעשה אדם אמר לפניו, רבונו של עולם, למה אתה נותן פתחון פה לאפיקורוסים? אמר לו, כתוב והרוצה לטעות יטעה עכ"ל. והוא תמוה דקושית משה היא קושית חזקה ותשובת הקב"ה תמוהה.

There is a **Midrash Yalkut Shimoni, on the verse**, “And G-d said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth.” (Gen. 1:26). The Midrash says:

**[Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of R' Yochanan]<sup>1</sup>: At the time that Moses wrote the Torah he wrote each incident day by day, and when he arrived at the verse, “Let us make man,” he said before [G-d], “Master of the Universe, why do you give an opening here for heretics?”** That is, a heretic might point to the plural language, “Let us,” and might argue that there were multiple gods. **He said to him, it is written, “One who wishes to sin will sin.”**

- (Midrash Yalkut Shimoni 13:3)

**This is strange, for Moses' question is a strong question, and the answer of the Holy One, Blessed be He, is peculiar.**

ויש לומר שמשה הנה סובר שמתמת פסוק זה יתהפכו בני אדם למינות לומר ששתי רשויות הם חס ושלום. והקב"ה השיב לו שאי אפשר שמתמת זה יתהפכו למינות שהרי תשובתו בצדו ויברא אלהים את האדם בצלמו. וכתיב למן-היום אשר ברא אלהים אדם על-הארץ.

**That is to say, that Moses was of the opinion that because of this verse, men would turn to heresy and say that there are two or more Heavenly powers, G-d forbid. The Holy One, Blessed be He, answered him that it is impossible that because of this verse that [people]**

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<sup>1</sup> The first edition had the acronym Rashbag, i.e., Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel. The translator has corrected the attribution to match that of the Yalkut Shimoni and the parallel text in Gen. Rabbah 8:8.

would turn to heresy, for “the response to his inference is right by its side,”<sup>2</sup> i.e., in the next verse: “**And G-d created man in His image**, in the image of G-d He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27). **And it is written, “Ever since G-d created man on earth**, from one end of heaven to the other: has anything as grand as this ever happened, or has its like ever been known?” (Deut. 4:32). Thus, there are other verses that clarify that it was G-d alone who created man.

ומשום הכי רצה שיכתוב כן להורות המוסר שלא יתבייש הגדול ליטול עצמה מן הקטון ממנו. אמנם הקטן אפטר שייהיה במי שקבר יש לו מחשבת מינות, שיתגבר פח סכלותו ורשעתו מחמת פסוק זה ולא ירצה לשמוע מה שאנו משיבים לו כנ"ל. ולכן אמר לו כתוב לפי שאין מקום לקלקל מחמת זה הפסוק, ואף שיש לחוש למי שקבר נטה לדרך המינות שיתחזק יותר בסברתו החלושה מחמת פסוק זה, אין אחריותו עלינו, מפני שקבר רצה מעצמו לטעות.

**Because of this protection provided by the other verses, He wanted [Moses] to write thus, “Let us make man,” to teach the lesson that the greater one should not be ashamed to take advice from one lesser than him.** That is, as Rashi notes, “Even though the angels did not participate in G-d’s creation and the verse provides room for heretics to err, Scripture did not refrain from teaching an important lesson in proper behavior and in humility, that that one who is greater should still consult—and take permission from—one who is smaller.”

**Indeed, the fear is possible that one who already has thoughts of heresy, will have his foolishness and wickedness grow stronger because of this verse, and won’t want to listen to what we answer him, as above, that other verses prove that G-d was the sole Creator. Therefore, He said to [Moses], “Write it, for there’s no room for harm because of this verse.”** I.e., someone who’s not already a heretic won’t be harmed. “**And even though you have to feel for someone who is already inclined toward the path of heresy—that he would be strengthened in his weak thinking because of this verse—there is no responsibility upon us, because it is already his will to err.**”

ונהו הרוצה לטעות יטעה. וכמו שפירש המדרש שמואל בפרק קמא דמסכת אבות על וישתו התלמידים הבאים אחרים ונמותו וכו' ועיי"ש. וכמו שנכתוב לקמן בפרשת וישלח על כל הקורא לאברהם "אברהם" וכו' ועיי"ש.

**This is the meaning of, “One who wishes to sin will sin.” Midrash Shmuel interpreted the first chapter of tractate Pirkei Avot (1:11), which states: “Abtalion used to say: Sages be careful with your words, lest you incur the penalty of exile, and be carried off to a place of evil waters, and the disciples who follow you drink and die, and thus the name of heaven becomes profaned.”** As Midrash Shmuel explained regarding this, sages should be careful in their words not to say things for which there is room to suffer another interpretation other than the true interpretation. We do not need to worry about the possibility of harm to the heretics themselves,

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<sup>2</sup> Sotah 29b.

but we should worry about their students, who may be misled by our teachings that the heretics misinterpret.

**Similarly, we will write below in Essay 8 of Parshat Va'yishlach on the teaching from Berachot 13a, “Bar Kappara taught: **Anyone who calls Abraham ‘Abram’** transgresses a positive mitzvah, as it is stated: ‘And your name will be Abraham’ (Gen. 17:5). Rabbi Eliezer says: [One who calls Abraham ‘Abram’] transgresses a negative mitzvah, as it is stated: ‘And your name shall no longer be called Abram’ (Gen. 17:5).”** There too, we discuss the principle that we are not obliged to correct the thinking of someone who is determined to be a heretic.

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