

Toldot Shimshon

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Chapter V – Mishnah 5

עֲשָׂרָה דְּבָרִים נִבְרְאוּ בְּעֶרְבַת שַׁבָּת בֵּין הַשְּׁמֶשׁוֹת, וְאֵלוֹ הֵן, פִּי הָאֶרֶץ, וְפִי הַבְּאֵר, וְפִי הָאֶתוֹן, וְהַקֶּשֶׁת, וְהַמָּן, וְהַמַּטֶּה, וְהַשְּׁמִיר, וְהַקְּתָב, וְהַמְּקָתָב, וְהַלְוִיחֹת. וְיֵשׁ אוֹמְרִים, אִף הַמְּזִיקִין, וְקַבְרֹתוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ, וְאֵילוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ. וְיֵשׁ אוֹמְרִים, אִף צָבָת בְּצָבָת עֲשׂוּיָהּ.

Ten things were created on the eve of the Sabbath at twilight, and these are they: [1] the mouth of the earth,¹ [2] the mouth of the well,² [3] the mouth of the donkey,³ [4] the rainbow,⁴ [5] the *manna*,⁵ [6] the staff [of Moses],⁶ [7] the *shamir* worm,⁷ [8] the letters,⁸ [9] the writing,⁹ [10] and the tablets.¹⁰ And some say: also the destructive forces,¹¹ the grave of Moses, our teacher,¹² and the ram of Abraham, our father.¹³ And some say: and also tongs, made with tongs.¹⁴

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¹ Num. 16:32, “And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up with their households, all Korach’s people and all their possessions.”

² Ta’anit 9a: “The well [was given to the Jewish people] in the merit of Miriam When Miriam died the well disappeared, as it is stated: ‘And Miriam died there’ (Num. 20:1), and in the next verse, ‘And there was no water for the congregation’ (Num. 20:2).”

³ Num. 22:28, “Then the L-rd opened the donkey’s mouth, and she said to Balaam, ‘What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times?’ ”

⁴ Gen. 9:13, “I have set My bow in the clouds, and it shall serve as a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.”

⁵ Ex. 16:31, “The house of Israel named it *manna*; it was like coriander seed, white, and it tasted like wafers in honey.”

⁶ Ex. 4:2–3; Ex. 17:5–6; Ex. 17:9–11; Num. 20:8–11.

⁷ I Kings 6:7, “When the House was built, only finished stones cut at the quarry were used, so that no hammer or ax or any iron tool was heard in the House while it was being built.” The rabbis understood that the *shamir* worm was able to eat or dissolve stone, so that no iron tools were required. Sotah 48b.

⁸ Bartenura understands this to mean the shape of the letters as engraved in the Tablets of the Ten Commandments.

⁹ Bartenura understands this to mean that miraculously, the text could be read from all four sides of the Tablets.

¹⁰ Bartenura teaches that the Tablets of the Ten Commandments were made of sapphire.

¹¹ Demons [“*sheidim*”], for example, see Gittin 68b.

¹² Deut. 34:6, “[G-d] buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, near Beth-peor; and no one knows his burial place to this day.”

¹³ Gen. 22:13, “When Abraham looked up, his eye fell upon a ram, caught in the thicket by its horns; so Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son.”

¹⁴ Pesachim 54a: “Rabbi Yehuda says: ‘Even the tongs [were created at this time].’ He would say: ‘Tongs [can be] fashioned [only] with [other] tongs, but who fashioned the first tongs? Indeed, [the first pair of tongs] was fashioned at the hand of Heaven.’ [Someone] said to him: ‘It is possible to fashion [tongs] with a mold and align it [without the need for other tongs]. Indeed, [the first tongs] were a creation of man.’ ”

מה גדלו מעשי ה' מאד עמקו מחשבותיו, לברא אלו העשרה דברים בסוף הרגע כמימריה. וכתבו המפרשים, שאלו העשרה דברים, הם מכוננים נגד העשרה מאמרות שבהם נברא העולם. ועוד כתבו, שהם עשרה תיקונים, לעשרה פגמים שקלקל אדם הראשון בחטאו.

How great are the works of the L-rd, how very profound his designs,¹⁵ to create these things at the end of a timespan that lasts as long as it takes to say the word “moment” [rega] [רגע].¹⁶ The commentators wrote,¹⁷ that these ten things, were intended to parallel the ten utterances with which the world was created. They also wrote¹⁸ that they were ten corrections for the ten injuries caused by the first Adam through his sin to eat from the tree of knowledge.

ובאמת כי לצאת ידי חובתנו במשנה זו לתרץ הספיקות והקשיות והדקדוקים, ותגלגלו הענינים עד הדברים שהם כפשונו של עולם, והוה הו מעשה בראשית בפרק "אין דורשין. לכן גדינו מסולקות ממנה, וכשם שקבלנו שכר על הדרישה, כך נקבל על הפרישה. וכן עשו קצת מפרשים אחרים. ועיינו בעיון יעקב בפירושו למסכתא זו. כי "לעלם" כתיב, ו"כבוד אלהים הסתר דבר".

In truth, because it is our duty in this Mishnah, to resolve the doubts and the difficulties and the details, the matters will be resolved to be “things that constitute the concealed matters of the world,”¹⁹ and these then are *Ma'aseh Bereisheet* of the second chapter of tractate Chagigah, entitled “Do not expound.”²⁰ The Talmud refers to *Ma'aseh Bereisheet*, “the Work of Creation,” esoteric secrets of the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis, which may only be taught to one or two people at a time.

Therefore, our hands are removed from it, i.e., it would be inappropriate to disclose these matters in writing. “Just as we received reward for the interpretation of other matters, so we shall receive reward for our withdrawal from using this method of exposition in this case.”²¹ Thus acted a few other commentators. See the *Iyun Ya'akov*²² in his interpretation of this Mishnah. Because in Ex. 3:15, for the text, “This shall be My name forever,” instead of the typical spelling for “forever” of לעולם, the deficient spelling לעלם is written. While we know from tradition that the word is pronounced *le'olam* [“forever”], the deficient spelling could lead one to pronounce it as לעלם [*le'aleim*], which would change the meaning to, “this is My name, which is to be concealed.”²³ And “it is the glory of G-d to conceal a matter.”²⁴

¹⁵ Cf. Ps. 92:6.

¹⁶ Berachot 7a; Avodah Zarah 4b.

¹⁷ Abarbanel (1437 – 1508), *Nachalat Avot*; Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel (“Maharal of Prague”) (c.1512–1609), *Derech Chaim* (Prague 1578–88); Rabbi Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller (1579–1654), *Tosafot Yom Tov* (1614–17).

¹⁸ Rabbi Binyamin HaKohen (“Rabach”), *Avot Olam* (Venice 1719), quoting Rabbi Menachem Azaria da Fano (“Rema M’Pano”) (1548–1620), Italian Kabbalist and commentator on the Talmud, in *Asara Ma’amarot* (“Ten Utterances”) (Venice 1597), Ma’mar Chakor Din, section 3, perek 3.

¹⁹ Chagigah 13a.

²⁰ Mishnah Chagigah 2:1; Chagigah 11b.

²¹ Pesachim 22b; Kiddushin 57a; Bava Kamma 41b; Bechorot 6b.

²² Rabbi Jacob ben Joseph Reischer (Bechofen) (1661–1733), *Iyun Ya'akov* (Wilmersdorf 1729).

²³ Pesachim 50a; Ex. Rabbah 3:7; Rashi on Ex. 3:15.

²⁴ Prov. 25:2.

ועם כל זה, הגה מקום אהנו שלא להפטר ממנה בלי שום חימוש, והיינו סיפיה דקרא "ויכבד מלכים חקר דבר", "בהן" אמר והו דברים. למה דוקא הנה צורך לברוא עשרה דברים בין השמשות, דהיינו בסוף הרגע של ששת ימי בראשית, דנדאי בבין השמשות דרבי יוסי שהוא כהרף עין, מירי מתניתין, וכמו שפתיב התוספות יום טוב, ועיי"ש. ועוד, מאי קא משמע לן התנא בזה הענין במסקתא זו.

Despite all this, we have room here to learn something about this matter and not to exempt ourselves completely without finding any novelty. We know this, because **at the end of the verse**, "It is the glory of G-d to conceal a matter," we read, **"and the glory of a king to study something [davar] [דבר]."** Gittin 62a teaches that one sage greeted two other sages, calling them kings. "They said to him: From where do you know that the Sages are called kings? He said to them: As it is written [with regard to the Torah in the book of Proverbs]: 'Through me, kings rule' (Prov. 8:15)." Thus, even if we understand that this Mishnah discloses matters of *Ma'aseh Bereisheet*, and we understand that sometimes G-d wants to conceal a matter, we also understand that a Torah scholar has the right to learn something.

[The Tanna] said, "and these are they," and "they" [refers to] things [devarim] [דברים]. A first question, then, is **why was it specifically necessary to create ten things during twilight, which is at the last moment of the six days of Creation, that is certainly speaking of the twilight of Rabbi Yosei, which is like the blink of an eye?**²⁵ **That is what the Mishnah is speaking of, as the Tosfot Yom Tov writes, and see there.**²⁶

Also, a second question is, what is the Tanna teaching us by this matter in this Mishnah? In other words, if the explanation of this Mishnah is an esoteric secret that cannot be taught in public, why did the Tanna make this Mishnah public in the first place? There must be some accessible teaching that he wanted to impart.

ויש לומר, דאמרינו בפירק קמא דעבודת זרה דף י"ט, הגיעו לכיפה שמעמידין בה עבודה זרה, אסור לבנותה. אמר רבי אלעזר אמר רבי יוחנן, אם בנה, שברו מותר. דמאן קא גרים לה, גמר מלאכה, ואימת הויא גמר מלאכה, במכוש אחרון, ומכוש אחרון לית ביה שנה פרוטה, וקסבר, ישנה לשכירות מתחלה ועד סוף. עכ"ל.

It can be said, that it is said in the first chapter of tractate Avodah Zarah, page 19b:

[Mishnah Avodah Zarah 1:8 teaches:] One may not build with [gentiles] a basilica, a tribunal, a stadium, or a platform. But one may build with them small platforms and bathhouses. [But once] **he reaches the arched chamber [in the bath] where [the gentiles] put up [objects of] idol worship, it is prohibited to build it.** [The Gemara cites a contrary view:] **Rabbi Elazar says [that] Rabbi Yochanan says: If he did [continue to] build [the arched chamber], his wages are permitted. . .**

²⁵ Berachot 2b.

²⁶ Rabbi Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller (1579–1654), *Tosafot Yom Tov* (1614–17).

Rabba bar Ulla says: [This statement that the wages are permitted] is necessary only with regard to the final stroke [with which the laborer completes his work. For an object of] idol worship, what causes it [to be used for idol worship]? The completion of labor, and when is the completion of labor? With the final stroke [of the laborer]. The final stroke [alone] does not have the value of one peruta [and therefore the wages he receives are due when each act of labor is performed during the entire process, not when the final stroke completes the work].

[Rabbi Elazar] holds [that the obligation to pay] a wage is [incurred continuously] from the beginning [of the period he was hired] to the end [not merely upon completion of the work]. [Since the worker has rights to his wages at every stage of labor performed during the entire period of work, the wages are not considered a benefit that he receives from idol worship, as the object is classified as an object of idol worship only at the very end.]

- Avodah Zarah 19b

ומעמיה, הואיל דקיימא לן שיגש בה לשכירות מתחלה ועד סוף, הייתי יכול לומר, שכל מי שחוטא ופוגם באיזה חלק של העולם, שאינו פוגם בכל העשרה מאמרות, שהרי בכל חלק יש מאמר אחד לחודיה. וקשה, למאי דתנא בריש פרקין בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם וכו' להפרע וכו'.

Now, since we hold that a wage is [incurred continuously] from the beginning [of the period he was hired] to the end, I could say that regarding everyone who sins and damages some part of the world, that he does not damage all the ten utterances. For in each part of the time period of Creation there is presumably one utterance alone.

A difficulty is why did we learn at the beginning of the chapter, “With ten utterances the world was created. And what does this teach, for surely it could have been created with one utterance? But this was so in order to punish the wicked who destroy the world that was created with ten utterances.”²⁷ If he has only damaged one utterance and not all ten, why does it say he is destroying the world?

אבל לאחר שמצינו שבמכוש אחרון, דהיינו ברגע אחרון של יום ששי, היושוי שם כל העשרה מאמרות ביחד לברוא אלו העשרה דברים, אם כן, מי שחוטא ופוגם בעולם, פוגם בכל העשרה מאמרות, שפינון שהיו שוים במכוש אחרון, מוכח שפיר, שבכל הבריאה היו כולם יחד. ומכל שכן שמה שנעשה ברגע אחרון, הם דברים חשובים יקרי הערה, ומטעם זה הוכרח הקדוש ברוך הוא כביכול, לברוא אותם בין השמשות דנקא.

But after we found that with the final hammer blow, which was in the final moment of the sixth day of Creation, all the ten statements together were equated to create these ten things. If so, he who sins and damages the world, damages all ten utterances, and since they

²⁷ Pirkei Avot, Chapter V, Mishnah 1.

were equal within the final hammer blow, it is nicely proven, that in all of the Creation they were all together. All the more so, what was done at the last moment were important and valuable things, and for this reason the Holy One, Blessed be He, was compelled, as it were, to create them precisely at twilight. This answers our first question, of why these ten things were created at twilight.

ואף המפנא הביאם פאן, פדי להוכיח שהרשעים מקלקלים העולם שנגברא וכו'. ומן הדין הנה לו לשנות משנה זו תכף אחר "בעשרה מאמרות" וכו'. אלא שבתחלה מפרש דבריו שבאמת פן הוא, שהקדוש ברוך הוא משלם לצדיקים שכר העשרה מאמרות, ונפרע פנגדון מן הרשעים, פי היכי דלא תקשי מנלן דהכי הוי. והביא ראיה מהמבול ומאברהם, מפרעה ומישראל, ומעשרה נסים שנעשו בבית המקדש. ואמר פה, במשנה זו בא לבאר הטעם.

As far as the second question, why the Tanna taught this Mishnah, if the explanation of its elements were *Ma'asei Bereisheet*, esoteric secrets that could not be publicly taught, we see that the Tanna brought them here, to prove that the wicked are damaging the world that was created.

And it was his duty to teach this Mishnah soon after saying "With ten utterances the world was created." Rather, that at the beginning, he explained the things that are truly thus, that the Holy One, Blessed He gives the righteous a reward of the ten utterances. He exacted payment for them from the wicked, so that there should not be a contradiction. From where do we derive that this is so? He brings a proof from the flood²⁸ and from Abraham,²⁹ from Pharaoh³⁰ and from Israel,³¹ and from the ten miracles that happened in the Temple.³² He said this, [and] in this Mishnah he came to explain the reason.

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²⁸ Pirkei Avot, Chapter V, Mishnah 2: "[There were] ten generations from Adam to Noah, in order to make known what long-suffering is His; for all those generations kept on provoking Him, until He brought upon them the waters of the flood. [There were] ten generations from Noah to Abraham, in order to make known what long-suffering is His; for all those generations kept on provoking Him, until Abraham, came and received the reward of all of them."

²⁹ Pirkei Avot, Chapter V, Mishnah 3: "With ten trials was Abraham, our father (may he rest in peace), tried, and he withstood them all; to make known how great was the love of Abraham, our father (peace be upon him)."

³⁰ Pirkei Avot, Chapter V, Mishnah 3: "Ten miracles were wrought for our ancestors in Egypt, and ten at the sea. Ten plagues did the Holy one, blessed be He, bring upon the Egyptians in Egypt and ten at the sea."

³¹ Pirkei Avot, Chapter V, Mishnah 3: "[With] ten trials did our ancestors try G-d, blessed be He, in the Wilderness, as it is said, "and they have tried Me these ten times and they have not listened to my voice" (Num. 14:22)."

³² Pirkei Avot, Chapter 4: "Ten wonders were wrought for our ancestors in the Temple: [1] no woman miscarried from the odor of the sacred flesh; [2] the sacred flesh never became putrid; [3] no fly was ever seen in the slaughterhouse; [4] no emission occurred to the high priest on the Day of Atonement; [5] the rains did not extinguish the fire of the woodpile; [6] the wind did not prevail against the column of smoke; [7] no defect was found in the *omer*, or in the two loaves, or in the showbread; [8] the people stood pressed together, yet bowed down and had room enough; [9] never did a serpent or a scorpion harm anyone in Jerusalem; [10] and no man said to his fellow: the place is too congested for me to lodge overnight in Jerusalem."