



Bereishis: Instant Gratification

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

"In the beginning God created heaven and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)

From the time we are children, we are taught the awesome and inspiring story of creation. Through the verses we see all the cosmic pieces fit together to form a beautiful tapestry of Divine handiwork. The creation story appears simple, yet, we know it has many dimensions and levels of deeper understanding. In fact, many of the commentaries posit that we cannot even begin to understand the esoteric secrets contained in these verses. Yet, God included these chapters in His Torah and as such, there are lessons to be learned. What can we take away from the creation narrative, and how can we use it to shape our new year?

When reading through the verses detailing the 6 Days of Creation, we see a pattern:

"And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." (Genesis 1:3)

"And God said, 'Let the water that is beneath the heavens gather into one place, and let the dry land appear,' and it was so." (Genesis 1:9)

"And they shall be for luminaries in the expanse of the heavens to shed light upon the earth.' And it was so." (Genesis 1:15)

God wills it and it happens. This is one of the most spectacular aspects of the Divine Persona: He can make things happen instantaneously. *Va'yomer Elokim Yihi Or*, God wants there to be light - *Va'yihi Or*, there is light. God's wishes require no effort to actualize. God's will creates new realities. Not so with man. For man to see the actualization of his efforts, he must be willing to expend much energy, he must be willing to struggle, he must be prepared to experience set-backs and at times even fail. Yet despite all of this, man must possess the strength to keep trying. This is the lesson of creation; it is only God who can produce instantaneous results. We mortals must be willing to work hard and often. The entire story of creation is to teach us the greatness of God and simultaneously remind us that we cannot expect immediate results, gratification, and success in our life endeavors. God can create with sheer will; we can only create with extreme effort.

On this Shabbos, Shabbos Bereishis, we recite *Birkas HaChodesh* (we announce the arrival of the Hebrew month of *Cheshvon* in the week ahead). This prayer reflects the anticipatory hope that the coming month will be filled with blessing and fulfillment. The text we use comes from a prayer created by the great Talmudic sage, Rav.

The Talmud quotes this beautiful prayer:

"Rav, on concluding his prayer, added the following: May it be Thy will, O Lord our God, to grant us long life, a life of peace, a life of good, a life of blessing, a life of sustenance, a life of bodily vigor (*Chilutz Atzamos*), honor, a life in which we may be filled with the love of Torah and the fear of heaven, a life in which there is fear of sin, a life free from shame and confusion, a life of riches and which Thou shalt fulfil all the desires of our heart for good!" (Berachos 16b).

It is intriguing to note that we ask God for a life of *Chilutz Atzamos* (health, bodily vigor). There are more accurate words in Hebrew for health (e.g. *refuah*, *briyus*). If we analyze the phrase more carefully, we will find that it actually means, "strong bones." Perhaps, we are asking God for "fortitude." We turn to God on this first Shabbos of the new year, on this Shabbos when Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Succos are behind us and an exciting yet daunting new year is ahead of us, and we say, "God, please give me all of the wonderful blessings that life has to offer, and please give me *Chilutz Atzamos* (fortitude) to see my various endeavors and efforts to fruition. Give me the staying power to be able to make it to the finish line of my life pursuits. Give me the strength to know that somehow things will work out." In a universe where only God can achieve instantaneous results, we ask God for the strength, the *Chilutz Atzamos* to achieve our life objectives.

It is on this *Shabbos Bereishis*, the Shabbos of creation, that we take stock of our present and begin to plan for our future. We pledge to ourselves to live better and more meaningful lives. We identify the aspects of life that need to change and the aspects that must be enhanced. We create a vision of what we would like the coming year to look like and create an action-plan to make it happen. We begin the year with unbridled optimism and excitement because we have been given another year in which to create a new world. Yet, we realize that we will hit roadblocks, encounter obstacles, and sometimes even fall. It is during these moments that we are often tempted to abandon our plan and new life course saying, "I tried, and it didn't work out." It is during these moments of failure and turbulence that we must remember only God can create the light of life with an utterance of the lips, only God can affect instantaneous results. We must work,



Bereishis: Instant Gratification

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

struggle, and ultimately persevere. It is during these challenging moments that we must look heavenward and ask God for an extra infusion of *Chilutz Atzamos* to allow us to be successful on the journey of life. (From 5779)