

פרשת בראשית

So much of Parshas B'reishis is so mysterious that it seems almost hopeless to attempt to fathom those subjects which are 'hidden' from our understanding and comprehension.

On the other hand, since the Torah has chosen to reveal bits and pieces, it certainly had a purpose for doing so and that purpose is for us to study and learn from it.

Chazal have made it clear that that which the Torah reveals is appropriate to study – despite our significant deficiencies and limitations.

The determination of Chazal that we are allowed to investigate all that occurred since Creation is based on their interpretation of a Posuk in Parshas Voeschanan. We read there in a discussion of the remarkable, singular and inimitable Revelation on Mt. Sinai when the Torah was given (D'vorim Perek 4/Posuk 32):

כִּי שָׁאַל נָא לַיָּמִים רִאשֹׁנִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ לְפָנֶיךָ לְמַן הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם עַל הָאָרֶץ וְלִמְקַצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם וְעַד קִצְהָ הַשָּׁמַיִם הֲנִהְיָה כְּדַבַּר הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה אוֹ הֲנִשְׁמַע כְּמָהוּ:

When you will ask, with urgency, regarding the first days that were before you, from the day that G-d created Man on the land and regarding from the end of the heavens to the end of the heavens, was there a matter that was this great or was anything heard similar to it?

Chazal's interpretation in Masseches Chagiga (11 b) reads:

תנו רבנן: כי שאל נא לימים ראשונים... יכול ישאל אדם קודם שנברא העולם - תלמוד לומר למן היום אשר ברא א... ל'קים אדם על הארץ. יכול לא ישאל אדם מששת ימי בראשית - תלמוד לומר לימים ראשונים אשר היו לפניך. יכול ישאל אדם מה למעלה ומה למטה, מה לפנים ומה לאחור - תלמוד לומר ולמקצה השמים ועד קצה השמים - מלמקצה השמים ועד קצה השמים אתה שואל, ואין אתה שואל מה למעלה מה למטה, מה לפנים מה לאחור.

The Chachamim learned in a Braisa: 'When you will ask with urgency regarding the first days' – I might think that one can ask regarding what was prior to Creation. Therefore the Posuk teaches 'from the day that G-d created Man on the land.' I might think that one cannot ask regarding that

which was during the Six Days of Creation – therefore the Posuk teaches ‘regarding the first days that were before you’.¹

I might think that one can ask regarding that which is above and that which is below and that which was before and that which will be after – therefore the Posuk teaches – from the edge of the heavens to the edge of the heavens’. You can ask from the edge of the heavens to the edge of the heavens; you may not ask what is above and what is below, what is before and what is after.

Let us take one subject from those ‘first days’ and attempt to learn it and learn from it.

If we go to the very beginning of those Days of Creation, we read the first five P’sukim of the Torah:

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֵהוֹ וְבַהֹוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל
פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל פְּנֵי
הַמַּיִם: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהי אור וַיְהי אור: וַיֹּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאֹר כִּי טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל
אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ: וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאֹר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קִרְא לַיְלָה וַיְהי
עֶרֶב וַיְהי בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד:

²In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth. The earth was perplexing and undefinable and there was darkness over the face of the depths; the wind of G-d caused it to hover over the waters. G-d said, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light. G-d saw the light that it was good and G-d divided between the light and the darkness. G-d called the light ‘day’ and the darkness ‘night’; it was evening and it was morning, Day One.

Rashi writes:

וירא א...ל'קים את האור כי טוב ויבדל - אף בזה אנו צריכים לדברי אגדה ראהו שאינו כדאי להשתמש בו רשעים והבדילו לצדיקים לעתיד לבא.

¹ See Rashi and Tosfos here and other commentaries regarding the precise meaning of ‘above’, ‘below’, ‘before’ and ‘after’.

² We attempted to present a translation that was accurate according to Rashi’s commentary here.

G-d saw the light that it was good and G-d divided – With this verse as well we need the explanation of the *Aggadah*. G-d saw it that the wicked did not deserve to use it and He separated it for the use of Tzaddikim in the future [in *Olom HaBo*].

Rashi notes that the very first Posuk required the *Aggadah* to have a sound explanation and thus his commentary to the Torah begins with an *Aggadic* explanation that is not inherently understood from the *p'shat* of the verse. And he continues in this verse that here, too, as well, we need the *Aggadah* to understand the meaning.

What is difficult about our verse that required Rashi to deviate from his standard to explain according to the *p'shat* and use the *Aggadah*? One of Rashi's main supra-commentators, *Nachalas Yaakov*, writes:

דלפי פשוטו של מקרא משמע דבתחילה היו מעורבין יחד, דלשון הבדלה שייך בדבר המעורב יחד, וזה אי אפשר כיון שיש אור אין חושך, דאור וחושך אינם אלא קנין והעדר, ואי אפשר חיבורם יחד בעת מן העתים:

According to the *p'shat* of the Posuk, the implication is that at first light and darkness were intermingled since the term *Havdalah* is relevant with things that are mixed. However, it is impossible to say that because where there is light there isn't darkness because 'light' and 'darkness' refer to that which is acquired and the absence of that which is acquired. The two can never be connected at any time.

This explanation, however, does not seem coherent with the continuation of Rashi there who offers us an explanation based on *p'shat*. Rashi's continuation reads:

ולפי פשוטו כך פרשהו ראהו כי טוב ואין נאה לו ולחשך שיהיו משתמשין בערבוביא, וקבע לזה תחומו ביום ולזה תחומו בלילה:

According to the *p'shat*, G-d saw that the light was good and it wasn't proper for the light to be used together with the darkness when they were mixed together. Therefore, He set boundaries for them – one's boundary was in the day and the boundary of the other at night.

Seemingly, this *p'shat* commentary is based on what Rashi writes regarding the fourth day of creation when the sun, moon and stars were created.

The Torah tells us (ibid. P'sukim 14, 19):

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים...לְקִים יְהִי מְאֹרֹת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה וְהָיוּ לְאֹתֹת
וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וּלְיָמִים וּשְׁנָיִם:

וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם רְבִיעִי:

G-d said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide between the day and the night; they will be for signs and special days and for days and for years.

It was evening and it was morning, Day Four.

Rashi writes:

יהי מארת וגו' - מיום ראשון נבראו, וברביעי צוה עליהם להתלות ברקיע, וכן כל תולדות שמים וארץ נבראו מיום ראשון, וכל אחד ואחד נקבע ביום שנגזר עליו, הוא שכתוב את השמים, לרבות תולדותיהם, ואת הארץ, לרבות תולדותיה:

Let there be lights – they were created on the first day and on the fourth day Hashem commanded that they should be hung in the firmament. So it was with all that was generated from the heavens and the land – they were created on the first day and each of them were set in their place on the day that was decreed.

That is the meaning of the words *eis ha'shamayim* 'with the heavens' – to include their 'generations' – and *v'eis ho'oretz* – 'with the earth - to include its 'generations'.

Radak to Posuk 3 expands upon Rashi and provides a response to Nachalas Yaakov who talked about the impossibility of light and darkness existing intermingled. We read:

יהי אור - אף שלא היו המאורות ברקיע השמים עד יום רביעי, מכל מקום נבראו ביום ראשון עם הגלגלים, והכל נברא ברגע אחד, אך לא יצאו פעילותם לפעלם על פני תבל, כי אם כל אחד ואחד ביומו; וגם האור לא התחיל לשלח ניצוציו לגדל צימחי ארץ, ולהיות עשב מזריע זרע עד אשר אמר השם שיהיו מאורות ברקיע השמים להאיר על הארץ ולעשות פעולתם בעולם הארצי:

Let there be light – Even though the lights were not in the firmament of the heavens until the fourth day, nonetheless they were created on the first day

together with the galaxies. All was created in one instant but were not activated to work on the earth – rather, each one on its day.

The *Or* – light- did not begin to send out its sparks to cause the vegetation of the ground to grow and for the grass to produce seed until Hashem said that there should be lights in the heavens to give light upon earth and to fulfill their activities in the earthly world.

Thus, light and darkness did intermingle, somehow, in the time before Hashem separated them.

And, of course, we wonder what the nature of that original ‘light’ was? If the original light was hidden and yet we do have light, natural and artificial, what is the difference between it and that which we experience all of the time?

And we may pose an additional issue for consideration. If Hashem found it necessary to secrete the light upon its Creation, why did He not leave it in its potential state and only activate it לעתיד לבוא, in the future when there will be only the righteous to benefit from it? What was the purpose of activating the light and then hiding it, practically at the very same time?

So, we return to the beginning of our words and the clash between our obligation for Torah study and to understand the Torah’s message to us when the Torah’s lessons seem incomprehensible.

What method can we devise to reach some type of understanding of a subject which seems so elusive?

However, even though the entire Torah is complicated and challenges our understanding, it would seem that other parts of the Torah are relatively far easier to comprehend than those ‘First Days of Creation’ that no person viewed or was present to experience their events.

And with these thoughts, we will turn to the very end of the Torah to aid us in understanding its beginning.

On Simchas Torah we read the following verses from Parshas V’zos HaBracha and then followed them with the P’sukim above from Parshas B’reishis.

The writes (D’vorim Perek 34/P’sukim 1-4):

וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה מִמֵּעֲרֹבַת מוֹאָב אֶל הַר נֶבֹו רֹאשׁ הַפְּסָגָה אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי יְרֵחוֹ וַיִּרְאֶהוּ ה' אֶת כָּל הָאָרֶץ אֶת הַגְּלָעַד עַד דָּן: וְאֶת כָּל נַפְתָּלִי וְאֶת אָרֶץ אֶפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה וְאֶת כָּל אָרֶץ יְהוּדָה עַד הַיָּם הָאֲחֵרוֹן: וְאֶת הַנֶּגֶב וְאֶת הַכֶּפֶר בְּקִעַת יְרֵחוֹ עִיר הַתְּמָרִים עַד צֶעַר: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵלָיו זֹאת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר לְזָרְעֶךָ אֶתְנַנָּה הָרְאִיתִיךָ בְּעֵינַיִךָ וְשָׁמָּה לֹא תַעֲבֹר:

Moshe went up from the Plains of Moav to Mt. Nevo, at the top of the peak that was facing Jericho and Hashem showed him all of the Land, Gilad until Dan. And all of Naftali and the Land of Efraim and Menashe and all of the Land of Yehuda until the final sea. And the Negev and the square of the fissure of Jericho, the City of Dates, until *Tzo'ar*.

Hashem said to Moshe, 'This is the land that I promised to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov saying, 'to your seed I Hashem will give it; I showed it to you with your eyes but you will not cross over.

It would seem that the Torah could have spared us many words by only writing that Hashem showed Moshe 'the Land in its entirety' without listing so many specifics. Why did the Torah choose to give us such a particular list?

Ramban explains that the specifics were necessary so that Moshe would know the particular divisions of the Land for the various *Shevatim* and their borders.

Ramban was responding to Rashi's commentary and Rashi's explanation for the necessity of the specific locations that are mentioned.

Rashi understood that our verses here are not interested in telling us that HaKodosh Boruch Hu provided Moshe Rabbenu with a virtual tour of Eretz Yisroel and, as it were, noting the sites that were most inviting for visiting.

Rather, Rashi teaches us that these verses continue themes that we saw in the earlier Parshos of Nitzavim, Vayelech and Haazinu in which He told Moshe of the events that were to unfold as history continued.

Rashi writes:

את כל הארץ - הראהו את כל ארץ ישראל בשלותה והמציקין העתידיים להיות מציקין לה:

The entire land – Hashem showed Moshe all of Eretz Yisroel in tranquility and in distress because there would be those who will cause it distress in the future.

עד דן - הראהו בני דן עובדים עבודה זרה שנאמר (שופטים יח/ל³) ויקימו להם בני דן את הפסל, והראהו שמשון שעתידי לצאת ממנו למושיע:

Until Dan – He showed him the people of Dan worshiping idolatry as it says, the people of Dan established the idol.

And He showed him Shimshon who in the future would come out from Shevet Dan and be a savior.

ואת כל נפתלי - הראהו ארצו בשלותה וחורבנה, והראהו דבורה וברק מקדש נפתלי נלחמים עם סיסרא וחיילותיו:

And all of Naftali – He showed him the land of Naftali in its tranquility and its destruction. He showed him Devorah and Barak from Kedesh Naftali fighting with Sisera and his armies.

ואת ארץ אפרים ומנשה - הראהו ארצם בשלותה ובחורבנה והראהו יהושע נלחם עם מלכי כנען שבא מאפרים, וגדעון שבא ממנשה נלחם עם מדין ועמלק:

And the land of Efraim and Menashe – He showed him their land in its tranquility and its destruction. He showed him Yehoshua, who came from Efraim, fighting with the Kings of Canaan and Gidon, who came from Menashe, fighting with Midian and Amalek.

ואת כל ארץ יהודה - בשלותה ובחורבנה והראהו מלכות בית דוד ונצחונם:

And all of the Land of Yehuda – in its tranquility and in its destruction. He showed him the royalty of the House of David and their victories.

עד הים האחרון - ארץ המערב בשלותה ובחורבנה.

³ The entire verse reads:

ויקימו להם בני דן את הפסל ויהונתן בן גרשם בן מנשה הוא ובניו היו כהנים לשבט הדני עד יום גלות הארץ:

The people of Dan established the idol; Yehonoson ben Gershom ben Menashe, he and his sons were the priests for the Dan Shevet until the day of the exile from Eretz Yisroel.

Until the last river – the land to the west [to the Mediterranean] in its tranquility and its destruction.

דבר אחר אל תקרי הים האחרון אלא היום האחרון, הראהו הקדוש ברוך הוא כל המאורעות שעתידין לארע לישראל עד שיחיו המתים:

Another explanation of yam hacharon – Do not read it as the last *yam* –river - but as the ‘last yom-day’. HaKodosh Boruch Hu showed him all of the events that will occur to Israel in the future until the dead will return to life.

ואת הנגב - ארץ הדרום. דבר אחר מערת המכפלה, שנאמר (במדבר יג/כב⁴) ויעלו בנגב ויבא עד חברון:

And the Negev – the land to the south.

An additional explanation – Hashem showed him *Machpelah* as it is written, ‘they went up in the Negev and he came to Chevron.

ואת הכנר - הראהו שלמה יוצק כלי בית המקדש, שנאמר (מלכים א ז/מו⁵) בכנר הירדן יצקם המלך במעבה האדמה:

And the square – He showed him Shlomo HaMelech forming the vessels of the Beis HaMikdosh as it says, ‘in the square of the Jordan River, the king formed them from the thickness of the ground.’

לאמר לזרעך אתננה הראיתיך - כדי שתלך ותאמר לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב שבועה שנשבע לכם הקדוש ברוך הוא קיימה, וזהו לאמר, לכך הראיתיך לך, אבל גזרה היא מלפני ששמה לא תעבור, שאלולי כך הייתי מקיימך עד שתראה אותם נטועים וקבועים בה ותלך ותגיד להם:

⁴ The entire verse reads:

ויעלו בנגב ויבא עד חברון ושם אחימן ששי ותלמי ילידי הענק וחברון שבע שנים נבנתה לפני צען מצרים:

The Meraglim went up in the Negev and he came to Chevron; Achiman, Sheishai, Talmi, the children of the giants were there; Chevron was built seven years before *Tzo'an* of Egypt.

⁵ The entire verse reads:

בכנר הירדן יצקם המלך במעבה האדמה בין סכות ובין צרתן:
In the square of the Jordan River, the King poured the materials with the thickness of the ground, between *Sukkos* and *Tzor'son*.

Saying ‘to your seed I will give it’, I have showed you – [I have showed it to you, Moshe,⁶] so that you will go and say to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov, ‘the promise that Hashem made to you, He fulfilled it. That is the meaning of לאמור-‘saying’. It is for that reason that I showed it to you.

But it is My decree that you will not cross over to there. For, were it not so, I would have continued your existence until you saw Israel settled in the Land and then you would have gone and told them.

It is most clear from Rashi, unlike Ramban, that HaKodosh Boruch Hu provided Moshe Rabbenu with an overview of the unfolding of Jewish History, in Eretz Yisroel, at least. Moshe Rabbenu saw periods of serenity and periods of suffering. He saw great heroes who would arise and save Israel from its troubles and saw others who would lead our people astray.

The vision that Moshe had, according to Rashi’s understand is inherently different than that in the opinion of Ramban. Ramban does write that Moshe’s vision was miraculous.

הראהו במעשה נס

Hashem showed Moshe such far-flung areas miraculously.

The Torah testifies just a few P’sukim later (Posuk 7):

וּמֹשֶׁה בֶּן־מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה בָּמָתוֹ לֹא כָהָתָה עֵינָיו וְלֹא נָס לְחָהּ:

Moshe was 120 years old at this death; his eye did not dim and his fluid did not depart.

However, the Torah does not mean that Moshe Rabbenu had telescopic vision. He had wonderful vision, perfect vision – equal to, if not surpassing, that of the best-sighted human. But he was human.

There was a miracle in the fact that he could see extraordinary distances!

⁶ Rashi does not deny that Moshe saw the physical and geographical places that are mentioned in the P’sukim. Rather, he emphasizes that Moshe saw far beyond the physical and geographical.

And, of course, the vision Moshe had according to Rashi's commentary was no less miraculous – but it was a miracle of a different sort.

The unique distances that Moshe saw in the teaching of Ramban were ones of geographical distances.

The unique distances that Moshe saw in the teaching of Rashi were ones of historical distances!

And what is the nature of the vision that allows a person to see into the future?

Or HaChaim HaKodosh provides us with the answer. He writes:

ויראהו ה' את כל וגו'. פירוש הפעיל ה' בו ראות מה שאין גבול בעין לראות באחת משתי דרכים, או יאיר עיניו מאור זרוע לצדיק (תהילים צז/יא⁷) שהוא אור ששת ימי בראשית הגנוז לצדיק שאמרו רז"ל (חגיגה יב א) שבו יביט האדם מסוף העולם, או הקריב הארץ למול עיניו והראה אותה לו לפניו:

Hashem showed him all etc. – the explanation is that Hashem activated in Moshe a vision that has no limitations in one of two fashions: either He enlightened his eyes with the light that is planted for the righteous – and that is the light of the Six Days of Creation that was hidden for the righteous as Chazal explained in Masseches Chagiga that Odom used that light to see from the end of the world.

The other possibility to explain how Moshe saw all of Eretz Yisroel is that Hashem brought all of Eretz Yisroel⁸ before the eyes of Moshe and he saw it before him, literally.

⁷ The entire verse reads:

אור זרוע לצדיק ולישרי לב שמחה:
Light is planted for the righteous; happiness for those whose hearts are straight.

⁸ There is a precedent for HaKodosh Boruch Hu moving entire segments of land, particularly in reference to Eretz Yisroel.

We read in Parshas Vayetze (B'reishis Perek 28/Posuk 13) in reference to the dream that Yaakov Ovinu had when he was leaving Eretz Yisroel to go to Lovon:

והנה ה' נצב עליו ויאמר אני ה' א...ל"קי אברהם אביך וא...ל"קי יצחק הארץ אשר אתה שכב עליה
לך אתננה ולזרעך:

These two explanations of Or HaChaim HaKodosh fit very well with Rashi and Ramban, respectively.

Ramban was dealing with a physical vision. Hashem enabled Moshe to see by making his target immediately before him.

Rashi, whose explanation referred to seeing in a historical distance, would tell us that there was a unique light here – one that would pierce the curtains of history.

What was that light? It was the light of B'reishis.

And – even though Hashem hid it for the future, He also took it out of its storage place and allowed Moshe Rabbenu to use.

That means that the light was not buried with permanence. It could be called forth when Hashem decided – even before לעתיד לבוא – that distant time in the future.

We now have an insight into the nature of that light of B'reishis. It was a light that illuminated history and when permitted, allowed Man to see a little of what G-d always sees, *kavayachol*.

How does one come to such a standing that he can see, in miniature, what G-d perceives?

Alshich HaKodosh provides us with an insight. He asks that since Moshe was seeing with such miraculous vision, the one that Or HaChaim HaKodosh described as the light of the Six Days of Creation, why was it necessary for Moshe to be at the peak of the mountain. He wasn't seeing with regular vision – he was seeing history by

Behold, Hashem was standing erect on the ladder and He said, 'I am Hashem, G-d of Avraham your father and the G-d of Yitzchak your father; the land that you are laying on, I will give it to you and to your seed.

Since the land upon which Yaakov Ovinu was laying on was a very small parcel indeed, what type of generosity is implied when Hashem says that that land will be given to Yaakov and his descendants? There was barely enough for one person – certainly not for an entire family.

In answer to that question, Rashi writes there:

שכב עליה - קיפל הקדוש ברוך הוא כל ארץ ישראל תחתיו, רמז לו שתהא נוחה ליכבש לבניו:

Laying upon it – Hashem folded up all of Eretz Yisroel underneath Yaakov.

That was a hint that its conquest would be easy for Yaakov's descendants.

virtue of a miracle! He could have had the same vision on ground-level as he had when being hundreds of meters about ground-level.

Alshich responds:

ויעל משה מערבות מואב אל הר נבו כו' ויראהו ה' את כל הארץ. והנה לבל יאמר איש מה צורך להראותו דרך השגחה את כל הארץ לעלות אל הר גבוה, לזה אמר כי מה שעלה שם, הוא למה שהר נבו ראש הפסגה הוא על פני יריחו, שעניו רואות קצת ארץ ישראל נגדו, שיש בזה קצת הכנה אל השגת ראייתה.

Moshe ascended from the plains of Moav to Mt. Nevo etc. and Hashem showed him all of the land – behold one need not say ‘what was the necessity of ascending the high mountain to be able to see the entire land since the vision was by virtue of special Divine Providence?’

The answer is that Moshe had to ascend to Mt. Nevo, to its peak facing Jericho and his [human, unaided] eyes would see a bit of Eretz Yisroel before him. The purpose was that Moshe had to have some personal preparation before he would receive the sight that was given to him miraculously.

Just like Moshe Rabbenu required preparation before his prophetic meeting with the Ribbono Shel Olom at the Burning Bush, he saw the bush burning and not being consumed and removed his shoes, so in this event some 41 years later, the vision did not come to him automatically.

Moshe first had to see with his own eyes, see the Eretz Yisroel that he so desired, and then, in response to Moshe’s great desire to see Eretz Yisroel, let him see it all from a historical position, not just geographical.

On that day Moshe Rabbenu required *hachanah*, preparation⁹.

⁹ At first I saw this explanation of Alshich HaKodosh as being perplexing. We know that Moshe Rabbenu Olom HaShalom was always ready to receive prophecy. That is stated clearly at the end of Parshas B’ha’alosecha. We read there (B’midbar Perek 12/Posuk 4):

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' פְּתָאֵם אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל מִרְיָם צֵאוּ שְׁלֹשְׁתֵּיכֶם אֶל אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיֵּצְאוּ שְׁלֹשְׁתָּם:
Hashem said suddenly to Moshe and to Aharon and to Miriam ‘the three of you go out to the Ohel Moed; the three of them went out.

What was the reason for the ‘suddenness’? Rashi explains that neither Aharon nor Miriam were in a pure enough state to receive prophecy.

It still may appear to us that just because Hashem opened His treasure house to provide Moshe with this vision of holiness that doesn't mean that anyone else would be able to have access to it.

But that assumption may be proven false.

During this past week, from the second day of Sukkos through its seventh day, we commemorated the extraordinary celebrations of *Simchas Beis HaShoeiva* that were marked during those days of Sukkos when our Beis HaMikdosh was standing.

The Simcha of the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva was unmatched. Chazal teach in the Mishnah in Masseches Sukkah (51 a):

מי שלא ראה שמחת בית השואבה לא ראה שמחה מימיו.

Moshe on the other hand was always ready:

מאחר שנגלית עליו שכינה תדיר ואין עת קבועה לדבור:

Since the Shechinah appeared to Moshe always and there was never a fixed time to receive the Divine Speech – Moshe had to be constantly ready.

Why, then, is there a need for Moshe to have a preparation here?

The answer can be found in Rashi's commentary to the beginning of Parshas Vayelech. The Posuk writes there (D'vorim Perek 31/P'sukim 1-2):

וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר אֶת הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֶל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם בֶּן מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה אֲנֹכִי הַיּוֹם
לֹא אוֹכֵל עוֹד לְצֵאת וּלְבוֹא וְה' אָמַר אֵלַי לֹא תַעֲבֹר אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה:

Moshe went and he spoke these words to all of Israel. He said to them, 'I am 120 years old today, I am not able anymore to go out and to come in and Hashem said to me, "you will not cross this Jordan River.

Rashi writes there:

לֹא אוֹכֵל עוֹד לְצֵאת וּלְבוֹא...-לצאת ולבא בדברי תורה, מלמד שנסתמו ממנו מסורות ומעינות
החכמה:

I am not able anymore to go out and to come in – to go out and come in with Divrei Torah. This teaches that the transmissions and the springs of knowledge were closed to him.

On the last day of Moshe's life there was a sea-change from his abilities that existed since *Mattan Torah*. For the past forty years Moshe was always in a state of preparedness to receive the Divine Word. On this last day of his life, that preparedness was no longer extant and thus he had to make a particular effort to behold the vision that Hashem wished to present to him.

Whoever did not see the rejoicing at a *Simchas Beis Hashoeiva* never saw a true Simcha.

The Gemara there is effusive in its description of those celebrations.

Now, it is clear that the reason why those celebrations took place from the second day of Sukkos through that Yom Tov's seventh day was because there was a unique offering during that period.

Daily, throughout the year, there is *ניסוך היין*, wine libations in which wine was poured into a special conduit which was on the *Mizbeach*.

During the final six days of Sukkos, there is an additional libation, *ניסוך המים*, water is also poured on the altar. Since the water was drawn out especially for that *avodah*, it was called *בית השואבה*, the place of the [water-] drawing.

On the *Mizbeach* there were two conduits into which the water and the wine, respectively, were poured. Those conduits were called *שיתין* and one explanation of that term is that they were part of creation in the same way that the rock from the world was formed was called *אבן שתיה*. That is what Chazal teach us in Masseches Sukkah (49 a):

תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל: בראשית, אל תיקרי בראשית אלא ברא שית. תניא, רבי יוסי אומר: שיתין מחוללין ויורדין עד תהום,

The *Tanna d'Bei Rabi Yishmael* taught: *B'reishis* – do not read it as one word, *B'reishis*-in the beginning, but as two words *bo'ro shis'* Hashem created the *shi'sim*. The Braisa taught: Rabi Yose says, 'the *shi'sin* conduits were hollow and they went down into the very depths of the earth.

Chazal teach us an additional aspect of the nature of those celebrations of *Simchas Beis Hashoei'va*. We read in the Yerushalmi Sukkah to that Mishna (Perek 5/Halachah 1):

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי למה נקרא שמה בית שואבה שמשם שואבים רוח הקודש על שם [ישעיה יב/ג] ושאתם מים בששון ממעיני הישועה.

Rabi Yehoshua ben Levi said, 'Why is it called the Rejoicing of the Place of Drawing Out'? Because from there they drew out *Ruach HaKodesh* as it says in Sefer Yeshaya, "You shall draw out water with happiness from the Springs of Salvation".

Let us see what the commentators say about that Posuk. Rashi writes:

ממעניי הישועה - כי ירחיב לבם על ידי ישועה הבאה להם ויתגלו להם רזי התורה
שנשתכחו בבבל על ידי הצרות:

From the Springs of Salvation – He will expand their heart through the salvation that comes to them and the hidden hints of the Torah that were forgotten in [the exile in] Babylonia because of their troubles will be revealed to them.

Isn't it Ruach HaKodesh that is able to revive that that which has been lost?

All Yomim Tovim, but particularly the days of Sukkos and Sh'mini Atzeres/Simchas Torah demonstrate that the hidden light has to been banished from this world completely.

The light that has been hidden does emerge. It does not emerge in all of its glory. But there are sparks! And what is the necessary prerequisite for that light to emerge – there must be preparation.

And what preparation was there in the Beis HaMikdosh? The answer is surprising, if you think about it.

All that had to be done was to draw water – such an easily available commodity and from an ever-flowing spring.

Why was there the *Sasson* that Yeshaya HaNovi mentioned when drawing the water? Radak there explains:

ושאבתם מים בששון - דרך משל כמו השואב מים מן המעיין שלא יפסקו מימיו כי
בכל עת ימצא בו לשאוב כי הוא מקור תמידי כן לא תפסוק מהם הברכה והישועה
ויהיו בששון כל ימיהם,

You shall draw water with happiness – this is a parable. Just like when some draws water from a spring from which the water never stops, because all of the time there is water to draw because it is a perpetual source, so will blessing and salvation not cease and people can be happy all through their life.

And Malbim presents us with an additional reason for happiness when drawing water by pointing out that in *L'shon HaKodesh* there are two terms for taking water. One is דולה and the other is שואב. He explains:

יש הבדל בין השואב והדולה, הדולה הוא מבארות עמוקים ויש בו טורח, והשואב הוא בלי טורח, ובנמשל כי תשיגו ישועות בלי עמל וטורח:

There is a distinction between *sho'eiv* and *do'leh*.

Do'leh refers to taking water from deep wells and it is hard to pull the bucket heavy with water to the edge of the well and beyond. *Sho'eiv* is without difficulty and the parable teaches that you will have salvation without difficulty.

The preparation is readily available and the act of preparation is relatively simple.

What then is the issue? We have to decide that we wish to fathom G-d's world and be an integral part of it.

Imagine, if before starting every Sh'moneh Esreh a person would think for a moment about the additions that are necessary and about whatever needs or foci that one wants to establish in this prayer.

Imagine, if when dealing with a friend or relative who is sometimes frustrating that a person would think if I deal nicely with this person I will be overcoming a hurdle that has prevented me from fulfilling a Mitzvah of *Bein Odom L'chavero*.

And the very last passage of *Meshech Chochmoh* in the Torah takes so many of the aspects that we have been learning and combines them into one coherent *maamar* as he connects the final Posuk of the Torah, the end of Parshas V'zos HaBrachah with the first Posuk of B'reishis that are read one following the other.

The final Posuk of the Torah reads (D'vorim Perek 34/Posuk 12):

וְלִכְלֵל הַיָּד הַחֲזָקָה וְלִכְלֵל הַמּוֹרָא הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה מֹשֶׁה לְעֵינֵי כָל יִשְׂרָאֵל:

For all of the strong hand and for all of the great awe that Moshe did before the eyes of all of Israel.

We read in *Meshech Chochmoh*:

ולכל המורא הגדול וכו' בראשית. פירוש, כי בעת ניסוך המים ושמחת בית השואבה היו שואבים רוח הקודש אף מי שלא היה מוכן לנבואה כמו יונה בן אמיתי שלא היה מוכן לנבואה, ומשום זה ביקש לברוח [ירושלמי ריש פרק החליל]. ולכן אמר "ולכל המורא הגדול" - זה גילוי שכינה – (דברים לד/י¹⁰) "לא קם". ואם תאמר, הא בשלמה היה גילוי שכינה (מלכים א ח/יא¹¹) שמלא כבוד ה' בית ה' וכו'. זה היה בבית המקדש מקום ש"בראשית" - בראשית [כמו דתנא רבי ישמעאל: אל תקרי "בראשית" אלא בראשית], ומתחילת הבריאה היה המקום מוכן לרוח הקודש ולגילוי שכינה. אבל משה הראה גילוי שכינה במדבר, מקום שאינו מוכן לנבואה ולרוח הקודש וכל שכן לגילוי שכינה - על זה "לא קם כמשה".

For all the great awe etc. – B'reishis – the explanation is that with the water libations and the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva they were able to draw *Ruach HaKodesh*, even those who were not prepared to receive prophecy [even though in general preparation it is an indispensable prerequisite for prophecy] as we find by Yona ben Amitai who wasn't prepared to receive prophecy and thus he sought to flee as we read in the Yerushalmi Masseches Sukkah (Perek 5).

Thus the Posuk writes, 'for all the great awe' – that refers to the revelation of the Shechinah and thus it says there never arose a prophet like Moshe.

But if you will ask at the time of the dedication of the Beis HaMikdosh there was a revelation of the Shechinah as it says, 'The Glory of Hashem filled the house'. That is because that was in the Beis HaMikdosh the place of *B'reishis* that is interpreted *boro shis*.

From the beginning of Creation that place was prepared for *Ruach HaKodesh* and the Revelation of the Shechinah [and thus provided 'preparation' even for those who were not 'prepared' to receive *Ruach HaKodesh*].

¹⁰ The entire Posuk reads:

וְלֹא קָם נְבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר יָדָעוּ ה' פְּנִים אֶל פְּנִים:
There did not arise in Israel another prophet like Moshe whom Hashem knew him 'face to face'.

¹¹ The entire verse reads:

וְלֹא יָכְלוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים לַעֲמֹד לְשֵׁרֵת מִפְּנֵי הָעֶנָן כִּי מָלֵא כְבוֹד ה' אֶת בַּיִת ה':
The Kohanim were not able to stand to serve because the cloud, because the Glory of Hashem filled the House of G-d.

But [the greatness of Moshe] was that he brought about the Revelation of the Shechinah [even] in the wilderness, a place where there was no preparation for prophecy and not for Ruach HaKodesh and certainly no preparation for the Revelation of the Shechinah. That is the uniqueness of Moshe about whom it is said that no one arose like him.

When that light of the first day of Creation is revealed, Creation is illuminated and those who use it have a view that is extraordinarily powerful and thus it could not have remained available for the wicked.

Yet, at the same time, it had to be created because there are occasional opportunities for that light to emerge from its hidden place to inspire, to motivate and to reveal all that exists but our sight is too dim to behold.

Sometimes the situation enables that light to emerge – such as in the Beis HaMikdash or at the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva.

At other times, when the situation is less favorable, the ability to extract the light from its hiding place is terribly challenging – we need the *koach* of Moshe Rabbenu to accomplish it.

Nonetheless, we see that the light can emerge temporarily – sometimes in its full glory and other times just glimpses.

The inspiration of Simchas Beis HaShoeiva does not end with the closing of its celebration, though. Rather we immediately read Sefer B'reishis, *bo'ro shis*, which is the foundation of spirituality, Ruach HaKodesh and revelation and thus the cycle has not ended, the light is still shining in its hidden place and our task is to prepare ourselves to retrieve it from its place of hiding.

Choref Ba'ri

Shabbat Shalom

Chodesh Tov

Rabbi Pollock