

וַתוֹצֵא הָאֲרֶץ דֶּשֶׁא 12 And the earth brought out a sproutage
 עֵשֶׂב מִזֵּרֵעַ זֶרַע לְמִינֵהוּ herb that seeds seed after its kind
 וְעֵץ עֹשֶׂה פֶּרִי אֲשֶׁר זֵרְעוֹ בּוֹ and trees that make fruit that has its seed within it
 לְמִינֵהוּ each after its kind;
 וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב: and God saw that it is good.
 וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר 13 And it was evening and it was morning
 יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי: פ a third day.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים 14 And God said
 יְהִי מֵאֲרָת בִּרְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם "There shall be luminaries in the firmament of the heavens
 לְהַבְדִּיל to separate
 בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה between the day and the night;
 וְהָיוּ לְאוֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים and they shall be for signs and for seasons
 וּלְיָמִים וּשָׁנִים: and for days and years.
 וַיְהִי לְמֵאֲרָת בִּרְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם 15 And they shall be for luminaries in the firmament of the heavens
 לְהָאִיר עַל-הָאָרֶץ to give light upon the earth";
 וַיְהִי כֵן: and it was so.

1:14

"For signs and for seasons"

The year, month, week, day, and hour are not arbitrary measures, but integral components of time as formed by its creator. Thus the *Baal Shem Tov* taught that it is preferable to perform two mitzvot on two different days than to do both on the same day, so that two different time-entities are elevated by their participation in a Godly act.

-TZEMACH TZEDEK

Reading this verse, we are struck by how different our own perspective can be than the higher perspective of the Creator. A human observer would assume that the primary function of the sun, moon and stars is to yield light, and the fact that these are used to measure and categorize time is secondary. But the Torah describes their first function to be "for signs and for seasons and for days and years," and only subsequently speaks of their role as sources of illumination.

-CHAFETZ CHAYIM

1:16

"The great luminary... and the small luminary"

First it says, "God made the two great luminaries." But then it says, "the great luminary... and the small luminary." How are these two verses reconciled?

Originally, the sun and moon were equal in size and luminescence. But then the moon complained: "Can two kings wear the same crown?"

Said God to the moon: "Go diminish yourself."

Said the moon: "Because I have said a proper thing, I must diminish myself?"

Said God: "You shall rule both by day and by night."

Said the moon: "What does a lamp accomplish at high noon?"

Said God: "The people of Israel will calculate their dates and years by you."

Said the moon: "But they will calculate the seasons by the sun."

Said God: "The righteous shall be called by your name—Jacob the Small, Samuel the Small, David the Small."

Still the moon was not appeased. So God said: "Offer an atonement for my sake (the he-goat offered in the Holy Temple on the new moon³²) for having diminished the moon."

-R. SHIMON BEN PAZI IN TALMUD

The whole of creation is comprised of suns and moons: spirit and matter, male and female, teacher and student... nothing in our

³² See Numbers 28:15.

NOTES

1:14

SIGNS (אוֹת ~ othoth) • **omens** -Rashi; Nachmanides; Chizkuni • **moments** -Ibn Ezra • **hours** -Radak • the **Shabbath** -Midrash Rabbah • signs by which to **navigate** -Hirsch; R. Meir Meiri
SEASONS (מוֹעֲדִים ~ mo'adim) -Onkelos; Saadia Gaon; Radak; Nachmanides • **hours** -Ibn Ezra • **appointed times, festivals** -Midrash Rabbah; Rashi

1:15

LUMINARIES (מְאֹרֹת ~ me'oroth) • spelled "deficiently" without a ו as if related to the word "plague" (מַּעֲרָה ~ me'eirah), a reference to the prevalence of croup in children on Wednesdays -Jerusalem Talmud; Rashi • a reference to the fact that all suffering is time related -Keli Yakar • to the "deficiency of the moon" (see commentary to 1:16) -Raavad II; Tur

world is created or accomplished without a giver / receiver dynamic.

As God created them, both are "great luminaries." From the Creator's perspective, the recipient's contribution is equal to that

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים 16 And God made
 אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַמָּאֹרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים the two great luminaries;
 אֶת־הַמָּאֹר הַגְּדֹל לְמִשְׁלַת הַיּוֹם the great luminary for rulership of the day
 וְאֶת־הַמָּאֹר הַקָּטָן לְמִשְׁלַת הַלַּיְלָה and the small luminary for rulership of the night
 וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים: and the stars.

וַיִּתֵּן אֱלֹהִים 17 And God put them
 בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם in the firmament of the heavens;
 לְהָאִיר עַל־הָאָרֶץ: to give light upon the earth.
 וּלְמִשְׁל בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה 18 And to rule in the day and in the night
 וּלְהַבְדִּיל and to separate
 בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ between the light and the darkness;
 וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב: and God saw that it is good.
 וַיְהיֶי-עֶרֶב וַיְהיֶי-בֹקֶר 19 And it was evening and it was morning
 יוֹם רְבִיעִי: פ a fourth day.

*The fourth day:
 sun, moon & stars*

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים 20 And God said
 יִשְׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם "The waters shall swarm
 שָׂרֵץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה a swarming of living creatures;
 וְעוֹף יַעֲופֵף עַל־הָאָרֶץ and the bird shall fly upon the earth
 עַל־פְּנֵי רָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם: upon the face of the firmament of the heavens."

of the giver. But from the luminaries' own perspective, there are "great luminaries" and "small luminaries." The givers of the world are motivated by a sense of greatness and self-perpetuation, and its recipients are driven by a sense of neediness and insufficiency.

Indeed, it is the moon, not the sun, who complains about the status quo, and the moon, rather than the sun, who must diminish herself. The sun is perfectly comfortable in his role as a "great luminary"; it is the moon who intrinsically possesses the sense of dissatisfaction that makes her a recipient.

God speaks to the moon about the greatness in smallness: how unlike the giver, the recipient illuminates also when its light is invisible; about the unique qualities of lunar time, where diminution and extinction give rise to rebirth and renewal; about the righteous who achieve true greatness by virtue of their humility and perpetual sense of inadequacy.

But the moon is not satisfied. She cannot be, for if she could fully sense her greatness, she would not be a recipient.

NOTES

1:16

GREAT... SMALL (קטן / גדול ~ gadol / katon) -R. Shimon ben Pazi in Talmud; Rashi • **greater and lesser** -Saadia Gaon; Rashbam; Radak

1:20

SWARM (יִשְׂרְצוּ ~ yishretzu) • also **spawn** -Ibn Ezra; Nachmanides; Ohr ha-Chayim
A SWARMING (שָׂרֵץ ~ sheretz) refers to • legless or short-legged creatures -Rashi • creatures categorized by perpetual movement -Onkelos; Nachmanides
CREATURE (נֶפֶשׁ ~ nefesh) • lit. **soul**
BIRD (עוֹף ~ of) • lit. **flying creature**, a category that includes flying mammals and insects

So God acknowledges that he must atone for the moon's malaise. For it is only because God desired a creative world—a world in which new realities are born out of the giver/recipient partnership—that its moons experience want and discontent.

Only in the messianic age, when creation attains its ultimate perfection, will the greatness of receiving be revealed. In the words of Isaiah, "The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun."

-THE REBBE

"And the stars"

Having diminished the light of the moon, God appeased her with her entourage of stars.

-R. ACHA IN MIDRASH RABBAH; RASHI

In the daytime, the light of the sun overwhelms all other celestial luminaries. Not so the moon, whose diminished light allows the stars to also shine and for mankind to benefit from them. Such is the way of the righteous: to withhold much of their own light so as to allow others to shine.

-CHATHAM SOFER