

Hodesh Tov Sivan 5773 | Shmuel (Richie) Lewis

בראשית רבה (תיאודור-אלבק) ח, ח

ר' שמואל בר נחמן בשם ר' יונתן
בשעה שהיה משה כותב התורה היה כותב מעשה כל יום ויום,
כיון שהגיע לפסוק ויאמר אלהים נעשה אדם וגו'
אמר רבונו שלעולם מה אתה נותן פתחון פה למינים,
אמר לו כתוב, הרוצה לטעות יטעה,
אמר לו הקב"ה משה האדם שאני בורא לא גדולים ולא קטנים אני מעמיד ממנו אתמהא,
שאם יבוא הגדול ליטול רשות מן הקטן ממנו הוא אומר מה אני ליטול רשות מן הקטן תמהא,
והן אומרים לו למד מבוראך שברא העליונים והתחתונים
וכיון שבא לבראות האדם נמלך במלאכי השרת.

B'reishit Rabbah, 8:8

R. Shmuel bar Natan in the name of R. Yonatan: At the time when Moshe was writing [the story of creation in] the Torah, he wrote the doings of each day. When he got to [write] the verse *And G-d said, 'Let us make man . . .'* he said, 'Master of the world why do you give opening for the claims of heretics?' He said to him, 'Write. One who wishes to err, may err.' The Holy One, blessed is He, said to Moshe, 'This human that I create – shall I not establish great and small from him [his descendants]? For if [in the future] a great man should come to take counsel from a lesser man, he may say, 'Who am I that I should take counsel from my inferior?' Then they will say to him, 'Learn from your Creator who created what is above and below, yet when He came to create man He took counsel with the ministering angels.'

Comment

In this *midrash* G-d uses the description of the creation of man to teach Moshe about the lack of moral meaning in social hierarchy. G-d wants (intends) a world full of diverse human beings and He plans from the beginning that there will be "great ones" and "lesser ones". The realization of complex human projects that require cooperation necessitates social hierarchy according to some criteria of skill and responsibility. But the status of any individual in that hierarchy is not meant to determine his value in the eyes of others, especially of those above him in the hierarchy. Social hierarchies are laden (almost) "naturally" with symbolic representations of value. Rabbi Yonatan comes to deny social hierarchies any such moral meanings.

Even the divine Creator waives this "natural" meaning and takes counsel from His own creatures. This waiving is complex and ironic as it ties in to G-d's *anavah*. G-d is willing to suffer the lowering of His status in human eyes, to be thought of as just one of many (deities), rather than allow the thought that lowliness in the social hierarchy carries a moral meaning of unequal value.

According to R. Yonatan's *d'rasha*, the Holy One prefers the propagation of heresy in His world to the granting of moral meaning to social hierarchies.