

Soul Spa – P. Bereishit
 October 14, 2023 • 29 Tishrei 5784

ברוך אתה יהוה
 אל הינו מלך העולם
 אשר קדשנו במצותיו
 וצונו
 לעסוק בדברי תורה.

Barukh Atah Adonai
 Eloheinu melekh ha-olam
 asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav
 v'tzivanu
 la'asok b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are You, YHVH our God,
 sovereign in all time and space,
 who makes us holy in connecting
 command, commanding us to
 busy ourselves in words of Torah.

מי שברך אבותינו
 ואמותינו יברך ישמור
 וינצר את השבויים
 בתוך שאר אחינו בית
 ישראל הנתונים בצרה
 ובשביה בעבור
 שהקהל מתפלל
 בעבורם, הקב"ה ימלא
 רחמים עליהם ויציאם
 מואשד וצלמות,
 ומוסרותיהם ונתק,
 וממצוקותיהם
 יושיעם, וישיבם מהרה
 לחיק משפחותיהם.

Mi shebeirakh avoteinu
 v'imoteinu yivareikh yishmor
 v'yintzor et ha-sh'vuyim
 b'tokh sh'ar aheinu beit
 Yisrael ha-n'tunim b'tzarah
 uv'shivyah ba'avor shehakahal
 mitpalel ba'avurim. HaKadosh
 Barukh Hu yimalei rahamim
 aleihem v'yotzeihem
 m'hoshekh v'tzalmavet
 u'mosroteihem y'nateik,
 u'mimtzukoteihem yoshi'eim,
 viy'shivem m'heirah
 l'heik mishpoteihem.

May the One who blessed our
 forefathers and foremothers
 bless, keep and preserve the
 captives among the House of
 Israel in trouble and captivity.
 In the merit of our community's
 prayer for them, may the Holy
 Blessed One fill with compassion
 on them, deliver them from
 darkness and the shadow of
 death, remove their bondage,
 deliver them from their affliction,
 and return them speedily to the
 care of their families.

THE PaRDeS SYSTEM OF TEXTUAL EXEGESIS – OR IS IT EISEGESIS?

Torah as conversation
 Torah as process
 Torah as inherently and always incomplete

PaRDeS Theme for 5784			R. Moshe Hayim Ephraim of Sudilkov (d. 1800) Degel Mahaneh Efraim, Genesis § 15	
<u>P</u>	Pshat (פשט)	Literal surface • plain linguistic	תשב"כ ותשבע"פ הכל אחד ואין אחד נפרד מחבירו כלל ... התשב"כ מתגלה צפונותיה ע"י תשבע"פ ותשב"כ בלא תשבע"פ אינו תורה שלימה ... מאמרי חז"ל נשלם התורה ... וכן בכל דור ודורשיו הם משלימין התורה כי התורה נדרשת בכל דור ודור לפי מה שצריך לאותו דור ולפי שורש נשמתן של אותו הדור כך הש"י מאיר עיני חכמי הדור ההוא בתורתו הקדושה והכופר בזה ג"כ כאלו כופר בתורה.	Oral Torah and Written Torah are one, and neither is separated from the other. ... As Oral Torah reveals the hiddenness in Written Torah, there is no complete Torah without Oral Torah: Midrash completes the Torah.... Each generation's scholars complete the Torah by inquiring the Torah in each generation for the needs of that generation. And by the source of their souls, God illuminates the eyes of the wise of that generation for its holy Torah. One who denies this, denies the Torah.
<u>R</u>	Remez (רמז)	Implication pointer • hint logical		
<u>D</u>	Drash (דרש)	Description inquire • midrash emotional - ethical		
<u>S</u>	Sod (סוד)	Secret theological, mystical multi-layered		

THERE WERE OTHER BEGINNINGS?

Genesis 1:1-5

this translation sidesteps the question of divine ontology (beingness) / creation

aleph > bet

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

1. In a **beginning** of God's creating the heavens and the earth, (created?)

וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתָה תֵהוֹ וְבָהוּ וְחָשֶׁךְ עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:

2. And the earth was void and waste, and darkness was on the face of the deep, and the spirit of God **hovered** over the face of the waters,

God is in form? – here and not there

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי-אוֹר וַיְהִי-אוֹר:

3. God said, "Light, be!" – And light was.

וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאוֹר כִּי-טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ:

4. God saw that the light was good, and God **separated** between light and darkness.

divided

(but doesn't God fill / inter-be with everything)

וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאוֹר יוֹם וּלְחֹשֶׁךְ קִרְיָ לַיְלָה וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד

5. God called the light "day" and called the darkness "night"; there was evening and there was morning – a first day.

למה לי? lamah li?

<u>P</u> shat (פּשט)	Literal surface • plain linguistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In “a” beginning or “the”? Light predated creation of sun.
<u>R</u> emez (רמז)	Implication pointer • hint logical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No time created? Or multiple starts? Distinction and opposites necessary to give existence / meaning
<u>D</u> rash (דרש)	Description inquire • midrash emotional - ethical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did water and earth pre-date the start? Spirit reflecting in the waters? Why is darkness impliedly bad? = racism God as the separation/bridging Why did God need to create light?
<u>S</u> od (סוד)	Secret theological, mystical multi-layered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who created God? What is THIS God? Beyond knowing. What is happening spiritually here – spaciousness? Is God “separating”? withdrawing?

- Commentary (460) [EN]
- Talmud (28) [EN]
- Midrash (144) [EN]
- Halakhah (20) [EN]
- More

Rashi, Gen. 1:1

(= Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki • 1040-1135, France)

ואם באת לפרשו כפשוטו כן
פרשהו בראשית בריאת שמים
וארץ, והארץ היתה תהו ובהו
וחושך, ולאמר אל הים יהי אור ולא
בא המקרא להורות סדר הבריאה
לומר שאלו קדמו, שאם בא
להורות כן, הנה לו לכתב
בראשונה ברא את השמים וגו'
שאין לד ראשית במקרא שאינו
דבוק לתבה שלאחריו, כמו
בראשית ממלכת יהויקים (ירמיהו
כ"ו), ראשית ממלכתו (ברא' י)....

Who
versus
what?

Male - מי

Female - מה

creation
as container
vessel

וא"ת להורות בא שאלו תחלה
נבראו, ופרשו בראשית הכל ברא
אלו... א"כ, תמה על עצמך, שהרי
המים קדמו, שהרי כתיב ורוח
אל הים מרחפת על פני המים,
ועדיין לא גלה המקרא, בריאת
המים מתי היתה, הא למדת,
שקדמו המים לארץ

ועוד, שהשמים מאש ומים נבראו,
על כרחך לא למד המקרא סדר
המקדמים והמאחרים כלום:

words losing us; we transcend words = it's all MIDRASH

To explain it in its *p'shat*: "At the start of creating heaven and earth, the earth was formless, void and dark. God said, 'Light, be!'" This text does not show creation's order, that [heaven and earth] were first. Had [Torah] come to show that it'd need to say בראשונה ברא את השמים (*b'rishonah bara et ha-shamayim*) – "First heaven [and earth] were created." Torah never says *reishit* without cleaving to the noun that follows it [=construct case], as in (Jer. 26:1), "At the start (*b'reishit*) of the reign of Yehoyakim," and (Gen. 10:10), "At the head (*b'reishit*) of [Nimrod's] kingdom"....

But if you say that [Torah] shows that [heaven and earth] were created first, so the meaning is, "At the beginning of everything God created the[m]," be astonished at yourself! The waters were first, as in (Gen. 1:2), "The spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters" – but Torah did not reveal when water was created! Thus deduce that water had to precede the earth.

Also, heavens were from fire and water, so fire and water preceded heaven. So conclude that the text says nothing about creation's order.

Genesis 1:6-8

PERIODIC TABLE OF THE
SPIRITUAL ELEMENTS?

ולאמר אל הים יהי רקיע בתוך
המים ויהי מבדיל בין מים למים:

ויעש אל הים את הרקיע ויבדל בין
המים אשר מתחת לרקיע ובין
המים אשר מעל לרקיע ויהי-כן:

ויקרא אל הים לרקיע שמים
ויהי-ערב ויהי-בקר יום שני:

6. God said, "Let there be an expanse amidst the waters, and it will separate water from water."

7. God made the expanse and it separated the water below the expanse from the water above the expanse – and it was so.

8. God called the expanse "sky"; there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

Bereishit Rabbah 4:6

(400-600 CE)

ויקרא אל הים לרקיע שמים, רב
אמר אש ומים, רבי אבא בר כהנא
אמר משום רב, נטל הקב"ה אש
ומים ופתכן זה בזה ומהו נעשו
שמים. ד"א, שמים, שהבריות
משתוממים עליהן לאמר, של מה
הן של אש הן של מים הן אתמהא.
רבי פינחס בשם רבי לוי אמר, הוא
אתא וקם עליו (תה' קד:ג): המקרה
במים עליותיו, הוי של מים הן.

God called the expanse sky [shamayim] – Rav said, "Fire (*esh*) and water (*mayim*)."
R. Abba bar Kahana said in Rav's name: "God combined fire and water to make heaven. *D'var aher: shamayim* is that creation wonder [*mishtomem*]: 'What are they? Are they of fire? of water? It's a wonder!'"
R. Pinhas said in R. Levi's name: [God] came and settled it, as in "Ps. 104:3): "God roofs the upper chambers with water." See, they're of water!

Artson, "Almighty? No Way! Coming to Know the God We Already Love"

If God didn't give [my son] his autism, doesn't cause suffering and evil, then what is the explanation? In the words of Job: "If not God, then who?" In order to uncover a deeper answer to this age-old question, we have to revisit the dogma of creation from nothing, a teaching derived from Aristotle and one that makes belief in God's goodness so difficult for so many.

What the Torah actually says is, "When God began creating heaven and earth, there was *tohu va-vohu* (chaos), and the *ruah* (wind/breath/spirit) of God was vibrating over the face of *tehom*, the deep, and God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." According to Torah, was there *tohu va-vohu*, chaos, before God started creating? Yes. Unambiguously yes. At the instant God began creating, *tohu va-vohu* was already existent, and the *ruah* of God flutters over *tehom* (that had to be there already for the spirit of God to be able to flutter over it).

The simple meaning of Genesis 1 is that there is pre-existent darkness and chaos. The *tehom*, the chaos, already exists – bubbly, uncontrollable and undomesticated. God's creative act is not the special effect of something from nothing, but the steady *hesed* (lovingkindness) of converting chaos into cosmos. *Tohu va-vohu* and the *tehom* have always existed, and threaten still. God has always been, and is still, inviting/commanding the chaos into cosmos. We have misunderstood the nature of divine creativity and power.

Zohar 1:15a

זֶהְרָה סְתִימָא דְסְתִימִין בְּטֵשׁ אֲוִירָא
דִּילִיָּה בְּהַאי נְקוּדָה וְכַדִּין אֲתִפְשֵׁט
הָאִי רֵאשִׁית וְעֵבִיד לִיָּה הִיכְלָא
לִיקְרִיָּה וּלְתוֹשֵׁב בְּחִתִּיָּה. תִּמְנָן זֶרַע
זֶרַעָא דְקוּדְשָׁא לְאוּלְדָא לְתוֹעֵלְתָא
דְעֵלְמָא.... זֶהְרָה דְזֶרַע זֶרַעָא לִיקְרִיָּה,
כְּהָאִי זֶרַעָא דְמִשֵּׁי דְאַרְגָּוִין טָב
דְאַתְחִפִּי לְגוּ וְעֵבִיד לִיָּה הִיכְלָא
דְאִיהוּ תוֹשֵׁב בְּחִתָּא דִּילִיָּה וְתוֹעֵלְתָא
דְכֵלְא. בְּהָאִי רֵאשִׁית בְּרָא הַהוּא
סְתִימָא דְלָא אֲתִיידַע לְהִיכְלָא דָא.
הִיכְלָא דָא אֲקָרִי אֱלֹהִים, וְרָזָא דָא
בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים.

Radiance! The concealed of the concealed struck its aura, touching and not touching a point. So *beginning* spread, building itself a palace for her glorious praise. There it sowed sacred seed to give birth, availing worlds.... Radiance! Sowing seed for its glory, like seed of fine purple silk wrapping itself within, weaving itself a palace, constituting praise, availing all. Thus *beginning*, the unknown concealed One created a palace called *Elohim* (God). This is the secret of "In the beginning, God created..." – this "beginning" created "God."

Psalm 111:9-10

פְּדוּת שְׁלַח לְעַמּוֹ
צְנֵה לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ
קְדוֹשׁ וְנוֹרָא שְׁמוֹ:
רֵאשִׁית חֲכָמָה יִרְאֵת יְהוָה
שְׂכָל טוֹב לְכָל-עֹשִׂיהֶם
תְּהַלְתּוּ עֲמֻדַת לְעַד:

God sent redemption to God's people,
Commanding the eternal covenant:
Holy and awesome is God's Name
The beginning of wisdom is awe of YHVH
Sound mind to all who do so
Praise of God stands forever.

... which is why Zohar read Genesis 1:1 this way:

בְּרֵאשִׁית
בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים

*B'reishit = hokhmah
bara Elohim*

*In hokhmah
was created "God."*

Pirkei Avot 5:6

עֲשָׂרָה דְּבָרִים נִבְרְאוּ בְּעֶרֶב שַׁבָּת
בֵּין הַשְּׁמֶשׁוֹת, וְאֵלוֹ הֵן, פִּי הָאָרֶץ,
וּפִי הַבְּאֵר, וּפִי הָאֲתוֹן, וְהַקֶּשֶׁת,
וְהַמָּן, וְהַמָּטָה, וְהַשְּׁמִיר, וְהַכֶּתֵב,
וְהַמִּכְתָּב, וְהַלְוִיחֹת. וַיֵּשׁ אֲזַמְרִים,
אֶף הַמְּזִיקִין, וְקַבְרֵתוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה,
וְאֵילוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ. וַיֵּשׁ
אֲזַמְרִים, אֶף צָבַת בְּצָבַת עֲשׂוּיָהּ:

Ten things were created on the eve of the first Shabbat at twilight, and they are: [1] the mouth of the earth, [2] the mouth of the well, [3] the mouth of the donkey, [4] the rainbow, [5] the manna, [6] the staff [of Moses], [7] the shamir, [8] the letters, [9] the writing, [10] the tablets. And some say: also the demons, the grave of Moses, and the ram of Abraham, our father. And some say: and also tongs made with tongs.

[1] the mouth of the earth – swallowed Korah and his congregation (Num. 16:32).

[2] the mouth of the well – gave Israel water in the desert (Num. 21:16-18).

[3] the mouth of the donkey – spoke to Bil'am (Num. 22:28).

[4] the rainbow – a sign to Noah (Gen. 9:13).

[5] the manna (Ex. 16:15).

[6] the staff [of Moses] (Ex. 4:17).

[7] the *shamir* (strong stone used to cut rocks for the breastplate)

[8] the letters used to write the Ten Commandments

[9] the writing (Ex. 32:16) – could be seen from all four sides of the tablets.

[10] the first tablets (Ex. 32:16) – Moses made the second tablets (Exodus 34:1).

Demons – In the ancient world, people firmly believed in demons, much as we believe in bacteria and viruses even if we have never seen one. These being unnatural phenomenon, must have been created on the twilight of the sixth day.

The grave of Moses – Since no one was there for Moses's burial, we could surmise that it was not created by any human being (Deuteronomy 34:6).

The ram of Abraham, our ancestor – which seemed to have miraculously appeared before Abraham sacrificed Isaac (Genesis 22:13). The *mishnah* teaches that God all along created the ram to be sacrificed in Isaac's place. Otherwise it might seem that if the ram had not gotten caught in the bushes, Abraham would have been allowed to sacrifice his son.

Tongs made with tongs – one cannot forge tongs in fire without already having tongs

How does all of this feel?

So what?

Next week is [P. Noah](#)