***Why Did Hashem Create the World? Living On Purpose***

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Imagine you wake up with $86,400 in your bank account. You can't invest or save it, only spend it, and at the end of the night, whatever you didn't spend disappears. Now imagine if this happened every single day. What would you do with your $86,400 every day? Would you ***ever*** leave a single penny unspent? Of course not!

Well, each and every day we are given 86,400 seconds. It's deposited into our bank account called “life”. And every day, whatever we don't spend is lost forever. Nobody would throw away money. So how can we possibly do that with our time? Time is infinitely more valuable than money!

There is never any borrowing time. You can’t take a loan out on your time or against someone else’s. The time you have is the time is the only time you will ever have. Time management is your decision of how you spend your time, your 86,400 seconds.

We can never say that we don't have time - we have 86,400 seconds every single day. The question isn't whether or not we have time to do something, but where it falls amongst our priorities. The greatest achievers in the world have the same exact amount of time as everyone else in their day. This connects to a theme in this week's parsha.

***Parshas Tetzaveh: Avnei Milu'im***

In Parshas Tetzaveh, we are introduced to the avnei milu'im, the twelve beautiful stones placed within the choshen, the breastplate worn by the Kohen Gadol, the high priest. Many commentaries explain that the twelve unique stones represent the twelve shevatim, each destined to fulfill their own unique role and purpose. All the shevatim then come together to create a single klal, a single nation, whereby the individuals come together in such a brilliant way that the result transcends the sum of its parts. So too, each of us are destined to fulfill a unique role in the world, to embark on our own unique journey to greatness, and to become part of something infinitely greater than ourselves.

***Hold On?!***

In essence, this is another inspiring pitch for us to “achieve greatness”. Rabbis, inspirational speakers, and psychologists alike will almost invariably claim that we should strive for greatness; it seems as if the goal of life is to become great. Yet, very few people actually articulate or explain *why* we should strive for greatness?!

Psychologists from across time and disciplines have often claimed that the secret to happiness is largely found in achievement and personal fulfillment.

However, this obsession with achieving happiness reveals the assumption of popular psychology that the goal and purpose of life is to be happy. Is this true? What is the Jewish perspective on the goal of life? Do we limit ourselves to our own individual happiness or should we be striving for something even deeper and greater? Furthermore, some people might claim that they're perfectly happy not striving for perfection. If greatness is merely to attain happiness, then if we achieve happiness without achieving greatness, there would be nothing wrong with that. This begs the question, is there perhaps a deeper purpose to achieving greatness and striving for perfection?

There is another question deeply connected to this topic. Many people who sincerely want to believe in Hashem, who have embarked on a genuine spiritual journey, are troubled by the following paradox. If we believe that Hashem, the God of the universe, is perfect, then how can He create such an imperfect world? Wouldn't a perfect God create a perfect world? Furthermore, if the purpose of life is to become perfect, then why did Hashem create a world full of challenges and ordeals, making it difficult, in fact, nearly impossible to reach perfection?

Essentially, we are asking the most fundamental question you can ask: *Why did Hashem create the World*?

***Two Fundamental Prerequisites***

Before we begin discussing the fundamentals of this world and the nature of man's existence, we must first state the following two qualifications: First, whenever we speak of Hashem we are referring to our relationship with Him and how He *appears* to *us*, not the infinite, objective, and unknowable truth of His reality. As the Rambam, the Maharal, the Ramchal, and all other Ba'alevi Machshava say, we can never know Hashem Himself, we can only know how He appears to us. The following analogy will hopefully make this clear: You can never truly know your friend or loved one. You will never see their thoughts, their mind, their consciousness, or even their emotions. All you can ever see is how they express themselves through their physical body: their actions, words, facial expressions, and body language. Through this, we can come to know someone more and more. Similarly, we can never know Hashem Himself; He's infinite and completely beyond our comprehension. However, we *can* know Hashem by understanding the way He reveals Himself to us: through His creations, through the physical world, and through His Torah, which is a revelation of His will and thought. So when we talk about why Hashem created the world, we are only talking about it based on our understanding of Hashem.

The second prerequisite is to understand that Hashem did not have to create the world. The Rambam and Ramchal explain that Hashem *chose* to create the world. Unlike Aristotle, who claimed that God was forced to create the world, we believe that Hashem chose to create the world of His own free will.

***The Answer***

The Maharal and Ramchal, as well as many other key Jewish thinkers, provide a fundamental understanding of why Hashem created the world. The Ramchal explains in Da'as Tevunos, Derech Hashem, and the beginning of Mesilas Yesharim as follows. Hashem is absolute and ultimate goodness. However, there are two aspects of goodness. Hashem *is* good, but He also has the ability to *do* good unto others. Before Hashem created the world, there was only Hashem Himself. Therefore, Hashem was internally good, but He wasn't actively giving or doing good unto others. Hashem then chose to actualize His potential ability to give good unto others by creating Man, the being upon whom Hashem would bestow the ultimate goodness.

***The Ultimate Good***

If Hashem's goal in creating the world was to bestow the ultimate goodness unto man, we must then ask, what is the ultimate goodness that Hashem can give? If Hashem Himself *is* the ultimate goodness, then the ultimate goodness Hashem could give is the ability to enjoy Hashem Himself, to enjoy Godliness, enjoying the deepest and ultimate connection with Hashem. This is the ability to be all-knowing, all-kind, all-loving, all-powerful, to have complete self-control. These are truly Godly experiences.

***Marriage With Hashem***

To explain this approach from a different angle, when Hashem created man, He did so to create a marriage relationship with him. Marriage is when two people connect in such a deep way that they existentially fuse into one. As we've explained in the past, this is why Adam and Chava were originally created as one being; it was to show them, and us, that the goal of marriage is to become one, to recreate the original oneness that they once shared. This is also why the relationship between Klal Yisrael and Hashem is referred to as a marriage. At Har Sinai, the Jewish people married Hashem- the mountain served as the chupah, the marriage canopy. Shir Ha'shirim is a sefer which Chazal interpret as being a description of the love relationship that exists between Hashem and the Jewish people. This is the original connection that Hashem intended to forge with Man when He created Him. Hashem therefore created us in this world to earn Olam Habah, the world to come, the place where each of us can enjoy this existential connection and oneness with Hashem. However, there is an obvious problem:

***Why Not Free?***

If Hashem's goal was to give us the ultimate goodness, defined as connection and fusion with Him, and Olam Habah is the place of this ultimate connection, then what's the purpose of this world? Why did Hashem decide to create us in this world, where we have to *earn* our share in the world to come? If Hashem really wanted to give us the ultimate good, then why not give it to us to begin with? Why do we have to go through the difficult process of earning it in this physical world? Furthermore, so many people don't seem to be succeeding; how many people do you know who are genuinely striving for greatness and achieving perfection?!

***We Only Enjoy that Which We Earn***

The Ramchal explains based on the gemara in Yerushalmi that human beings were created in such a way that we don't enjoy free handouts. A poor person is embarrassed to receive money from people, since he feels ashamed, knowing that he didn't earn the money. This is termed "the bread of embarrassment". This is why the halacha is that it's better to give a poor person a loan instead of a free handout. This way, he'll be able to eventually pay you back, and feel independent. Even better is to get him a job, which will endow him with a more complete sense of independence and dignity.

If Hashem would have created us in Olam Habah, it would have been free, unearned. This is the type of perfection that malachim, angels, enjoy. However, this is not the ultimate enjoyment. The ultimate enjoyment is perfection that is earned, that is chosen, that is an expression of all the hard work you put it. Psychologically, we feel so much more connected to achievements and rewards that we've earned than those that we received for free. Just think about a child who works for a week to earn twenty dollars compared to that same child who gets twenty dollars for free. He would feel very differently towards them. Yet, while this appears to answer our question, there is still a very obvious problem!

***Why Not Create Us Differently?***

We know that Hashem put us in this world in order to give us the opportunity to *earn* our reward instead of simply receiving it for free so that it will be much more enjoyable. Yet, if Hashem created the world, why didn't Hashem just create us in a way that we *do* enjoy gifts and free handouts as much as we enjoy things that we've earned through hard work? We can't look at human psychology and how we are currently wired to explain *why* Hashem created us this way?! If Hashem had chosen to create us differently, psychology and human experience would reflect that! So why didn't Hashem simply create us differently?!

***Marriage: True Oneness***

We need to keep in mind that this enjoyment is not something artificial or external. It's not a gift which is handed from one person to another. We are talking about an existential relationship, a connection of oneness. A human being can't have a real relationship with a rock. A rock is completely and utterly different than a human being, there would be no connection, nothing real. You can only have a relationship and deep connection with an essence that is similar to you. This is why human beings can have such deep relationships with each other.

If Hashem would have created us in Olam Habah, in such a way that we enjoyed free handouts, we would have been the exact opposite of Hashem. Hashem would be the giver, we would be the taker; Hashem would have free will, we would have no choice; Hashem would be the creator, we would be the created; no one would have given Hashem His perfection, but Hashem would have given us ours. Since we'd be so different from Hashem, this would not allow for the ultimate connection with Hashem, and thus, this would not result in the greatest expression of Hashem giving of His goodness to another.

***Created Imperfect***

This is why Hashem created us imperfect. We get to choose and earn our perfection, our Godliness. Hashem *is* perfect, we get to *become* perfect. Hashem *is* good, we get to *choose* to *become* good. We are born imperfect with the goal of becoming Godly, to become perfect, all knowing, all good, all kind, to have complete self-control. However, this is the goal, not the starting point. We start out as animalistic beings. As a baby we are born with no intellectual abilities and no developed character traits. We are selfish, we think that we are the only person who exists, we perceive ourselves as the center of our own universe. We are the exact opposite of Godly. The goal of life is to then *become* Godly, to actualize our potential and to *become* tzelem Elokim. As we've explained in the past, the fetus learns kol ha'Torah kulah in the womb, and then loses it upon being born into this world. We are born imperfect so that we can journey through this world on the journey of becoming perfect, recreating and earning what we once received as a gift.

***Free Will***

This is why we have free will. We are tasked with the mission of *choosing* good, *choosing* perfection. We can now understand that our mission in this world is to become great, to become Godly. We live in a world of time and movement, as our job in this world is to become. Perfection lies in a transcendent realm, beyond process, beyond time. *Becoming* perfect requires time, movement, and process. We need to learn to ride the waves of time, the 86,400 seconds in our day, utilizing them to the best of our ability.

***Our Challenges***

The challenges we face aren't there to stop us from achieving our greatness, quite the contrary. The Ramban explains that the purpose of challenges are to push us out of our comfort zone, to help us achieve our true potential. Only when we are pushed to our max do we begin to realize what we are truly capable of.

***Our Olam Habah Experience***

Olam Habah is the experience of everything we've built in this lifetime. Some people think that the world to come is a place where you receive something enjoyable. In reality, as the Ramchal, Nefesh Ha'chaim, and others explain, Olam Habah is where you experience ***you***. It's where you enjoy the ecstatic experience of the person and consciousness you've created, everything you've built and become during your lifetime. The problem is that many people think that they'll live forever. In truth, time is dying. Every second fades away. How many years do you really have left on this world? The better question is, what are we going to do with the time we have left? May we be inspired to utilize as many of the 86,400 of every day, and may each of us achieve our true greatness.