

בס"ד

PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

Chapter Five

24 Iyar, 5784 – June 1, 2024

Compiled from the works of
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The Lubavitcher Rebbe

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PIRKEI AVOS OF THE WEEK

An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Pirkei Avos Chapter V

Likkutei Sichos Volume 4, Pages 220 - 224

Chapter V

פרק ה', משנה ו': עשרה דברים נבראו בערב שבת בין השמשות, ואלו הן: פי הארץ; פי הבאר; פי האתון; הקשת; והמון; והמטה; והשמיר; הכתב; והמכתב; והלוחות ...

Chapter 5, Mishnah 6: Ten things were created at the twilight of Shabbos eve. These are (1.) the mouth of the earth, (2.) the mouth of (Miriam's) well, (3.) the mouth of (Bilaam's) donkey, (4.) the rainbow, (5.) the Mon–Manna, (6.) (Moshe's) staff; (7.) the Shamir, (8.) the writing, (9.) the inscription and (10.) the tablets (of the Ten Commandments).

The Simple Explanation

The Bartenura explains that this Mishnah discusses the end of the sixth day of Creation, Friday afternoon at twilight, immediately before Shabbos. That is when these ten miraculous items were created.

The ten items were (1.) *the mouth of the earth* which would swallow Korach and his band; (2.) *the mouth of (Miriam's) well*, which traveled together with the Jews throughout their 40 years in the wilderness, supplying them with water to drink; (3.) *the mouth of (Bilaam's) donkey*. On twilight of that Friday, it was decreed that when the time came, this donkey would have the ability to speak to Bilaam; (4.) *the rainbow* that appeared in the sky after the Great Flood. It was a sign of a covenant that Hashem would never again destroy the world with a flood; (5.) *the Mon – Manna* with which Hashem fed the Jewish Nation for forty years in the desert; (6.) *(Moshe's) staff* with which he performed the miracles at the time of the Exodus, which are described in the Torah; (7.) *the Shamir*, which was a sort of worm. It was able to slice through stone. It followed a path on the stone with a line drawn upon it. In this manner, the stones used to construct the altar in the Bais Hamikdosh were cut to size. It was prohibited for these stones to be hewn with metal implements; hence, this miraculous worm was necessary; (8.) *the writing*, meaning the form of the letters engraved upon the two tablets; (9.) *the inscription* upon the two tablets. The letters went entirely through the stones, yet they could miraculously be read from all four sides; and (10.) *the tablets (of the Ten Commandments)*, which were made of sapphire.

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Difficulties in Understanding the Mishnah

In this chapter of Pirkei Avos, the Sages teach us several lists grouped by number. First, we found seven lists, each consisting of ten items. At the very beginning of this chapter, we read that¹ "the world was created with ten utterances." In other words, the first list that the Mishnah teaches us regards the Creation of the world. It says,² "There were ten generations from Adam to Noach." We see that the Mishnah follows the story of Creation with a second list of ten regarding the "crown" of Creation, i.e., the first man. The Sages are teaching us these lists in chronological order; the same is true of the groups of ten listed in our chapter.

The famous Maharal asks³ that our Mishnah, the last list of tens items, seems to be the exception to this rule. The first Mishnah discusses Creation. Our Mishnah, which lists those items created after the sixth day, should be the following teaching. Why is this not so; why is our Mishnah pushed off until the end of the list?

The Explanation

This can be explained as follows. Everything listed before our Mishnah is within the realm of nature. It is all connected to the Creation of the world. Even miracles are within the scope of Creation; they are a part of the "chain" of Creation employing which G-d created (and continues to create) the world. The Holy Temple and the ten miracles that occurred there regularly were also a part of nature, albeit its ultimate perfection. We are taught that Hashem created this world to have "a dwelling place below⁴." One's dwelling place, his residence, is where his actual being is open for all to see. That is where his essence is revealed. "Below" means a world where no one would recognize Hashem's presence within the Creation. A world where we would see the Creation without extrapolating the presence of a Creator.

The difference between our Mishnah and those preceding it is not just a difference in quantity. There is a difference in quality as well. The miracles described in our Mishnah transcend nature. They leave no doubt whatsoever that they are supernatural.

These ten items were entirely and undeniably beyond nature, so they were created on Friday at twilight.

1. Pirkei Avos, Chapter 5, Mishnah 1.

2. Pirkei Avos, Chapter 5, Mishnah 2.

3. See his commentary to Pirkei Avos, Derech Chaim, Chapter 5, Mishnah 2.

4. See Bamidbar Rabbah, Parshas Naso Chapter 16. See also Tanya Chapter 36.

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The Halachic meaning of twilight is the time between sunset and nightfall. Day and night are opposites, yet this period can connect them. One must be on a level greater than both to connect two opposites. "Day" and "night" are the most significant expressions of nature. We can see this from the Torah's description of Creation⁵, "And it was evening, and it was morning, one day."

In our Mishnah, the meaning of twilight is far greater. Here we are talking about the twilight of Friday. It does not merely connect day and night; it connects the six weekdays, meaning the act of Creation and Shabbos, that which transcends Creation. From this, we can see it is a time totally above nature. Therefore, it was the time Hashem created those items that transcended Creation.

We are impatiently waiting for and working toward the days of Moshiach. This is a time that will be a constant Shabbos; we will always be permeated with a light beyond nature's limitations. May we reach that time now!

(Adapted from the Sichah of Shabbos Parshas Behar-Bechukosai, 5723)

I hope you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.

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5. Parshas Bereishis, Bereishis 1:4.

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לזכות

חיילי "צבאות השם" חיים, עזן עודד, וזכרי' מתן שיחיו מאריס

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נדפס ע"י הוריהם

הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

לזכות

מרת אסתר שתחי' שרבני

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נדפס ע"י בנה

ר' גרשון שי' בן טוב