

Parashat Bereishit



My Granddaughter Granting Me a Ride to Heaven

Grandma Behold the Heavens!

Today I finally took down all the beautiful artistic drawings my granddaughters had made and pasted on our glass door so the light would shine through them. I had left the drawings hanging for close to a month, but now, faded in the sunlight; it was time to take them down. Fortunately, I had photographed the pictures when they were fresh and colorful. As I wistfully threw them out, one of the drawings called my attention. It was from my youngest granddaughter, Hadar, age 8. She wrote me: !השמים הנני הנה/Nani hine hashamayim! – Grandma here is heaven! (I have to mention that Nani is the name my daughter-in-law and granddaughters call me, but that's a whole other story for another time). “Grandma behold the Heavens!” written inside of a heart shape, tugged at my core and brought tears to my eyes. Faded or not, I wasn't going to throw out this drawing. And here it is taped onto the wall at my writing desk. My loving granddaughter, with a heart so vast, open and loving, wanted to give me all of heaven if she only could. The love of this child has no judgmental limitations, no fear of rejection, or failure. She is ready to share even the highest heavens, which continually seem to open for her.

Embracing the Stars

Whereas some people may be over-achievers, always pushing themselves to achieve the highest goals not knowing how to relax and have fun, it is still vital to reach for heavens in our aspirations. Too many closing doors may taunt our juvenile starry hopes. Perhaps the muddy reality has darkened our childlike heavenly visions. Yet, when I look into my granddaughter's sparkling eyes, a glimpse of all the open opportunities returns the light to my own dusty visions. “Is anything too wondrous for Hashem?” (*Bereishit* 18:14). Isn't the essence of the Jewish people emunah that Hashem can open the heavens for us? Avraham and Sarah teach us never to give up. Even after all hope is lost, there is still hope after despair. Hashem changed the position of the stars and planets so Sarah could have a son (*Bereishit* 12:5). Since Hashem is the Creator of heaven and earth, He can also change the reality He created for us. If only we would retain a childlike belief in the impossible, then we could cuddle the stars.

Remember the Heavenly Purpose Why We Were Sent Down to Earth

Being a Virgo by birth, I have a natural earthy inclination. Moreover, having been preoccupied with the earth of the gardens, I could really use my granddaughter's gift of heaven. My job as the director of a midrasha – even a very heavenly midrasha – still requires me to keep my two feet firmly planted in the earth of practicality. With all the pressures tugging at our toes, it is easy to forget our spiritual yearning. It's easy to forget that “in the beginning Hashem created heaven and earth” (*Bereishit* 1:1). Although there are different opinions whether heaven or earth was created first (*Midrash Vayikra Rabbah* 36:1), “heaven” precedes “earth” in the very first verse of the Torah. As busy as we may be dealing with earthly challenges, we mustn't forget the heavenly purpose of why we were sent down to earth. On the other hand, there are those so preoccupied with spiritual matters that they repeatedly forget their shoes under the dining room table.

On the Earthly Wings of Heaven

Achieving balance between heaven and earth in our life is the goal. Therefore, in the next mention of “heaven and earth,” each of them gets a turn to be written first:

ספר בראשית פרק ב פסוק ד אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם ביום עשות השם אלהים ארץ ושמים:

“These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, on the day that Hashem Elokim made earth and heaven” (*Bereishit 2:4*).

Rashi explains that Hashem created two worlds: This World and the World-to-Come as it states, “For in *Yah* [*yud* and *heh*], Hashem is the Rock [Creator] of the worlds” (*Yesha’yahu 26:4*). This World is created with the letter ה/*heh* which is open on the bottom, just as this World is open to those who return in repentance. The World-to-Come is created with the letter י/*yud* alluding that the righteous are few the same way that the *yud* is the smallest of the Hebrew letters. The “earth” seems to refer to this World, whereas “heaven” refers to the World-to-Come. As I gaze at my dear granddaughter’s drawing, I get a sense that she is giving me a ride on the wings of the heavenly י/*yud* all the way to the World-to-Come.

