

5781 – Genesis 1-6 – Bereshit (In the beginning)

Do We Have Too Much STUFF?¹

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Professional home organizing is a relatively new and expanding industry, developed to help individuals and businesses create systems and processes using organizing principles to make their lives more efficient and enjoyable.

Professional organizers help their clients reduce their excessive and disorganized accumulation of stuff to better control their surroundings. They offer services from designing functional closets, to reorganizing the space of a room, to managing the flow of paperwork in work spaces. In short, they provide systems to conquer clutter and create better productivity.

According to Kondo, many of us imbue our things with emotions; we hang on to items we don’t like or need. We need to begin “questioning how much I have and how much I really need.” “Brooming” all of those unnecessary things can be liberating.

In the story of creation, mankind was created on the sixth day of creation—the planets, gases, minerals, vegetation, and animal life were already in place. **Human beings were created last in order to create a hierarchy of order and purpose within creation.**

Commanded to “fill the earth and conquer it and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky ...,” **we were given the mission to utilize our world for a divine purpose.** We develop, challenge, and push creation to its limits and beyond **in our mission to build a home for G-d.**

Should we achieve our purpose, mankind soars higher than all creation; should we fail, we are lower than the lowliest mosquito created before us.

If man behaves improperly he is told: “Even a gnat, even a worm, (which was made on day five, while man was created on day six) preceded you.”—SANHEDRIN 38A

In the material excess of our privileged society, have we forgotten this hierarchical order and the divine purpose for mankind that it reveals? **Do**

we need a reminder that everything in the world exists for a purpose?

Have we become slaves to our things, rather than their masters? Do we work to live, to achieve our G-dly destiny, or do we live to work, to acquire more? Have we forgotten that there is no creation that can achieve the heights of spiritual achievements like mankind, when we use our resources properly?

There may be many methods and techniques to learning to become more organized or clutter-free. But **one thing is crystal clear: as part of controlling our “stuff,” we need to gain a perspective on what order things should take in our lives.**

And that can truly be life-changing.

1. Avot 2:5

Hillel says: Do not separate yourself from the community; do not believe in yourself until the day you die; do not judge your fellow until you have reached his place; do not make a statement that cannot be easily understood, on the ground that it will be understood eventually; **and do not say, “When I am free I will study,” for perhaps you will not become free.**

a. Matthew 8:19-23

²¹And another of the disciples said to Him, **“Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.”** ²²But Yeshua said to him, **“Follow Me; and allow the dead to bury their own dead.”** ²³And when He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him.

- 1) Although the burial of the dead is meritorious, especially for a child to bury a parent, **the work of the Kingdom had absolute priority.**²
- 2) The explanation that those who are spiritually dead should bury the deceased among their number is not satisfactory.
- 3) The translator read *le’mekbar*, “to bury” instead of *lemekaber*, “to the burier, to the undertaker”—in other words, **“let others who share your responsibility to bury the dead, bury him, you follow me.”**

b. Isaiah 55:6-7

“Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.

2. 1Corinthians 14:26-40

²⁶What then shall we say, brothers? **When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation.** All of these must be done for the strengthening of the

1 Chana Weisberg, *Shabbat deLights*, Volume 1, (Chabad.org), pp. 3-5

2 Samuel Tobias Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament*, (KTAV), p. 159.

kahal. ²⁷If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. ²⁸If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet ... and speak to himself and God. ²⁹Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. ³⁰And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. ³¹For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. ³²The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.

³³For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, ³⁴women should remain silent in the *kahal*. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. ³⁵If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the *kahal*. ³⁶Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?

³⁷If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. ³⁸If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored. ³⁹Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

a. ³⁴women should remain silent in the *kahal*. They are not allowed to speak ...

1) Berachot 31b

“Now Hannah, she spoke about her heart” (1Sam. 1:13), about matters, so said R. Eleazar in the name of R. Yose ben Zimra, that were in her heart. She spoke right up to the Holy One: Master of the universe, of all that You created in woman, there is not one part without its purpose—eyes to see, ears to hear, a nose to smell, a mouth to speak, hands to work with, legs to walk with, breasts to give suck ...

b. 1Corinthians 11:5,13

⁵And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered ... ¹³Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?

1) If women are supposed to “remain silent” in the *kahal*—then Paul's instruction earlier in the same letter does NOT make any sense whatsoever.

2) 1Corinthians 14:1-5

¹Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. ²For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. ³But everyone who

prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. ⁴He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the *ei-dah*. ⁵I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the *ei-dah* may be edified.

1) Megillah 15a

R. Eleazar further said in the name of R. Hanina: Anyone who reports a saying in the name of its originator brings deliverance to the world, as it says, And Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai (Est 2:22).

c. These instructions are about order—they apply to everyone in the community in the same way:

^{14:28}If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet (σιγάω [*sigao*]) ... and speak to himself and God.

^{14:30}And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop (σιγάω [*sigao*]).

^{14:33}For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, ³⁴women should remain silent (σιγάω [*sigao*]) in the *kahal*.

1) σιγάω (*sigao*)—to keep silence, hold one's peace, to be kept in silence, be concealed.

2) And, since “the spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets” (v. 32)—the “silence” should be self-imposed—by both men and women!

d. Another way to look at it—the Flood Account (6:1-8:22).

A God resolves to destroy the corrupt race (6:11-13).

B Noah builds an ark according to God's instructions (6:14-22).

C The Lord commands the remnant to enter the ark (7:1-9).

D The flood begins (7:10-16).

E The flood prevails 150 days, and the mountains are covered (7:17-24).

F God remembers Noah (8:1a).

E¹ The flood recedes 150 days, and the mountains are visible (8:1b-5).

D¹ The earth dries (8:6-14).

C¹ God commands the remnant to leave the ark (8:15-19).

B¹ Noah builds an altar (8:20).

A¹ The Lord resolves not to destroy humankind (8:21-22).

2) Worshipping in a way that strengthens the community (14:26-40).

A ²⁶What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, **everyone** has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. **All of these must be done for the strengthening of the *kahal*.**

B ²⁷If **anyone** speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, **one at a time**, and someone must interpret. ²⁸If there is no interpreter, **the speaker should keep quiet** ... and speak to himself and God.

C ²⁹Two or three **prophets** should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. ³⁰And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, **the first speaker should stop**. ³¹For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. ³²The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.

(³³For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints.)

D ³⁴**women** should **remain silent** in the *kahal*. **They are not allowed to speak**, but must be in submission, as the Law says. ³⁵If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is **disgraceful for a woman to speak** in the *kahal*.

E ³⁶**DID THE WORD OF GOD ORIGINATE WITH YOU? OR ARE YOU THE ONLY PEOPLE IT HAS REACHED?**

D¹ ³⁷If **anybody** thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command.

C¹ ³⁸If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.

B¹ ³⁹Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues.

A¹ ⁴⁰**But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.**

a) The “key” is **NOT** that women should “remain silent” in the *kahal*—but that **disorderly conduct in a worship service reflects a destructive arrogance on the part of everyone who contributes to it** (v. 36).

b) Song of Songs Rabbah VII:19

19. LET US GET UP EARLY TO THE VINEYARDS. This refers to Israel, as it says, *For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the*

house of Israel (Isa. V, 7). LET US SEE WHETHER THE VINE HATH BUDDED: this refers to the recital of the shema'. WHETHER THE VINE-BLOSSOM BE OPENED: this refers to synagogues and houses of study. AND THE POMEGRANATES BE IN BLOSSOM: this refers to children busily learning the Torah. THERE WILL I GIVE THEE MY LOVE: there I produce **the righteous men and women, the prophets and prophetesses** who have arisen from me.

a) **WITH WHOM DOES THE WORD OF GOD ORIGINATE?**

e. What were women doing that “weakened” the character of the *kahal*?

1) “Any of the follow could have been disrupting the Corinthian's orderly (service):

a) Women, like men, may have been ministering without consideration of others, lacking self-control.

b) Because women were (less educated), they may have been interrupting the service by asking questions inappropriately.

c) Some of the women may have been reverting to the model of their pagan worship, disrupting the service with their loud noises.”

2) “**In pagan religions, the only way** women were allowed to participate was by wailing and making high-pitched cries called “ululations”³ ... From Homer onward, writers described ululation. Among pagans, the men ministered and offered sacrifices while the women provided sound effects. Paul now expected all to minister, but in an orderly way, without the chaos of their pagan past.”⁴

3) “If, as seems likely, women were predominately in that group of

³ An *ululation* is a long, wavering, high-pitched sound resembling the howl of a dog or wolf. Ululation is found in some singing techniques and ritual situations. In Arab countries ululation is commonly used by women to express celebration or grief, especially at weddings and funerals. It may also be used to encourage belly dancing. In the Middle East, *zaghareet* is an ululation performed to honor someone. In East Africa, ululation (or *illita*) performed by worshippers is a feature of services in the Ethiopian Orthodox and Eritrean Orthodox Churches, and is also commonly used in secular celebrations such as parties or concerts. Ululation is incorporated into African musical styles such as Shona music, where it is a form of audience participation, along with clapping and call-and-response. Herodotus (On Libya, from *The Histories*, c. 430 B.C.E., BOOK IV. 42-43) appears to mention ululation in North Africa (where it is still practiced), saying; “I think for my part that the loud cries uttered in our sacred rites came also from thence; for the Libyan women are greatly given to such cries and utter them very sweetly.” http://www.answers.com/ululation#cite_note-0.

⁴ Cunningham, Hamilton, *Why Not Women—*, p. 197.

prophets who were disposed to be 'disorderly,' Paul may, in 14:34, be addressing them specifically with regard to this matter of submission to other prophets for the sake of order and peace (14:32-33). These parallelisms in the imperatives to 'keep quiet' and 'to be in submission' (see 4., b., 3), p. 73) strongly suggest that the problem of disorderly participation in prophetic proclamation and tongues was particularly prominent among women believers in Corinth, and that it is with respect to this context that Paul's admonitions must be understood."⁵

f. ³⁴as the Law says.

1) **What passage from the Torah is Paul referring to?**

- 1) Many scholars assume that it is Genesis 3:16.
- 2) But, "it is clear from the context of Genesis 2-3 that 3:16—'Your desire will be for **your husband**, and **he will rule over you**'—does NOT announce God's created desire for 'male leadership,' but is the statement of a cursed existence because of sin."¹⁵⁷
- 2) Since the text (in question) is NOT about "male leadership"—it is far more likely that Paul has Leviticus 19:18 in mind; "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but **love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.**"

a) John 13:34-35

³⁴"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵**By this** all men will know that you are my disciples, **if you love one another.**"

b) Galatians 5:13-14

¹³You, my brothers, were called to be free. But **do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.** ¹⁴The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

c) Ephesians 4:2-3

²Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³Make every effort to **keep the unity of the Spirit** through the bond of peace.

d) John 1:5-6

⁵And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. ⁶**And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands.** As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

e) Genesis Rabbah XXIV:7

R. Akiba said: But thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Lev. XIX, 18) is even a greater principle. Hence you must not say, Since I have been put to shame, let my neighbor be put to shame. R. Tanhuma said: If you do so, **know whom you put to shame**, [for] *In the likeness of God made He him.*

f) M. Avot Chapter 2:10

MISHNAH 10. THEY [EACH] SAID THREE THINGS. R. ELIEZER SAID: **LET THE HONOUR OF THY FRIEND BE AS DEAR TO THEE AS THINE OWN**,⁽⁸²⁾ AND BE NOT EASILY PROVOKED TO ANGER,⁽⁸³⁾ AND REPENT ONE DAY BEFORE THY DEATH,⁽⁸⁴⁾ AND [HE ALSO SAID:] WARM THYSELF BEFORE THE FIRE OF THE WISE,⁽⁸⁵⁾ AND BEWARE OF THEIR GLOWING COALS,⁽⁸⁶⁾ THAT THOU MAYEST NOT BE SINGED,⁽⁸⁷⁾ FOR THEIR BITE IS THE BITE OF A FOX,⁽⁸⁸⁾ AND THEIR STING IS THE STING OF A SCORPION,⁽⁸⁹⁾ AND THEIR HISS IS THE HISS OF A SERPENT,⁽⁹⁰⁾ AND ALL THEIR WORDS ARE LIKE COALS OF FIRE.⁽⁹¹⁾

(82) On the principle of Love thy neighbor as thyself (Lev. XIX, 18).

(83) Cf. Eccl. VII, 9, Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry.

(84) When R. Eliezer's disciples asked him (Shab. 153a): Does any man know what day he is to die? he replied: All the more reason for him to repent every day of his life in case he should die on the morrow.

(85) The Torah which is called אור (i e. light or flame) v. Prov. VI, 23, The teaching (Torah) is light ... Isa. II, 5, *O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light* (אור which also flame) *of the Lord.*

(86) The commentators regard this as a warning against behaving towards the Sages in a manner incompatible with the dignity which should be theirs as exponents of the Torah.

(87) Their fire, the fire of the Torah, being a divine fire (cf. Deut. XXXIII, 2, *At his right hand was a fiery law*), is an ever potent one, even when the Sages are, as it were, not aflame but only resembling glowing coals.

(88) The bite, even a slight one, of a fox was thought particularly hurtful because its teeth were said to be crooked.

(89) The sting alone of a scorpion is poisonous.

(90) The very hiss of a serpent was believed to be deadly.

(91) Their mere words, even if they seem unimportant, should be heeded as they, too, are aglow with the Divine fire of the Torah. Or, the mere words of the Sages even when not intended to be 'burning' are like coals of fire, which, if approached or dealt with, without due care, will burn one. For the action of the fire of God upon those who take up the wrong attitude towards Him, i.e. upon the wicked, v. Mal. III, 19, 20. *For, behold, the day cometh, it burneth as a furnace; and all the proud, and all that work wickedness, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall*

set them ablaze, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings. Herford sees in these words of R. Eliezer a piece of self-revelation expressive of the deep suffering he endured as a result of the severe ban of excommunication which the Rabbis pronounced against him, v. B.M. 59b.

3) Perhaps Paul was also thinking of Deuteronomy 22:5

⁵A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this.