

Parshas Toldos 5763

Wonderful story : Physicist is giving lecture, describing solar system. In front row sits an elderly lady, smiling and shaking her head the whole time. Finally he asks her what she finds so objectionable. "Young men, what's all this nonsense about the world spinning in empty space. Everyone knows that it rests on the back of a giant turtle". The physicist thinks he'll disabuse her, so he asks: "Well, then what is the turtle resting on?" Unfazed, she answers: "On another turtle, of course". Thinking he has her, the physicist says: "Yes, but what does the bottom turtle rest on?" She fixes him with a pitying glance and says: "Young man, you can't catch me that way. It's turtles, *all the way down.*"

עקב אשר שמע אברהם בקולי וישמר משמרתי מצותי חוקותי ותורותי
אמר רב קיים אברהם אבינו כה"ת כולה : יומא גמרא

Question raised by many meforshim - I've been asked this question here in shul - Avraham lived before מתן תורה. How did he know what the מצות of the Torah are?

Many answers. I want to share with you one particular answer, that has roots in some important and basic concepts.

ולא פסק : Says the Targum: (פי ואתחנן) - קול גדול ולא יסף

The sound of מתן תורה, the voice from the mountain, never stopped. It still reverberates. And if we don't hear it - it's because our ears aren't sufficiently attuned, because the other sounds of the world drown it out, because we're too מגושם, too mired in physical existence to perceive it.

Yet we are not completely deaf to it, either. ט"ז explains the formula נותן התורה in the present tense as referring to this קול גדול ולא יסף, the רבשי"ע is continuously giving us the Torah, and that is why we can still glean new insights, even after all these millenia, because we can still catch something of that קול גדול.

So the sound of מ"ת still reverberates. If we were receptive enough, if we had the spiritual capacity, we would hear it.

And if we did, we would hear another sound, too.

(יהי אור, יהי רקיע כו') בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם.

Important idea elaborated by R' Chaim Volozhin in נפש החיים, as well as by the תניא, citing the בעשי"ט: The עשרה מאמרות are not just the words that הקב"ה "spoke" when he created the world. They are the ongoing force that gives continued existence to the world. We say in davening that He is יום תמיד מעשה בראשית; He gives continued existence to the world. And that giving of existence is through those מאמרות, by which הקב"ה constantly gives existence to the world.

A contemporary writes describes this idea with a very beautiful phrase: The sustaining utterance. The עשרה מאמרות are the sustaining utterance of the world.

So if we were receptive enough, we would hear two sounds: The קול גדול ולא יסף of מתן תורה, and the עשרה מאמרות of בריאת העולם.

Actually these are not two separate sounds, but one harmony. The Zohar states that the root, the source of the עשרה מאמרות of creation were the עשרת הדברות of תורה.

In other words, just as the עשרה מאמרות are the sustaining utterance - the foundation - of the world, so the עשרת הדברות - and by extension, the entire Torah - are what sustains those עשרה מאמרות themselves; they are the foundation beneath the foundation.

And here we come back to אברהם אבינו. אברהם חי"ל describe how אברהם discovered הקבי"ה; how he saw the world as a בירה דולקת, a brilliantly lit mansion, and he realized that the mansion must have a בעה"ב.

אברהם perceived the דבר ה' the word of the רבשי"ע, that lies beneath the surface of the world. He saw beneath the veneer, beneath the surface, to the עשרה מאמרות that lie below. That was his genius.

And therefore, just as he could perceive the דבר ה' that lay below, he perceived the deeper דבר ה' that lay even deeper. With the same spiritual faculty with which he delved down and discovered the עשרה מאמרות that lie beneath the surface and sustain the world, he discovered the עשרת דברות - the קול גדול ולא יסף - the sound of מתן תורה - that lies even deeper. And therefore it is no surprise - that he was able to hear and understand and fulfill the mitzvos of the Torah; קיים אברהם אבינו כל התורה עד שלא נתנה.

So you see, what supports the world, what sustains it, is the דבר ה', the living word of the רבשי"ע - **all the way down.**