

Shabbat Shalom! If you

a) enjoy and value these divrei Torah, and/or

b) value and/or believe in the hashkat olam (worldview) they present,

please respond generously to the appeal that follows this week's dvar Torah, either [here](#) or by mail to

The Center for Modern Torah Leadership

121 Billings Street

Sharon, MA 02067

### **קהלת פרק יב פסוק יג**

סוף דבר הכל נשמע את האל-הים ירא ואת מצותיו שמור כי זה כל האדם:

### **אבות פרק ו משנה א**

רבי מאיר אומר: כל העוסק בתורה לשמה זוכה לדברים הרבה, ולא עוד אלא שכל העולם כלו כדי הוא לו . . .

### **תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף ו עמוד ב**

ואמר רבי חלבו אמר רב הונא: כל אדם שיש בו יראת שמים דבריו נשמעין, שנאמר "סוף דבר הכל נשמע את האל-הים ירא וגו'".

מאי "כי זה כל האדם"?

אמר רבי אלעזר: (אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא) כל העולם כלו לא נברא אלא בשביל [כ"י פריס: דבר] זה.

רבי אבא בר כהנא אמר: שקול זה כנגד כל העולם כולו.

רבי שמעון בן עזאי אומר, ואמרי לה רבי שמעון בן זומא אומר: כל העולם כולו לא נברא אלא לצוות לזה

### **רש"י על אתר**

**בשביל זה - שיברא זה.**

### **רש"י לקהלת פרק יב פסוק יג**

**סוף דבר הכל נשמע את האל-הים ירא - מה שתוכל עשה ולבך לשמים:**

**ואת מצותיו שמור כי זה כל האדם - כי לדבר הזה נברא כל האדם:**

### **Avot 6:1**

Rabbi Meir says: Anyone who engages with Torah *lishmoh* merits many *devarim*=things, and this is not all, but the entire world is justified for his sake

### **Berakhot 6b**

Said Rabbi Chelbo further in the name of Rav Huna: Every person that has within him reverence of Heaven – his words are heard, as Scripture says “The final word – everything of the one who reveres Heaven is heard.”

What is the meaning of “*ki zeh kol ho’adam*”?

Said Rabbi El’azar: The entire world was only created for the sake of this [Ms. Paris: *davar* =thing].

Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said: This is equal to the entire world.

Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai said, and some say it was Rabbi Shimon ben Zoma: The whole world was created only to be commanded by this.

### **Rashi to Berakhot 6b**

For the sake of *zeh* – that he be created

### **Rashi to Kohelet 12:13**

**The final word, when everything is heard: Revere G-d! – do what you can, with your intent for Heaven and keep His commandments, for this is the entire human – for the sake of this thing all humanity was created.**

Sometimes an apparently trivial textual variance reflects and embodies an enormous difference in religious outlook. This week's dvar Torah will present a possible such case, and along the way try to model the experience of learning Torah interdisciplinarily, and under the assumptions that truth can be found anywhere, and that all truth is Torah.

Rabbi Chelbo, in the name of Rav Huna, offers on Berakhot 6b a creative counterreading of the opening of the first two sections of Kohelet 12:13 as a promise of reward for religious attitude and behavior, rather than as a dour injunction to follow religion even though religious duty is its own only reward. (We will discuss briefly below how these readings relate to the book as a whole.) The Talmud asks for an interpretation of the last section of the verse as well, and brings three possible interpretations of "*ki zeh kol ho'adam*". The first is offered by R. Elazar.

But what is R. Elazar's reading? In the Vilna shas, he says "*kol haolam kulo lo nivra ela bishvil zeh*" = the world in its entirety was created only for the sake of this. But how does R. El'azar's statement derive from the verse, which mentions nothing about the world? It is tempting to suggest that *haolam* is a typo, and should read instead *hoadom* – "all of humanity was created only for the sake of this", and indeed this is the text of ms. Oxford. However, the subsequent statements of R. Abba bar Kahana and Ben Zoma/Azzai also say *olam*, in all manuscripts, so this remains mysterious to me.

Ms. Paris offers a different variant – *bishvil davar zeh*. The added *davar* makes clear that the world is not created for the sake of any human being, but rather for the sake of reverence of Heaven. This version too is unsustainable in context, however, as the statements of R. Abba bar Kahana and Ben Zoma/Azzai are literarily dependent on R. Elazar's, and both use the word *zeh* to refer to the person who revered G-d rather than to the reverence itself.

Rashi on the Talmud notices the possible ambiguity of *zeh* and therefore comments "*sheyibarei zeh*" = so that this would be created – again, this makes clear that it refers to the person, as reverence is not created as such. But the statement that the world was created only "for the sake of Reverence of Heaven" appears in the Zohar, although attached to Kohelet 3:14. And the commentary attributed to Rashi on Kohelet 12:13 seems to follow both manuscript variants above – "*ki ledavar zeh nivra kol hoadam*" = for the sake of this **thing** all of **humanity** was created.

It is possible that this reading is the simple reading of the verse, and that its occasional penetration into interpretations of R. Elazar's statement simply reflect the constant pressure of pshat on drush. But I want to suggest a deeper explanation for why some would prefer "all of humanity was created for the sake of reverence of Heaven" to "all the world was created for the sake of the human being who reveres Heaven".

Here I venture into territory well outside my expertise, so tentatively and with trepidation: The early 20<sup>th</sup> century mussar yeshivot in Navaredok and Slobodka represented radically different religious approaches. Navaredok saw the root of evil in mistaken human arrogance, in the belief that human beings mattered – how else could we consider defying G-d? Thus its religious program centered on the

destruction of pride, including deliberately placing oneself in situations in which one would be treated with no kavod, with complete lack of dignity.

Slobodka, by contrast, saw the root of evil in mistaken human humility, in the belief that human beings did not matter – how else could we consider ignoring G-d? Thus its religious program was one of ontological self-esteem, *gadlut hoadami*, with a concomitant insistence in dressing and behaving in a manner that generated *kavod*.

Returning to our sugya: For the Navaredoker, any statement that the world was created for the sake of human beings, however conditional, is knowledge proffered by the snake. But a Slobodkan would see such a statement as the essence of Torah, as the antidote that lets us hear the voice of G-d before rather than after we eat the forbidden fruit.

Which of these religious attitudes is more correct? Douglas Adams in [The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy](#) suggests brilliantly that both involve elements of fantasy. He describes the “Total Perspective Vortex”, a machine that enables a person to see themselves in the perspective of the entire universe – an infinitesimally small red dot says “You are here”. Naturally, everyone who enters it goes insane, until one man enters and leaves in peace. His secret? He enters the machine in a virtual universe created specifically for him. In other words, keeping sane requires us either to avoid seeing ourselves in true perspective, or else to adopt a perspective that grossly exaggerates our importance.

Adams' metaphor, consciously or not, is drawn from chassidut. A story told of Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Berdichiver (and others) is that he kept two pieces of paper in his pocket. On one was written Avraham's words in his failed plea for Sodom; “I am but dust and ashes.” On the other was the conclusion of Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5's paean to human diversity: “Every human being is required to say: **The world was created so that I would come into being** (*bishvil nivra haolami*)”. The Berdichiver tried to remain in dynamic equilibrium between Navaredok and Slobodka, knowing that neither extreme was stable or healthy.

Now R. Meir in Avot 6:1 (in Eliyahu Zuta it is R. Eliezer) says *kol haolam kulo kedai hu lo* regarding the person who engages with Torah lishmoh, and many commentators relate this statement to R. Elazar's in our sugya. Here there is no real possibility of reading *lo* as referring to anything other than the human being. But the connection between the statements is not obvious – why is engaging with Torah lishmoh identified with revering G-d and keeping his commandments? One possibility is that lishmoh means “without consideration of reward”, and that is precisely the meaning of “revering G-d” that is conveyed by Kohelet in context. Perhaps R. Chelbo himself was suggesting ironically that while revering G-d brings rewards, those rewards come only to those who were unconcerned with them – in this regard see my [essay on lyoy](#). But I hope to discuss the concept of lishmoh in greater depth with you before Shavuot. Shabbat Shalom.

Dear Friend and Supporter,

We are very pleased to announce that we have more fabulous applicants for the 2010 Summer Beit Midrash (SBM) than we can accept. Our superbly talented and diverse SBM 2010 Fellowship includes Israelis and Americans, married couples and college freshmen. They hail from Harvard and Yale, RIETS and YCT, and Yeshivot Har Etzion, Maalei Gilboa, and Petach Tikvah. Our fellows have taught in public and Jewish schools, led communities and founded journals, performed as chesed clowns and magicians. Bios and photos can be found at our website.

This summer's SBM topic is "Informed Consent: Developing the value of autonomous decision-making in Halakhah". SBM is thus building on the discussions of our 2007 Rabbis and Educators Conference (see our website for more information). We encourage you to follow our learning online this summer. Links to presentations by last year's all-star lineup of guest faculty can also be found at the website.

Our website has become a major international Torah resource, with 2,000-3,000 shiur downloads per month. Several hundred people subscribe to our weekly parshah email, and we regularly receive appreciative, insightful, and challenging responses. We plan to launch a website redesign soon to better accommodate our growing body of Torah, and are working toward producing interactive online classes. At [www.torahleadership.org](http://www.torahleadership.org) you will find audio recordings and sourcesheets for many shiurim, as well as articles and archives.

Planning for our 4<sup>th</sup> annual Rabbis and Educators Conference, "Containing Diversity", is well under way. We will integrate high-level study of Tanakh and Halakhah with contemporary case studies of issues such as conversion and kashrut. We will develop broad and reflective approaches to the dichotomy of uniformity vs. diversity in Orthodox communal life, especially issues relevant to synagogues and schools. We're also looking forward to integrating SBM Fellows into the conference for the first time. You can find the conference outline and updates about participants and specific topics at our website.

Please note that the Center for Modern Torah Leadership has moved. We are now located year-round in beautiful Sharon, MA. Our new address is 121 Billings St, Sharon, MA 02067.

CMTL remains the only institution dedicated to developing Modern Orthodox intellectual leadership. Our work is essential to the growth and health of committed Modern Orthodoxy, and the increasing demand for our Torah and programs shows that our message resonates with our community. Your past support has led directly to our current success and growth. We can't do it without you! Please invest in the Torah leadership our community deserves with your tax-deductible donation to the Center for Modern Torah Leadership today.

Thank you for your generosity,

Rav Aryeh Klapper  
Dean

Deborah Klapper  
Director of Development