



Revealing the inner beauty of the Torah in a way that touches and inspires the Jewish soul

THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

B.S.D.

By: Rabbi Chaim Zwick

We are living at a time of unprecedented levels of wealth, achievement and success. Advancements in medicine, science and technology are greater than any time in history. People are acquiring absurd amounts of money, possessions, status and power. We seem to have everything, and despite all this, the world around us plagued by increasingly serious problems and no-one seems to know why.

Drug abuse, divorce, suicide and crime are at an all time high. Many people feel empty, alienated, dissatisfied and unhappy. People search for highs, thrills and excitement to fill a void and emptiness of a life lived without purpose and meaning. As Victor Frankel says "Our search for meaning is the primary motivation in our lives. It is this search that makes us human. And it is when this deep need for meaning goes unmet, that our lives feel shallow, empty and unfulfilled. This void and lack of meaning - is the fundamental crisis of our time."

The foundation of Judaism is the realization that life has purpose and meaning. This of course is true of every major religion, but in the case of Judaism it is absolutely central. But, to say that life has meaning is not enough. Judaism goes a step further and articulates very clearly exactly why life has meaning and purpose - because it was created by a purposeful being called G-d. But why would an infinite, all powerful G-d unbounded by time and space want to create a lowly world?

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan in his infamous book, *If you were G-d*, explains as follows. To the best of our understanding, the creation of the universe was the ultimate act of love. It was an act of love so immense, that the human mind cannot even begin to fathom it.

After-all, G-d had no need to create the world. G-d himself is absolute perfection, and has no need for anything, even creation. Therefore, G-d created the world basically as an act of kindness - as a vehicle upon which he could bestow his infinite goodness. However G-d's love is so great that any good that he bestows must be the greatest good possible. Anything less would simply not be sufficient.

What is this greatest good? What is the ultimate good that G-d wanted to bestow on his creation? If you think for a moment the answer should be obvious. The ultimate good is G-d himself. There is no greater good than achieving relationship, oneness and unity with the divine.

However, for this goodness to be complete and contain no lack in the giving whatsoever, it had to be something mankind earned and not something that was given to him as a free gift. For anything given for free carries with it a bread of shame and lacks completion.

For this reason man was given free will, and it is for this reason G-d created a lowly world - made up of good and evil. You see G-d wanted mankind to bear full responsibility for his actions both good and bad. He wanted human action to be a matter of free choice rather than compulsion. Because only through the expression of our free will specifically in the arena of morality and ethics can man elevate himself and achieve the reward which was destined for him by his creator.

It was in order to give man a place to exercise this free will that G-d concealed his light, so that creation could exist as an independent entity, appearing void of G-dliness. This concealment creates the perfect stage for mankind to fulfill his purpose in creation. For earning his own perfection and closeness to the divine requires the maximum possible challenge.



Revealing the inner beauty of the Torah in a way that touches and inspires the Jewish soul

We have said that the greatest good that G-d could give is himself. The purpose of creation was therefore to give man a chance to come close to G-d. When we speak of coming close to G-d, we are not speaking of physical proximity, but rather spiritual closeness. And as our sages tell us, spiritual closeness is achieved only through likeness and similarity. For only when two things resemble each other, are they considered close in a spiritual sense.

We can now begin to understand free will and G-d's plan to draw man close on a deeper level. For when we speak of this type of good - closeness to our creator, relationship with the divine, we are faced with a dilemma. G-d the giver, and man the receiver, and as such, polar opposites, with nothing in common. Because of this dilemma, G-d established a system where man by exercising his free will could close this gap and become master of his own perfection.

It is for this challenge man comes into the world as a taker, selfish, and self-centered by nature. However, through toil and hard work, man begins the process of transforming his selfish taking nature by emulating the infinite giving nature of our divine creator. With the ultimate goal of achieving perfection, by focusing on the foundation of character as man aspires to attain oneness with the divine.

Therefore this feeling, the sense that something is missing, a longing for something just beyond our grasp, is a universal human experience. It is the inexpressible yearning within our souls to reconnect with the divine. This lack and emptiness we feel was built into our psyche from the beginning of time, and it is this longing that drives all of human behavior.

Our soul seeks completion and connection - and we feed this burning desire of the soul with endless materialism. Since we do not recognize the divine plan that drives human existence, we lack vision - and have no way to understand this relentless force within us. Our approach to life, our world view is flawed, limited and incomplete. Therefore, mankind remains disillusioned, he lacks peace, happiness and fulfillment, and he does not know why. This lack of clarity and direction is the reality of the human condition - and the tragedy of modern man.

Man must realize we have been bestowed a unique destiny which unfolds as we exercise our free will, specifically in the area of character, morality and ethics. For the ultimate aim in the life of every human soul is to attain moral and spiritual excellence!