

Hide and Seek

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Our *parashah* commands us regarding the mitzvah that is most identified with our Jewishness: “On the eighth day, his foreskin should be circumcised” (Leviticus 12:3). Contemplating the nature of this mitzvah, an obvious question arises: If the foreskin is extra, why wait until the eighth day to remove it? Better yet, why is the baby born with it in the first place?

In *Likutey Moharan* II, 78, Rebbe Nachman explains that everything in our universe was created by the Ten Utterances of God. For example, “In the beginning, God created the Heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). The *Zohar* links these Ten Utterances to the Ten Commandments of the Torah. Accordingly, every part of creation has an element of Torah hidden inside, which gives that creation its vitality.

Yet the Torah was not given to mankind until 26 generations after Creation. Since the world was created for the purpose of the Torah and its mitzvot, how did the universe sustain itself for those 26 generations? Rebbe Nachman answers that the Hidden Torah – a treasury of unearned gifts – sustained the world even when the fulfillment of its purpose was lacking. But this raises another question: Why wasn't the Torah given right away? Why did God want us to rely on His treasury of unearned gifts for so long?

When you want to eat a fruit, you usually have to peel away the hard, undesirable shell to reach the sweetness inside. Similarly, in spiritual matters, there is an outer, difficult shell that must be peeled away before one can get to the sweetness. Had God created the world and given the Torah right away, He would have given us a revealed spiritual existence in which actual holiness was exposed and obvious. Even in such a reality, we would still have had freedom of choice, because without it, there would be no reward or punishment, and the fulfillment of mitzvot would serve no challenge. But we know, "There is not a Tzaddik on earth that does only good and does not err" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). And certainly, mankind would have found it too difficult to remain at this level untainted. Since the Torah was given in such an exposed fashion, any deviation from it would be considered the greatest insult, worthy of destroying creation.

God therefore did us the greatest kindness by creating a world in which His Will (encapsulated as the Torah) is hidden in each part of creation. In this way, He forced us into an existence where we would have to break the outer shell of everything we experience in order to reach the inner fruit. And since we would have to find the merit and vitality to exist in the meanwhile, He created His treasury of unearned gifts so we would be sustained by the Torah vitality that is hidden in all of creation. He understood that our lives would be a work in progress, with many ups and downs, and therefore

created the perfect system to give us the room we need to find Him.

Our most difficult and important challenge is attaining sexual purity. There is no greater base desire or temptation. The Torah itself is called a *brit* (covenant), which demonstrates the mammoth importance of this goal. It would therefore seem that there is no place for one who breaks the *brit*. God therefore created a baby boy with (the peel of) extra foreskin, which only increases these desires. This demonstrates that even during these eight days of temptation, God still sustains the person out of His lovingkindness. Even if the person sins later in life, God forbid, he is always able to remember this earlier time when God sustained him in His impure state through the Hidden Torah. With this knowledge, he can always pick himself up and continue searching, until he will finally reach the revelation of Torah. Amen!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Milah 3