



Zohar on Genesis 90a

When God created the world, it was on the condition that if Israel when they came into the world should accept the Torah, it would be well, but if not, then the world should revert to chaos. Nor was the world firmly established until Israel stood before Mount Sinai and accepted the Torah. From that day God has been creating fresh worlds with the marriages of human beings, for from that time God has been making matches; these are the worlds which God creates.

Thought Questions:

1. What does this text say about our obligation to engage with Torah?
2. Do you ever feel as though the entire world's existence is resting on your shoulders? When? Is it good to feel that way? Bad?
3. If God stopped creating the world after 7 days, whose job is it to continue or finish the work of creation?
4. What does the last line imply about the potential of every person who is born?

Babylonian Talmud Menachot 29b

Rav Yehuda says that Rav says: When Moses ascended on High, he found the Holy One, Blessed be God, sitting and tying crowns on the letters of the Torah.

Moses said before God: “Ruler of the Universe, who is preventing You from giving the Torah without these additions?”

God said to him: “There is a man who is destined to be born after several generations, and Akiva ben Yosef is his name; he is destined to derive from each and every thorn of these crowns mounds upon mounds of halakhot. It is for his sake that the crowns must be added to the letters of the Torah.”

Moses said before God: “Ruler of the Universe, show him to me.”

God said to him: “Return behind you.”

Moses went and sat at the end of the eighth row in Rabbi Akiva’s study hall and did not understand what they were saying. Moses’ strength waned, as he thought his Torah knowledge was deficient. When Rabbi Akiva arrived at the discussion of one matter, his students said to him: My teacher, from where do you derive this? Rabbi Akiva said to them: “It is a halakha (Law) transmitted to Moses from Sinai.” When Moses heard this, his mind was put at ease, as this too was part of the Torah that he was to receive.

Thought Questions:

1. Do we need to know everything about Torah to be relevant, meaningful or make a difference?
2. What does this imply about the Torah’s meaning over different generations or time periods?
3. If Moses doesn’t know or need to know all of Torah, then what does that mean for us?

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