

The Song of the Elephant



פִּיל אָמַר: מִה גְּדֹלוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ ה' מְאֹד עֲמֻקּוֹ מִחֲשַׁבְתֶּיךָ.
(תהילים צב, ו)

The elephant says: **How great are Your deeds, Hashem!**
Very deep are Your thoughts.

The elephant is the most wondrous of creatures. Its very name "פיל" is related to the word "פלא" – wonder. Its huge size, elongated nose, and overlarge ears have no similarity among other creatures. With all of its imposing composition of hundreds of kilograms of tough flesh and a pair of ivory tusks, it feeds on nothing more foreboding than simple vegetation.

It is such a different animal from others that one who sees it may be obliged to bless “Meshaneh Habrios”, meaning, “Blessed is He who makes creatures different”. Its strangeness shows Hashem’s greatness in creating creatures of all types.

Yet, its extreme features are all necessary and perfectly adapted for its survival. Its titanic size renders it invulnerable to predators¹. If it would have been a carnivore it is unlikely that it would be able to hunt enough meat to satisfy its diet of survival. If not for its trunk the only way it could reach the ground to feed would be if it had a long neck like a giraffe, however, to have a neck so long would have made it vulnerable when it had to fight with other mighty and aggressive elephants. So too with all of its features and dimensions.

All of its strangeness was fashioned with wisdom deeper than we possess and all of it, coupled with its incomparable size, is a song to its Creator: “How great are Your deeds, Hashem! Very deep are Your thoughts.”

Living with Song

The elephant’s song is an excerpt from Mizmor Shir Leyom Hashabbos – the song that will only truly be sung when the world reaches its final state of perfection. Its song is a call to realize that Hashem’s deeds are great and for good purpose, even if our minds do not always understand them.

Man is to sing from whichever vantage point he resides. The strong and wealthy thank Hashem for every element of goodness they have been given and for the success granted to their endeavors. The weak and poor thank him for sustaining them and protecting them from toppling.²

Standing in the orchestra of the world, do not crane your neck to try read the music notes of your neighbor. Your instrument and part are unique and unchangeable. Rejoice in your lot and play your part wholeheartedly. The Master Composer has arranged a song too perfect for your comprehension.

¹ See Malbim.

² Mesilas Yesharim.