

PEREK SHIRA- THE SONG OF THE SUN



שָׁמֶשׁ אָמַר: שָׁמֶשׁ יָרַח עָמְדוּ זָבְלוּ לְאוֹר חֲצִיָּה יִהְיוּ
לְנֹגַהּ בְּרַק חֲנִיתֶךָ.

(חבקוק ג, יא)

The sun says: **The sun and the moon each stood in its place. By the light of Your arrows they shall go forth, by the glow of Your spearhead.**

The sun is a giant sphere of burning hydrogen and helium, comprising more than 99% of the total mass of our solar system. Temperatures at its core can reach 15 million degrees Celsius. Such heat would cause it to explode and scatter, were it not for its immense gravitational pull that holds it together, allowing it to release only heat-energy which is essential for all life on earth.¹

Clearly, this massive and brilliant servant of God was created only in order to benefit the relatively diminutive dwellers on earth, primarily mankind. In fact, "sun" in Hebrew is "*shemesh*," a derivative of the word "*shamash*," servant, referring to its role of serving mankind.² With its gravity, it holds the earth in perpetual orbit, and provides for it. It nourishes all earthly life, warms the atmosphere, influences weather patterns, and marks the passage of time. It illuminates the darkness, stimulates the spirit, and gladdens the heart.

Not surprisingly, the sun was the chief object of idol-worship in ancient times. Even kings would prostrate themselves before it each morning. Although idolatry contradicts the very purpose of Creation – to reveal Hashem's presence in His world – He nevertheless showers His kindness upon the world by allowing the sun to shine. And in contrast to the sun-worshippers, the Jewish people rise each morning, some as early as dawn, and bless Hashem, the Fashioner of Luminaries, for shining His goodness daily upon His creations.

1 Scientific facts from NASA.

ע' ספר תזרח השמש לר"נ מברסלב זצ"ל 2

Shortly after the Exodus from Egypt, Korach instigated a revolt against Moshe's leadership. The Sages teach³ that in response to this disgrace of Hashem's righteous servant and prophet, the sun and the moon refused to shine, demanding instead that Hashem deal justice. Hashem admonished the sun and the moon sternly, "Each day, people throughout the world bow down to you, yet you shine nonetheless and do not protest for the sake of My honor. And now, you protest for the sake of flesh and blood?"

Every day since, the sun and moon hesitate to go forth and shine. Abiding that lesson, they fear that mankind will become deluded by their light and thereby fail to discern the world's true Benefactor. Choosing to hide His kindness within nature, Hashem summons forth these luminaries anyway for the well-being of the world, while still preserving the opportunity for those who honestly seek His presence to discover Him.

It is this idea that the sun, which is the primary luminary of the world, sings about each day. It declares that, along with the moon, they both wish to stand still in their places in protest of those who dishonor Hashem by erroneously glorifying them. But that, in His largesse, Hashem overlooks His own honor, and figuratively employs His "arrows and spears" to command them to come forth and shine.

At dawn, the sun breaks through the darkness, rising steadily, crowning the heavens at its zenith. But then, it descends, bowing westward, to the direction of the Divine Presence. As it gradually weakens and then disappears into the horizon, it submits to Hashem, signifying that He is the One and Only Power of the universe.

Section Two: Living with Song

The sun above us is a constant reminder that Hashem is the ultimate Light and the source of all goodness. For all of its blazing luster, it is only expressing a minute measure of Hashem's own Divine magnanimous splendor.⁴ It is also symbolic of Hashem's Torah, which enlightens the world spiritually.⁵ Its very existence is a bold, bright song testifying to Hashem's unrivaled and everlasting grandeur and goodness He displays to His world.

The sun never misses a day, a lesson we strive to emulate. However, at the time of Yehoshua's battle of Giv'on (גיבעון), the sun was bidden to stand still so that the Jewish army could complete the battle while it was still day. And it did as it was commanded. Here, too, in ceasing to appear when Hashem did not wish it to, the sun demonstrated that the sole purpose of its daily crossing of the sky is for the sake of its Creator.⁶

We are asked to do something similar. On the day of Shabbos, we are enjoined to stand still from our business matters entirely, to the point of not even discussing them. With this, we have the Divine opportunity to testify that our involvements during the rest of the week are also in service of Hashem, and ultimately for the sake of the Creator.

3 נדרים לט: 3

4 תלמוד 4

5 ע"פ משמעות תהלים יט 5

6 יהושע י', יב 6

Our Divine souls within us bear the light of Hashem. Just as the sun's beams radiate a joyful Heavenly service, we can conduct ourselves with a powerful and positive energy that is a daily source of warmth and uplift for those in our orbit. At the same time, we best remember not to allow our capabilities, energies, and successes to blind us from the Source of them all. We ought to be grateful for our G-d given talents, assets, and accomplishments, and not seek to glorify ourselves on their account.

The sun transforms night into day. So too, we have the capacity to illuminate our lives and the lives of those around us, revealing Hashem's glory in His world.