

Bereshit Rabbah 1:10

In the beginning God created (Gen. 1:1a).

Rabbi Jonah said in R. Levi's name: Why was the world created with a *bet*? Just as the bet is closed at the sides but open in front, so you are not permitted to investigate what is above and what is below, what is before and what is behind.

Bar Kappara quoted: *You have but to inquire about bygone ages that came before you, ever since God created man on earth (Deut. 4:32a).* You may speculate from the day that days were created, but you may not speculate on what was before that. *From one end of heaven to the other (Deut. 4:32b)* you may investigate, but you may not investigate what was before this.

Rabbi Judah ben Pazzi lectured on the Creation story, in accordance with this interpretation of Bar Kappara.

Why was it created with a *bet*? To teach you that there are two worlds.

Another interpretation: Why with a *bet*? Because it connotes blessing (*berachah* בְּרָכָה). And why not with an *alef*? Because it connotes cursing (*arur* אָרוּר).

Another interpretation: Why not with an *alef*? In order not to provide a justification for heretics to plead, "How can the world endure, seeing that it was created with the language of cursing?" Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, said, "Lo, I will create it with the language of blessing, and would that it may stand!"

Another interpretation: Why with a *bet*? A *bet* has two projecting points, one pointing upward and the other backward. We ask it, "Who created you?" And the *bet* reveals the upward point saying, "The One above created me." "And what is His [God's] name?" And the *bet* reveals the backward point saying, "Adonai is His name."

Rabbi Leazar ben Abinah said in R. Aha's name: For twenty-six generations the *alef* complained before the Holy One, blessed be He, pleading before Him: "Sovereign of the Universe! I am the first of the letters, yet You did not create Your world with me!" God answered: "The world and its fullness were created for the sake of the Torah alone. Tomorrow, when I come to reveal My Torah at Sinai, I will commence with none but you: *I (anochi* אֲנֹכִי *am Adonai* אֲדֹנָי *your God*" (Ex. 20:2).

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