BERESHIT: What was God’s last creation?

MATTER: “In the beginning God created heavens and earth”. That is, He created matter: (1) The microcosm, molecules, atoms, and subatomic particles, and (2) the macrocosm: 200 billion galaxies, with 200 billion stars each, with an inestimable number of planets around each star. Within this vast universe, there is a unique and singular celestial body: Earth, a planet located at an exquisitely fine-tuned distance from the sun: the precise distance required to have an average temperature of 14 degrees C, which allows for the existence of water in its liquid form.

LIFE: Then on the Fifth Day, after creating everything necessary to sustain life: Earth’s atmosphere, the oceans, the continents, the plants and fashioning the solar system, HaShem created animals. On that day HaShem created: reptiles, birds, arthropods, amphibians, and fish. What do they have in common, all these creatures? That they are oviparous (egg-laying creatures).

LANGUAGE: In the Sixth Day, HaShem created mammals. And in that same day, God created the first human being. A creature that shares many physical traits with other mammals, but it is distinguished from them by an element that makes it unique and categorically different from other living things: the *neshama* (soul). To understand what is the *neshama*, at its most basic level, I prefer to use the word “mind”. Which means: 1. The ability to think and to imagine. 2. Free will: the ability to obey or disobey God, the possibility to chose between good and bad, the ability to repent and ask forgiveness. 3. And one more very important element brought by Targum Onqelos: “*ruah memalela*“, human beings can “talk”, that is: think with words, enunciate sounds, or write signs, and combine those to create sentences and express ideas or emotions. *Ruah memalela* is the “linguistic intelligence” man was endowed with.

EMPATHY: The story of Creation follows a pattern a progressive (you could almost call it “evolutionary”) order, where each element that is created is greater than the previous, and inferior to the one that will follow. Now, the latest creation

of HaShem was not man. The last thing HaShem created was “woman”. Within this scheme of “progressive Creation”, what is that characterizes women? What makes a woman different, in a sense, “superior” than man, in the context of the Creation narrative? Two thousand years ago, the rabbis of the Midrash gave a very compelling explanation. They said *bina yetera nitena laisha*, woman was given a “superior” intelligence (superior *to man’s*). What does it mean? Modern neuroscientist Simon Baron-Cohen, among many others, explains that the female brain is structured in a way that communication does not depend exclusively on language. Women are NOT limited to words (1) to express themselves and especially (2) to understand (decipher) what another human being expresses (this is what allows a mother to “understand” the needs of her baby, a being that for two years does not communicate through words). Women, says Baron Cohen, are able to “read” situations and understand what another person feels, wants or needs without the medium of words. More than emotional intelligence, I would call this capacity “communicative intelligence”. Or as Baron-Cohen says: “empathy” (superlative empathy!).Thus, reading between the lines of the story of Creation we can see that HaShem first creates matter, then life, then semantic intelligence and then empathic intelligence. We should realize that the more we understand the world around us, the better we appreciate the infinite wisdom of the Book of Books.