

## **In the beginning (Hashem) created. (1:1)**

The *Talmud (Megillah 9a)* tells us about king Ptolemy, who gathered seventy two elders and implored them to translate the *Torah* into Greek. Rather than translating it in the correct form, in their translation they wrote ",hatrc trc ohekt" - "*Hashem created the Beginning.*" *Rashi* attributes the deviation from the original text to logical reasoning. One would not have expected the name of the Creator to precede the creation itself (*M'harsha*). Therefore, had the elders preserved the sequence of the original text, Ptolemy might have misconstrued the Greek word for "*in the beginning*" to be the proper name for another deity who had created Hashem.

*Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita*, questions this hypothesis. Why should the *Torah* make a statement at the onset which could be misunderstood? He explains that the *Torah's* intent was specifically to be ambiguous in order to communicate the proper attitude toward *Torah* study. *Torah* is given to those who seek its truth. Indeed, as *Chazal* note, at the end of these three words, ohekt trc ,hatrc, the Hebrew letters which comprise the word ",nt" or "truth". One whose approach to *Torah* study is not honest will inevitably find ways to distort its truth.

Often we meet people who regrettably strayed from the prescribed path of worship. They may defend their attitude by citing questions regarding the philosophy and traditional values of Judaism. One must understand, however, that the moral posture of the questioner is probably the single most important factor in any critique of Judaism. Some questions remain unanswered no matter what position one adopts. Other questions disappear immediately upon the questioner's change of orientation. Furthermore, one's level of tolerance for unaddressed issues is often consistent with the perspective from which he views them. One who is nurtured in an atmosphere that is both meaningful and rewarding will not be distressed as acutely as one who does not enjoy such a positive milieu.

The religious believer exalts in his ability to serve the Divine. His motivation emanates from a pure love for Hashem and His *Torah*. Questions and ambiguities are not obstacles in his chosen course. He seeks only the opportunity for a deepened understanding of Hashem's imperative, not a rationale to fulfill it. As we once again begin the *Torah*, the greatest code of truth, we must rededicate ourselves to studying it from a committed orientation. For the believer there are no questions, and for the non-believer there are no answers.