

THE MOON WAS JEALOUS: *UNDERSTANDING THE FORCES OF NATURE*

Background

ספר בראשית פרק א

טז) וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת שְׁנֵי הַמָּאֲרוֹת הַגְּדֹלִים אֶת הַמָּאוֹר הַגָּדֹל לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת הַמָּאוֹר הַקָּטָן לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֶת הַכּוֹכָבִים

And HASHEM made the two large luminaries (light sources): the large one to rule over the day, and the small one to rule over the night, and the stars.

רש"י על בראשית פרק א פסוק טז

טז) המאורות הגדולים - שוים נבראו ונתמעטה הלבנה על שקטרגה ואמרה א"א לשני מלכים שישתמשו בכתר אחד ואת הכוכבים - ע"י שמיעט את הלבנה (ב"ר מ"ו) הרבה צבאיה להפיס דעתה

Rashi: *The large luminaries — They were created as equals, and the moon became smaller because it complained. It claimed, "It is impossible for two kings to wear one crown." Since the moon made itself smaller, HASHEM increased its servants to appease it.*

Questions

The sun, the moon, and the stars are inanimate objects. They have no consciousness, no mode of cognition, and no emotional system. Yet Rashi is quoting a Gemara that states that the moon was "jealous," that HASHEM felt bad for the moon and then "appeased it." How are we to understand these events that seem to attribute very human characteristics to inanimate objects?