THE WEISS EDITION

בראשית

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Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

Lightpoints

לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח הרה"ת הרה"ג ישעיהו זושא

ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם

נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט התשפ"ב

תנצב"ה

בראשית
Bereishis

1:1 | א:א

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ

In the beginning, G-d created the heaven and the earth.

Seeking Aleph

The first letter in the Torah is ב—the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Everything in the Torah is precise, so by beginning with the second letter rather than the first, the Torah indicates that the studied word of the Torah is "Part 2," and we must preface our study with "Part 1."

What is the Torah's "Part 1"?

The prophet Yirmiyahu lamented the exile of the Jewish people from the Land of Israel and identified its cause, saying, "Why is the land ruined, withered like a wilderness, with no one passing through? Said G-d, 'Because they have forsaken My Torah.'"[1] The Talmud asserts that the abandonment of G-d's Torah that the prophet refers to was "that they did

1. Yirmiyahu 9:11–12.

not first utter the blessing over the Torah [before studying it]."[2] The Jews in Yirmiyahu's era did not forsake the study of the Torah, yet their neglect of the *berachah* indicated that although they appreciated the Torah's wisdom, they did not focus on its holiness and Divine origin.[3]

This passage in the Talmud illustrates that studying and understanding its teachings is only one aspect of our relationship with the Torah. Before approaching the Torah with our tools of intellect, we must establish and affirm the other aspect of our relationship—our primary objective in Torah study: to attach ourselves to the Divinity of the Torah that transcends human comprehension. As the Talmud emphasizes, we must "*first* utter the blessing over the Torah," in which we bless and acknowledge G-d, "the Giver of the Torah." Thereafter, when we study the Torah, we attach ourselves not only to the Torah's wisdom and ideas, but to the G-dliness of the Torah as well.

The Torah therefore starts with a ב, to remind us that first we must recognize that our primary goal is to unify ourselves, through our Torah study, with the Giver of the Torah. Then we can proceed to part 2—the letter ב of בראשית, with which we begin the process of reading and understanding the Torah.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 15, pp. 1–3

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2. Bava Metzia 85b.

3. See Bach, Orach Chaim 47.

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In the beginning, G-d created the heaven and the earth.

The First Question

Rashi's very first comment on the Torah begins with a question: "Said Rabbi Yitzchak: The Torah should not have begun from anywhere other than 'This month shall be for you...,'[4] the first mitzvah given to the Jewish people. Why then does it begin with 'In the beginning...'?" Only after answering this question does Rashi begin his interpretation of the first verse in the Torah.

The order of Rashi's comments is puzzling. The objective of Rashi's commentary is, in his own words, "[to teach] the simple meaning of the Scripture."[5] If so, why does he begin with a theoretical question about the Torah's structure before addressing the difficulties in the literal meaning of the verse?

This unusual opening serves as an introduction to Rashi's commentary throughout the Torah, and in fact to Torah study in general. With this opening discussion, Rashi addresses the first question that a child, or anyone, should ask as they begin to study Torah, even before they begin to analyze its words.

A child begins his study of the Torah expecting that in the Torah he will find G-d's message to the world and the laws that He gave to the Jewish people (some of which the child has already begun to observe). When the first thing he reads is the story of Creation, he instinctively asks, "What does this

4. Shemos 12:2.
5. Rashi, Bereishis 3:8.

story have to do with G-d's expectations from me? Why am I reading about Creation, or any other story, instead of reading about the mitzvos that G-d commanded the Jewish people?" As such, the first thing that Rashi must explain is that this story, too, contains a message for the Jewish people. Only then can he continue with his interpretation of the Torah's words.

This explains another peculiarity in Rashi's words. Normally, Rashi answers the difficulties in the verse without spelling out the questions. Here, however, Rashi elaborates on the question, thereby emphasizing the validity of this question, and teaching us the attitude with which we must approach every aspect of the Torah. Like the child who begins to read the story of Creation, we must constantly ask, "What does this teaching in the Torah tell me about G-d's expectations of me today?"

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 5, p. 2, fn. 6;
Toras Menachem 5744, vol. 1, pp. 349–353

1:31 | א:לא

וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי

...And it was evening and it was morning, the sixth day.

You Will, but When Already?

At the conclusion of its account of the first day of Creation, the Torah sums up the day by saying, "It was evening and it was morning, one day." On the second day it concludes, "It was evening and it was morning, a second day." On the third day, "...a third day," and so on. On the sixth day of Creation, however, the Torah concludes with, "It was evening and it was morning, *the* sixth day." Based on the Talmud,[6] Rashi explains that the Torah thereby hints to another well-known and important "sixth day"—the sixth day of the month of Sivan, the day the Jewish people accepted the Torah 2448 years after Creation. Meaning, says the Talmud, that "G-d stipulated with all of creation" that its existence was contingent on the Jewish people accepting the Torah, which would eventually take place on the 6th of Sivan.

Why does the Torah allude to this important "stipulation" by highlighting the date the Jewish people accepted the Torah, the 6th of Sivan, and not with a more general allusion to the giving of the Torah?

In doing so, the Torah seeks to demonstrate the unparalleled greatness before G-d of the actual deeds of a Jew in this world.

6. Shabbos 88a.

Unlike the creation that waited in abeyance, "uncertain" if the Jewish people would accept the Torah, before G-d there were no doubts. G-d knows the future just as He knows the present and the past, and the Jewish people's future acceptance of the Torah was already an established fact. Yet despite His advance knowledge, G-d still "marked" the significance of "the sixth" day of Sivan (hinted in "the sixth day" of creation), demonstrating the importance of this future date. Because despite G-d's knowledge that the Jewish people would accept the Torah (and the significance of their future acceptance of the Torah before Him even before the fact), nothing can compare to the moment in earthly time when the Jewish people actually accepted the Torah.

Though the future is as real to G-d as the present and the past, He still awaits the moment that a Jew in this world will act and realize his potential.

—Toras Menachem, Sefer Hamaamarim Melukat, vol. 2, pp. 145–146

2:3 | ב:ג

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹקִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בוֹ
שָׁבַת מִכָּל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים לַעֲשׂוֹת

G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, for on it
He abstained from all His work that G-d created to do.

The New Perfect

On the seventh day from the start of Creation, G-d rested from His creation of the world—"His work that G-d created to do."

What is the meaning of this phrase? Would it not have been more accurate to refer to Creation as the work "that G-d created and did"?

The Midrash explains that indeed G-d created the world "to do"—i.e., to be perfected by humankind. In the words of the Midrash, "Anything created in the six days of Creation requires enhancement."[7]

This perspective seems to contradict the oft-repeated teaching of our Sages that the world was entirely perfect and complete upon creation.[8] Which one is it? Was the world perfect upon creation, or does it require further improvement—"to do"?

These two views are not contradictory, however, when we consider the context of the verse that refers to creation as the work "that G-d created to do"—a verse which speaks about the seventh day, Shabbos.

In the first six days of Creation, the creation met all "expectations": it was perfect and complete. When the seventh

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7. See Bereishis Rabbah 11:6 and commentaries ad loc.
8. See Bereishis Rabbah 12:6, 13:3 and 14:7.

day arrived, however, and G-d sanctified that day as Shabbos, the additional holiness drawn into the world made it suddenly possible for the world to attain greater heights than it had been capable of before, rendering its initial state of perfection deficient. Thus began the requirement for humankind "to do"—to bring creation to its newly endowed potential, for greater potential obligates greater responsibility and accomplishment.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 25, pp. 14–17

THE LIGHTPOINTS PROJECT WAS MADE POSSIBLE
THROUGH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT *of*
Rabbi Moshe Aaron Tzvi and Mrs. Ruty Weiss