



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Bereishis

October 16, 2020

A Taste of Torah Character Development

by Rabbi Nesanel Kipper

This week's parsha takes us back to the very beginning of the creation of the world. The verses describe in detail how the world came to be: Beginning with absolute emptiness, and culminating in our beautiful world, all with ten utterances from Hashem.

The Torah presents a book of laws, a blueprint for how we should live our lives. Through the 613 mitzvos written in the Torah, we learn how to conduct ourselves according to Torah law.

Rashi (1:1), in the name of Rav Yitzchok, asks a question. If the Torah is primarily a book of laws, why does it begin with Bereishis, which describes the entire process of the creation of the world? It would make more sense to begin the Torah in Parshas Bo in the Book of Shemos, when the first mitzvah, that of *Rosh Chodesh* (declaring the new month) was given to the Jewish People.

Rashi explains that the story of Creation provides the Jewish People with the ultimate rejoinder to the nations of the world who accuse us of wrongfully claiming the land of Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel) as our own. Should they challenge us saying, "You are not the original inhabitants of this land," the Jewish People will know and have the confidence to proclaim that there were no "original inhabitants" of this world, either. Hashem is the original Title Holder. He promised our forefathers the land of *Eretz Yisrael* and He decides who should receive the land.

The above response explains the relevancy of the story of Creation. However, why is there a need for all

the other *parshios* (sections of Torah) in between the story of Creation and the first mitzvah given to the Jewish Nation? Why the need for the story of the early generation of humanity, the Patriarchs and Twelve Tribes, and the Egyptian exile? Why doesn't the Torah go straight from Parshas Bereishis to Parshas Bo?

The Nesivos Shalom (Rabbi Sholom Noach Berezovsky, the Slonimer Rebbe; 1911-2000) provides an answer based upon the words of Rabbi Chaim Vital (1542-1620). Rav Chaim notes that there is a crucial element to Torah observance that is not included in the 613 mitzvos: *middos*, character traits. Why is such a fundamental part of Torah observance left out? He explains that *middos* are a prerequisite for Torah. Without refinement of one's *middos*, one cannot fully integrate the content of Torah and it will not accomplish what it was designed to do. *Middos* are therefore not included within the 613 mitzvos, as they exist on a different plane entirely. Proper refinement of *middos* must precede any discussion of Torah and mitzvos.

This approach still requires explanation, though. While *middos* cannot be considered within the same system as the mitzvos themselves, how could the Torah remain silent about them? From where are we to take instruction and inspiration about improving character traits if not from the Torah?

This question, says the Nesivos Shalom, is the answer to the importance of the Torah's narrative from Creation until the mitzvah of *Rosh Chodesh*; they are

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Stories for the Soul

Guarding the Shabbos

Reb Yaakov Yosef Herman (1880-1967), who built a successful business in New York City in the early 1900's, was legendary for his Torah observance, Torah knowledge, and kindness to others. In his later years, Reb Yaakov Yosef immigrated to Eretz Yisrael. Due to unforeseen delays, his ship arrived at the port in Israel late Friday. The lift containing all of his family's possessions was unloaded on the dock.

Reb Yaakov Yosef was told that the lift had to be removed immediately. He replied that he had to leave, and had no time to take his lift, because Shabbos was fast approaching. "If you come back Saturday night, nothing will be left. It will all be stolen," said the officer.

"So be it!" said Reb Yaakov Yosef. "I will not violate Shabbos!" That entire Shabbos, R' Yaakov Yosef gave not a thought to the fact that he had probably lost all that he owned. He celebrated Shabbos with the same fervor and joy as he usually did.

On Motzoei Shabbos, Mr. Herman returned to the dock to see if any of his possessions were still left. As he approached, a British soldier appeared, exclaiming that he had expected Mr. Herman to arrive immediately after dark. He went on to explain that after his departure on Erev Shabbos, the commanding officer, amazed at Mr. Herman's devotion to keeping Shabbos, had ordered that the soldiers keep watch over the Hermans' possessions.

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Kollel Happenings

KOLLEL CLASSES CONTINUE VIA ZOOM MEETING

The Kollel is continuing many of its classes and offering new classes via Zoom Meeting. You can tune in to live classes online or call in on a phone. For a full schedule and the links and phone numbers to access this treasure trove of Torah, visit www.denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

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HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

Halacha Riddles

New feature! Every week, an intriguing halachic question will be posed. The answer will be provided the following week.

This week's question: What should be on one's table, even if not being used?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Menashe ben Yisrael - Part XXV

In 1657, Rabbi Menashe was given an annual state pension of £100 by the English government. However, he died in November of 1657 before he could make use of the funds. He died

in the Netherlands as he was bringing the body of his son Samuel home for burial. Rabbi Menashe is buried at the Beth Haim cemetery in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel in the Netherlands.

A Taste of Torah

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included to teach us proper *middos*. In fact, our Sages (Avodah Zara 25a) refer to the Book of Bereishis as *Sefer Hayashar*, the Book of the Straight, a description of the developed *middos* of *Avos* (Patriarchs), the founders of the Jewish Nation, which set the stage for the giving of Torah and mitzvos later.

In addition to gleaning lessons on proper *middos* from our ancestors and other righteous individuals, we also learn about bad *middos* and the dire consequences they produce.

Our Sages tell us that there are three key bad *middos* which will drive a person out of this world, *kinah*, *ta'avah*, and *kavod*, jealousy, lust and honor. Each of them is represented in Bereishis.

Jealousy is represented in the story of Kayin and Hevel. Kayin was so consumed by jealousy when Hashem responded favorably to Hevel's offering that it drove him to kill his own brother.

Lust is represented in the story of the Generation of the Flood, when their insatiable desire for physical pleasures caused them to be wiped out from the world.

Honor is represented in the story of the Generation of the Dispersion. Their drive for honor and recognition led them to construct an edifice and attempt a rebellion against G-d Himself.

The Book of Bereishis shows us that with the correct refinement of *middos*, like our holy *Avos*, we can reach the greatest of heights in our observance of Torah and *mitzvos*. On the other end of the spectrum, we see that if one allows bad *middos* to reign, it can lead to the most devastating destruction.

May we all learn and internalize the proper lessons from the Torah on how to conduct ourselves, as well as how not to conduct ourselves, and reach the greatest heights in our *middos* and observance of Torah and mitzvos.

Stories for the Soul

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Not a thing was missing!

In this week's parsha, the Torah describes the very first Shabbos, following the six days of Creation. As

Hashem rested from worldly matters, all Jews rest as well, recognizing that ultimately Hashem is the One who runs the world, not we with our actions and efforts.

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