



Fascinating excerpts and intriguing discourses from the works of the great Gaon and kabbalist Morainu HaRav Shimshon Chaim ben Reb Nachman Michael Nachmani
Author of *Zera Shimshon* and *Toldos Shimshon* who lived almost 300 years ago.

HE PROMISED THAT WHOEVER LEARNS HIS WORKS WILL SEE HELP WITH CHILDREN, LONG LIFE, AND PARNASSAH. MANY PEOPLE CAN ATTEST TO THEIR PERSONAL SALVATIONS!

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Parshas Breishis

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: (בראשית א/א)

In the beginning *Hashem* created the heavens and the earth. (*Bereishis* 1:1)

The first letter in the Torah is the letter *beis* and there are many opinions in *Chazal* why *Hashem* chose specifically this letter to begin the *Torah*. One of the opinions in the *Medrash* is that it is because the letter *beis* represents *beracha* (blessing).

Zera Shimshon asks that in *Tehillim* (119:160) it is written, "*Rosh devarecha emes*" ("The beginning of Your words is truth). Since the *Torah* is *Hashem's* word, "Your words" in this *possuk* refers to the *Torah*. The *possuk* therefore seems to be saying that the *Torah* should begin with *emes*. If so, shouldn't it begin with an *alef*, the first letter of *emes*, rather than with a *beis*, which represents *beracha*?

It is written in *Devarim* (25:14-15): "You shall not have in your house varying measures, large and small. A fully accurate, just weight, you shall have; you are to have whole and honest measures in order that you live long on the land that *Hashem*, your Lord, is giving you." The simple understanding of these *pessukim* is that the *Torah* prohibits even owning inaccurate weights and measures in our homes and businesses, even if we don't actually use them when buying or selling, because having them around could eventually cause us to cheat. Rather one should own only precise weights and measures. The reward for this honesty is that *Hashem* will give you long life on the land that He gives you.

The *Medrash* (*Vayikra Rabbah* 15:7), however, reads it differently: when there is, "a fully accurate, just weight",

meaning when a person deals honestly, then "you will have", meaning *Hashem* will bless you with abundance. And the contrary, "You shall not have", meaning you will lose all of your belongings, if there is, "in your house varying measures, large and small."

According to the *Medrash* the *Torah* is teaching that the result of being honest is the *beracha* of long life and the punishment for being dishonest is poverty.

Zera Shimshon learns from this *Medrash* that *beracha* and *emes* are interconnected. Blessing comes through honesty, so the *beracha* represented by the *beis* has its source in the *emes* that preceded it.

The *Torah's* opening with *beis*—the letter that represents *beracha*—does not, then, contradict "*Rosh devarecha emes*." Since *emes* is the source of *beracha*, beginning with *beis* is, in a sense, also beginning with *emes*.

Yet a question remains: even if *beracha* results from *emes*, why not begin with *alef* itself, the first letter of *emes*?

Zera Shimshon answers that the *Torah* is teaching us an important practical lesson: a person doesn't lose by being honest; he only gains. It may take time, but in the end it is always worth it.

There are times when a person may feel that telling the truth or dealing honestly will cost him money or cause him to lose out. Someone else may seem to come out

ahead precisely because he was less careful about *emes*, while the honest person appears to be left behind.

The *beis* of *Bereishis* teaches us not to judge the outcome by what we see in the moment. The *Torah* begins with a *beis*, the symbol of *beracha*, in place of an *alef*, the letter of *emes*, because the *alef* was the source of the *beis*, which represents *beracha*. Right from the very beginning of the *Torah*, we are taught that *beracha* flows from *emes*. What may at first appear to be a loss caused by honesty can ultimately be the very thing that brings *beracha*.

Zera Shimshon asks that a *Gemara* in *Yoma* (75a) seems to contradict the second part of the *Medrash*, which says that if a person is not honest in his business dealings, he will lose all that he has.

The *Gemara* there teaches that *Hashem's* ways differ from those of man. When a person is angered by someone, he may try to deprive him completely; *Hashem*, however, even when He curses, still leaves some element of good. The *nachash hakadmoni* (the primordial serpent) was cursed, yet its food is always readily available; *Canaan* was cursed, yet he eats and drinks what his master does; woman was cursed, yet men pursue her; and the earth was cursed, yet everyone is sustained from it.

From this *Gemara* it appears that even when a *klalah* remains in force, there can still be some type of good and *beracha*. Yet from the *Medrash* concerning false weights it appears that once a *klalah* applies, all good is taken away. How can these two teachings be reconciled?

Zera Shimshon resolves this with a *Gemara* in *Avodah Zarah* (4b). In matters of *Torah*, about which it is written

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וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים תִּדְשָׁא הָאָרֶץ דְּשָׂא עֵשֶׂב מִזְרִיעַ זֶרַע עֵץ פְּרִי עֹשֶׂה פְרִי לְמִינֵוּ אֲשֶׁר זֶרְעוּבֹו עַל־הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי־כֵן (בראשית א/יא)
And *Hashem* said, “Let the earth be covered with lawns of seed bearing grass, fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit of its own type with the seed in it.” And it was so. (*Bereishis* 1/11)

The *Gemara* in *Chullin* (60a) relates that R. Channa ben Papa said: When *Hashem* commanded the trees to produce fruit “each according to its kind”, the grasses, seeing this, reasoned among themselves: “If *Hashem* commanded the trees, which are tall, separate, and distinct species, to reproduce only their own kind, then certainly we, who grow closely and tend to intermingle, must be careful not to mix with other kinds.”

When the *Malach ha'Olam* heard the grasses' conclusion, he exclaimed, “*Yehi chevod Hashem le'olam, yismach Hashem b'ma'asav*”—“May the glory

emes, *Hashem* does not act *lifnim mishuras hadin*, beyond the letter of the law. But in matters of *din*, about which *emes* is not written, *Hashem* does act *lifnim mishuras hadin*. According to this, there are two types of curses. A curse that comes through the *Torah* and its *mitzvos*, such as the curse for false weights, has no element of *beracha* at all. The *Torah* is *emes*, and *Hashem* does not go beyond the letter of the law.

However, the curses of the earth, the *nachash*, *Kenaan* and *Chava* did not come through the *Torah* and its *mitzvos*. They came as a penalty and punishment (*knas v'onesh*). That is *din*, where *Hashem* does go beyond the letter of the law, and therefore some element of *beracha* remains.

Most of us do not need to be convinced that honesty is right. We were brought up with that truth and it is part of us. The difficulty comes when honesty seems to cost us something. We do not immediately see the *beracha* that is supposed to follow; on the contrary, what we often see first is the loss. At such a moment, it can be hard to truly believe that being honest will eventually pay off.

That is precisely why the *Torah* places this lesson in its very first letter. The *beis* of *beracha* comes after the *alef* of *emes*. We may see the *emes* first and have to wait before seeing the *beracha*, but the *Torah* is teaching us from its very beginning that the *beracha* will come.

(Adapted by Rabbi Shevach Pepper from *Zera Shimshon Parshas Bereishis Derush* 1)

of *Hashem* endure forever; *Hashem* will rejoice in His works.”

In other words, the *Malach ha'Olam* rejoiced upon hearing that the plants had learned from the trees to reproduce only “after their own kind,” and he burst into song, praising *Hashem*.

Zera Shimshon asks: what was so significant about the plants' decision that it caused such joy to the *Malach ha'Olam*? And why would an angel charged with governing the entire world rejoice and sing praise over

something seemingly limited to the behavior of grasses alone?

Zera Shimshon answers in light of the *Medrash* (*Yalkut Shemoni Bereishis remez 13*) that when *Hashem* created the world *Hashem* asked the *Torah* (which was created before *Hashem* created the world) what was its opinion about creating man? The *Torah* objected, explaining that man's very nature is bound to the physical world—he is drawn to pleasure, tempted by desire, and easily swayed by the pull of material pursuits. Because of this, said the *Torah*, man will inevitably stumble and sin. His actions will anger *Hashem*, and as a result, *Hashem* will be compelled to punish or even destroy him.

The *Torah* reasoned that such a creation would threaten the harmony of existence itself. Better, it argued, that the world remains without mankind—so that all of creation could continue to function in perfect obedience to *Hashem's* will, free of rebellion, sin, and divine anger. In that state, the universe would endure in peace and stability, fulfilling its purpose without disruption.

The *Medrash* continues that *Hashem* replied to the *Torah* that He has a tremendous amount of patience and there is no need to worry that *Hashem* will destroy the world.

According to this, explains *Zera Shimshon*, when the *Malach* of the World heard that *Hashem* was about to create man he became frightened. He was afraid that the whole world, which is his responsibility to keep going, would soon be destroyed. It is similar to a warehouse manager who suddenly learns that the company owner has decided to hire an ex-convict—someone with a record of starting fights, stealing small items, and even setting businesses on fire. The manager would be gripped with fear, imagining the chaos that could follow—years of hard work keeping the warehouse orderly, secure, and efficient could collapse overnight. He pictures shelves overturned, goods stolen or burned, and the smooth routine he worked so hard to maintain thrown into disorder.

However, when he saw the grasses overcome their very nature—refraining from mixing with other species purely to carry out *Hashem's* command—the *Malach ha'Olam* was astonished. In that instant, his dread turned to hope, realizing that the world he was

entrusted to sustain might indeed endure after all. If even simple plants could overcome their natural instincts for the sake of *Hashem*, then surely man, too, could rise above his impulses and choose righteousness. The dread of inevitable destruction was replaced by confidence in mankind's potential—and with that uplifting realization, he burst forth in joyous song, praising *Hashem*.

Zera Shimshon adds that there is a strong allusion to this idea in the *possuk* the *Malach* of the world recited. It is written "May the glory of *Hashem* last forever; *Hashem* WILL rejoice in His works." This implies that when this praise was said, *Hashem* did not yet rejoice in His works but will only rejoice in the future. In other words, at the time of creation *Hashem* didn't have a reason to rejoice because the natural inclination of man is not too virtuous. It is only after man will overcome these tendencies is there reason for *Hashem* to rejoice.

This is not the only place where *Zera Shimshon* expresses this teaching—that a powerful urge toward *aveirah* is not proof of weakness or failure in *Hashem's* eyes. On the contrary, these struggles are hard wired in us, part of our divine mission. If we cannot escape them, we are meant to embrace them and face them head-on, recognizing that the temptations themselves were placed within us by *Hashem*. They are not our fault. But just as *Hashem* created us with these drives, He also gave us the inner strength to overcome them. Each victory over temptation brings true joy to *Hashem*, fulfilling the words "*Hashem* will rejoice in His works"—His works meaning every Jew who chooses right despite the struggle.

Last week, between *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkos*, a *mashgiach* I know shared with me a powerful and deeply moving story that had taken place a few days before. He told me about a *talmid* of his who, for years, had struggled in every *yeshivah* he attended. No matter how many times he tried, success seemed beyond his reach—he simply couldn't keep up, and he carried a heavy sense of discouragement wherever he went.

Eventually, he transferred to a different *yeshivah*, one that decided to launch a *mitvza*—an incentive program—to motivate the students. The offer was simple: whoever would learn the entire *Maseches Makkos* over *Elul* until *Yom Kippur* would receive a

prize. Something about this challenge awakened the boy. For the first time in his life, he applied himself fully, and to everyone's amazement—he succeeded!

When the *marshgiach* later called the father to tell him the news, the reaction was overwhelming. The father—and not only the mother—burst into tears of joy. Real wet ones. It was the first time they had ever heard such words about their son.

This is the kind of *simchah* we bring to Hashem when we overcome our own struggles and do His will despite the obstacles. Just as that father rejoiced in his son's hard-earned success, so too does Hashem rejoice in each of us when we fight through weakness and choose right, even when it feels almost impossible.

(Adapted from *Zera Shimshon Parshas Breishis Derush 3*)

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בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: (בראשית א/א)

In the beginning Hashem created the heavens and the earth. (*Bereishis 1:1*)

On the opening possuk of the parsha, Rashi writes: R. Yitzchak said, the Torah should have begun with “*This month shall be for you the first of the months,*” since it is the first mitzvah given to Yisroel. Why then does it begin with Creation? The answer is, because “*He declared to His people the strength of His works, to give them the heritage of nations.*” Meaning, if the nations say, “You are robbers for taking the land of the seven nations,” Yisroel can answer, “All the earth belongs to HaKadosh Baruch Hu; He created it and gave it to whom He pleased. It was His will to take it from them and give it to us.”

In simpler terms, R. Yitzchak asks why the Torah doesn't open with the first mitzvah, the laws of Pesach. He answers that it begins with Creation to show that Hashem owns the world and may grant land to whomever He wishes—thus defending Yisroel's right to Eretz Yisroel.

Zera Shimshon asks: how does this answer R. Yitzchak's question? The Torah still does not begin with a mitzvah—it begins with the claim to Eretz Yisroel.

He explains by introducing a deeper idea: the bond between Hashem and Klal Yisroel is not just Creator and creation but Chassan and Kallah. Various pessukim and Chazal describe this relationship as a divine marriage. Yet if so, there must be a *kesef kiddushin*—a token of value—sealing this union. What did Hashem give?

It might seem that the Torah and mitzvos themselves are the gift, but halachically the item must have a definable, finite value. Since Torah and mitzvos are infinite, they cannot serve this purpose. Therefore, *Zera Shimshon* explains, Hashem gave the *reward* for the mitzvos—the physical world and its blessings. As Pirkei Avos teaches, the world was created through ten utterances to grant reward to the tzaddikim and punishment to the resha'im. This makes the world itself the “marriage token” binding Hashem and Yisroel.

Now R. Yitzchak's question and answer align. His question was not simply why the Torah didn't start with laws, but why it didn't begin with the act that represents the “bond” between Hashem and His people. Initially, one might think mitzvos serve that role. But since their value is infinite, the Torah could not open with them.

By starting with Creation, the Torah presents the finite, tangible world—the medium through which Hashem rewards those who serve Him. This world thus becomes the symbolic “ring” of the divine marriage, formalizing the exclusive relationship between Hashem and Klal Yisroel.

In short, *Zera Shimshon* teaches that the Torah begins with Creation because the world itself—created to bestow reward—is the *kesef kiddushin* binding Hashem and His nation.

To dedicate a week of Zera Shimshon for a yahrtzeit, a zechus for a refuah or shidduch, or in honor of a simcha — contact:

Rabbi Shevach Pepper · Shevachp@gmail.com or in Israel 0527-132217.

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