



# The Path To Follow

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## GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

### The "Dust" of Lashon Harah

The Sages have said, "There are three sins for which man is punished in this world and on account of which he has no portion in the World to Come: Idolatry, immorality, and murder – and Lashon Harah is equal to all three." They have also said: "Whoever speaks Lashon Harah is as if he denied G-d, as it is written: 'Because of our tongues we shall prevail. Our lips are with us; who is master over us?' [Psalms 12:5]." Furthermore, the Sages state that Lashon Harah kills three people: The speaker, the one who believes him, and the person being discussed. The one who believes the speaker commits an even greater sin than the speaker himself. Some remarks are known as the "dust" of Lashon Harah, such as when a person says, "Who would have believed what became of so-and-so?" Or even, "Don't say a word to so-and-so. I don't want him to know what happened and what we said about him." Praising a person in front of his enemy also constitutes the "dust" of Lashon Harah, for when a person's enemy hears this praise, he will start disparaging him.

– Chafetz Chaim

## THE INFINITE WISDOM OF THE TORAH (BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is written, "I was then His nursling; I was then His delight every day, playing before Him at all times, playing in the inhabited areas of His earth. My delights are with the sons of man" (Proverbs 8:30-31). The Sages have said, 'Nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the creation of the world, the Torah was written and placed in the bosom of the Holy One, blessed be He, and it sang with the ministering angels, as it is written: 'I was then His delight every day, playing before Him at all times.' " We need to understand why the Holy One, blessed be He, rejoiced in the Torah during all that time, only giving it to man after a thousand generations. We must say that by this statement, Hashem is teaching everyone on earth that although the Torah was written 1,000 generations earlier, He never ceased to rejoice in it each day, and He found, as it were, more jewels in it which He did not find before. Now if such is the case for the Holy One, blessed be He, how much more does it apply for those born of women? Even if they were to live as long as the earth, they still would be unable to understand the equivalent of a single drop of water from the sea. The Torah's words are compared to water, as it is written: "Everyone who is thirsty, go to the water" (Isaiah 55:1), for just as water has no end, the Torah's words have no end.

The Sages have said, "It is impossible for a Beit Midrash to exist without finding new things in it [the Torah]." It is also said, "I will walk in broad pathways" (Psalms 119:45). Rashi explains that King David walked about freely in vastness. Similarly, the holy Torah is tremendously vast and no man can say, "I have reached the end of the Torah and understand it all." Even with his tremendous wisdom, King Solomon stated: "I said, 'I will be wise,' but it was far from me. What existed is elusive and so very deep. Who can fathom it?" (Ecclesiastes 7:23-24). Scripture states, "G-d gave wisdom and considerable understanding to Solomon, and greatness of heart as the sand upon the seashore" (I Kings 5:9), and the Sages explained that Solomon's wisdom exceeded the wisdom of all Israel, who are compared to the sand of the sea in number, as it is written: "The number of the Children of Israel will be like the sand of the sea" (Hosea 2:1). Nevertheless, Solomon's wisdom was still greater. In fact if his wisdom were placed on one side of the scale and theirs on the other, his wisdom would outweigh theirs. Despite all this, his wisdom was not greater than the Torah's, and he could not penetrate its deepest meanings. Even Moses, the father of the prophets – concerning whom the Sages have said that Hashem taught him Scripture, Mishnah, Halachot, Talmud, Tosaphot, Aggadot, and everything that every Torah scholar would ever say before his teacher – even from Moses the words of the Torah were hidden, for he did not completely understand them during his lifetime.

This is alluded to by a teaching of the Sages, for they said: "The Holy One, blessed be He, created the world only for the sake of three things that are called reshith: The Torah, Israel, and the fear of Heaven." Why are they called reshith? It is because they have a beginning, but not an end. As soon as a person enters the Beit Midrash to study Torah, he can no longer stop studying by thinking: "I've reached the end of the Torah," for King Solomon, the wisest of all men, would contradict him. Similarly, it is impossible for a person to achieve a complete fear of Heaven in this world, for no one feared Heaven more than Moses. In fact the Gemara states, "For Moses it [the fear of Heaven] was a small matter" (Berachot 33b). Nevertheless the verse states: "Because you did not believe Me to sanctify Me" (Numbers 20:12), which implies that Moses was lacking something. The Children of Israel are also called reshith,

thereby teaching us that the Jewish people will never be destroyed. In other words, it has a beginning but not an end, as it is written: "Yet despite all this, when they are in the land of their enemies I will not cast them away, nor will I loathe them to destroy them utterly" (Leviticus 26:44). Generally speaking, no person can say, "I've finished the Torah." If the Holy One, blessed be He – Who studied it for 1,000 generations and rejoiced in it during all that time – could say, "It has not become old before Me," how much more can a being of flesh and blood find jewels in it as he digs! In fact the Mishnah states, "Turn it over and over again, for everything is in it" (Pirkei Avot 5:21). The wisdom of the Torah differs from all other forms of wisdom. The more a person familiarizes himself with other forms of wisdom, the more he understands them, until he finally discovers their ultimate meaning. As for the Torah, the more discoveries a person makes and the more he plumbs its depths, the more he realizes just how deep it is! Even King Solomon did not realize this before having studied much more than any other Jew. The greater a person is, the more he realizes that the Torah is infinite. Thus it is written: "Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea" (Job 11:9).

We should not think that in the future, all Jews will know Torah and nobody will have to study it, for it is written: "Torah shall emanate from Me" (Isaiah 51:4). The Sages have interpreted this to mean: "New Torah explanations shall emanate from Me." This teaches us that even in the future, Hashem will uncover new Torah teachings for us, and therefore the holy Torah will never have an end; it has only a beginning. Just as the Torah is eternal and without end, the Jewish people are eternal and without end, as it is written: "The eternity of Israel does not lie" (I Samuel 15:29).

This is why Hashem began the Torah with the term bereshith, which can be divided into be-reshith. This teaches us that the world was created for two (beit) things that are called reshith, meaning the Torah and Israel. Rashi states: "This verse calls for a midrashic interpretation. ... As our rabbis stated, [G-d created the world] for the sake of the Torah, which is called reshith darko ['the beginning of His way' – Proverbs 8:22], and for the sake of Israel, who are called reshith tevuato ['the first of His crop' – Jeremiah 2:3]." If one were to ask why the word reshith is cited two (beit) times, whereas above it is stated that the world was created on account of three things (Torah, Israel, and the fear of Heaven), the answer is that the Torah and Israel will never change, not even in the era of Mashiach. As we have said, they will never have an end, only a beginning (reshith). Yet the fear of Heaven will change in the future world, during the era of Mashiach, as the Rambam writes: "During that time understanding, wisdom, and truth will prevail, as it is written: 'The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the L-RD as the waters cover the sea' [Isaiah 11:9]." We also read, "They shall no longer teach – each man his fellow, each man his brother – saying, 'Know the L-RD,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the L-RD" (Jeremiah 31:33). It is also stated, "I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). Therefore in the future, all Jews will be equal in their fear of Heaven. No one will fear G-d more than anyone else, and everyone will know Him, from the smallest to the greatest. This is because everyone will be able to perceive Him, and the fear of Heaven will be equal among them all. There will therefore be an end to the fear of Heaven during the era of Mashiach, but not an end to Torah or Israel. Thus it is stated bereshith, for two (beit) things that are called reshith – the Torah and Israel – which have only a beginning, not an end.

# MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

## Holy Garments

*It is written, “The L-RD G-d made for the man and his wife coats of skin, and He clothed them” (Genesis 3:21).*

The Sages have said, “This teaches us that the Holy One, blessed be He, made them priestly garments” (Baal HaTurim). The Midrash states, “They were garments of honor, which subsequent firstborn used” (Bamidbar Rabba 4:8). What exactly does this mean? Why did the first man wear priestly garments, since nobody at the time officiated in the Sanctuary? Furthermore, why did he wear garments of honor, ones befitting Shabbat, during the weekday?

This subject is explained in Sefer HaAkeida (end of article nine): “The Holy One, blessed be He, made for the man and his wife coats of skin, and He clothed them. This means that just as a garment is connected to the body...the light of the Torah, its mitzvot, and its warnings are a means for them to...rectify what the serpent ruined and return to a correct understanding of good and evil. It is written vayalbishem [‘and He clothed them’], much as it written: ‘And a spirit lavsha [clothed] Amasai’ [I Chronicles 12:19].”

This means that Hashem in His goodness gave man the ability to conquer the temptations of the physical world. These garments provide him with strength, as it is written: “Who is strong? He who controls his inclination.” Hence these garments were considered as priestly garments, which also possessed the ability to sanctify the priest who wears them, as it is written: “These are holy garments” (Leviticus 16:4). Therefore we read, “They shall be upon Aaron’s heart” (Exodus 28:30), meaning that these priestly garments left a permanent impression on the heart of the priest, in order for his heart to control his desires. The Sefat Emet said, “The priestly garments are meant to influence the bodily members, for it is certain that all the bodily members of Aaron, Hashem’s chosen one, changed when he became like an angel of Hashem.... The brilliance of these garments left a mark on the body of this tzaddik...so he could control all the desires of his heart in order that forgetfulness would not overcome him” (Sefat Emet, Tetzaveh 644).

Hence from this point of view, the first man is similar to an angel because of the garments that Hashem gave to him, for they rectified all his bodily members. They left an indelible impression on his heart so he could control his desires. As for ourselves, every morning we recite the blessing: “Blessed are You... Who girds Israel with might.” Modest garments leave an impression on man, and through them he is girded with the strength to conquer his instincts and control the desires of his heart. This is the power that the Holy One, blessed be He, gave to Adam and Eve when He provided them with garments and clothed them.

– Tefillah Zakah

## A Pearl From the Rav:

### A New Creation – Each Day!

*It is written, “In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).*

The Sages have said, “The Holy One, blessed be He, renews each day the work of Creation.” They also said, “The reshith mentioned here is none other than the Torah, as it is written: ‘The L-RD acquired me at the beginning of His way’ [Proverbs 8:22], and the world was created only for the sake of Torah.” A person should therefore view the Torah’s words as being new each day, which is why the Torah is called reshith. Each day it must appear as something new, as if a person had

never studied it before, as our Sages have said: “May the words of the Torah not seem to you as an old decree that no one respects, but rather as a new work, one to which everyone turns.” Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, renews each day the work of Creation, so too must a person constantly renew the Torah, for the sake of which the world was created and in which it is stated bereshith.

## Primary and Secondary Concerns

*It is written, “In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).*

The Midrash cites Rabbi Yitzchak as saying that when a man of flesh and blood constructs a palace, he first builds a lower level and then a higher level. However the Holy One, blessed be He, built the heavens before the earth. By doing so, He taught us that people are not right by building, while in their youth, a “lower level” by concerning themselves only with material concerns, and then to build a “higher level” by working on their souls when they grow older. The Holy One, blessed be He, showed us what we should really do, which is to concentrate on Heaven first (spirituality) and then on the earth (materiality), in order that we may learn from Him to concern ourselves first about our souls, and then about our bodies.

– Shevet Shimon

## Prejudice and Strife

*It is written, “And G-d made the firmament” (Genesis 1:7).*

The Gemara cites Rabbi Chisda as teaching, “Since the day that the Temple was destroyed, there has never been a perfectly clear sky” (Berachot 59a). The firmament alludes to strife, and all who are involved in a conflict generally say that they are fighting for the sake of Heaven. In reality, however, since the Temple was destroyed no dispute is completely pure, without any trace of personal interest.

– Rabbi Shimon Sofer

## The Greatness of Peace

*It is written, “G-d called la-rakia [the firmament] shamayim [Heaven]” (Genesis 1:8).*

The reason why the name “firmament” did not please the Holy One, blessed be He, is because it is a symbol of strife. It separated the upper waters from the lower waters, and therefore Hashem refused to use this name. Instead He called it by a name composed of esh (fire) and mayim (water). This demonstrates that the world can only endure in this way, namely when people who are polar opposites by nature – much like fire and water – come together. The Holy One, blessed be He, wanted the inhabitants of the earth to see a name that indicates unity, and to draw a lesson from it.

– Kli Yakar

## Everything is Known Beforehand

*It is written, “Let the waters beneath the heaven be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear” (Genesis 1:9).*

When the sea split during the Exodus, the Torah states that in the morning it returned to its strength (le-etano). The Sages explain the term le-etano to mean that Hashem imposed a condition (tnai) on Creation which compelled the sea to split before the Children of Israel. We need to understand where this condition is alluded to in the Torah. From the above verse, the Sages learned that once the waters were gathered into one place, it is obvious that the dry land appeared. Therefore why did Scripture explicitly state this fact? The answer is that Hashem issued a command: “Now that the waters have gathered together, I impose on Creation the condition that when necessary, the dry land will appear

in place of the sea.” Thus it is written, “The Children of Israel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea” (Exodus 14:29).

– Imrei Shefer

## The War Against the Evil Inclination

*It is written, “Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is toward you, and you will conquer it” (Genesis 4:7).*

When the evil inclination approaches a person to make him sin, it stands at the door like a needy person. This is what constitutes “sin is crouching at the door.” At first it places itself at your door, yet “its desire is toward you” – it yearns to completely devour you. Therefore when you see that it is still at the door, you must immediately “conquer it” and chase it away. “Its desire is toward you, and you will conquer it” means that although the evil inclination was created and sent by Hashem to push man to sin, its true goal is to be defeated by man. This is what constitutes, “The wicked watches the righteous and desires to kill him” (Psalms 37:32). The “wicked” is the evil inclination, and “desires to kill him” means that it wants the righteous to kill it. Thus it is written: “Its desire is toward you.” What is its desire? That “you will conquer it.”

– Yalkut HaGershoni

## When the Mouth and Heart are at Odds

*It is written, “Cain spoke with his brother Abel. ... Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him” (Genesis 4:8).*

The verse does not tell us what Cain said to his brother Abel, and in reality he said nothing to him. He simply acted like a brother, appearing to be a loving sibling, which is why Abel was not suspicious of him. Thus Cain was able to kill him, even though Abel was the stronger of the two. After Abel was murdered, Hashem said to Cain: “Where is Abel your brother?” In other words, where has your brotherly love gone? Cain replied, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” That is, even when I called him “my brother,” I did not know if I would be able to fulfill the words of my mouth and truly act as a brother.

– Shaar bat Rabim

## Overview of the Parsha

The book of Genesis recounts the story of man and the earth as a backdrop to the creation of the Jewish people, who appear later in the book of Exodus. Parsha Bereshith deals with the creation of the world and humanity until its devastation, meaning from Adam until Noah. During the first three days of Creation, G-d establishes and divides the foundations of the universe into “heavens,” “earth,” and “seas,” and He fills them in the following three days with all the hosts of the heavens and earth. At the end of this work, Hashem rests on the seventh day and blesses and sanctifies it. The development of Creation begins with man, the earth, and the Garden of Eden. Though he gives names to the other creatures, Adam finds none that is a suitable helper for him, and so Hashem forms a woman from his side. The serpent’s seduction through the intermediary of the woman leads to the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge, which damages the bond between man and the earth. Lest man eat from the Tree of Life, he is chased from the garden. Adam and his wife produce Cain and Abel, and following the murder of the latter in the first human confrontation, the bond between Cain and the earth deteriorates even further. Cain is exiled from the land as humanity begins to build cities and fashion tools from the time of Cain until Enosh. Scripture lists Cain’s descendants, followed by the descendants of Adam (from whom Israel would emerge) until the time of Noah, who brings consolation for the desolation of the earth. In Noah’s generation, the evil committed by man reaches such a level that Hashem decides to wipe man and all life off the face of the earth.

# REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

## When Fear is Absent, Wisdom is Lacking

Rashi mentions the Midrash which cites Rabbi Yitzchak as saying: “The Torah should have started with, ‘This month shall be for you...’ [Exodus 12:2], which is the first commandment that the Israelites were commanded. Now for what reason did He begin with Bereshith?”

The Ramban raises an objection here: “One may object that it was indeed very necessary to begin the Torah with the chapter of, ‘In the beginning, G-d created,’ for this is the root of faith, and one who does not believe in this and thinks the world is eternal denies the essential principal of religion and has no Torah at all” (Ramban on Genesis 1:1). Similarly, all the details of Creation hold great meaning for us, since they provide us with a clear and precise understanding of the entire universe. We possess a Torah that was transmitted from person to person and from generation to generation without losing a single letter, not even the end point of a yud. The Torah was given thousands of years ago to a generation that saw the founders of the tribes, a generation that saw Jacob, Abraham, Noah, and the first man. Therefore the Torah that is in our hands contains an account of how the heavens and the earth, as well as all their hosts, came into existence. It provides us with a clear and solid understanding of all the mysteries of the universe. Should we therefore question why the Torah began with this passage?

The truth is that it is useless to study the account of Creation without first performing mitzvot, whose main element begins with the passage, “This month shall be for you....” In fact the Sages have taught us that “if there is no fear [of Heaven], there is no wisdom” (Pirkei Avot 3:17). As long as we do not perform mitzvot – the performance of mitzvot resulting from a fear of Heaven – we cannot possess wisdom! For a man who does not put on tefillin or observe Shabbat, reading the book of Genesis will not help him grasp the Torah’s explanation of Creation. It is only after he studies Torah and observes mitzvot with the fear of Heaven that he will be able to absorb the wisdom of the Torah found in the account of Creation. Hence, “The Torah should have started with, ‘This month shall be for you....’” In fact this passage comprises the beginning of the mitzvot, and we can only learn and infuse our souls with an understanding of the account of Creation when we perform mitzvot.

– Rav Shach

# ESHET HAYIL

## Indispensable

The manna descended for the Children of Israel by the merit of Moses, the clouds of glory appeared by the merit of Aaron the priest, and the people were provided with water by the merit of Miriam. We need to understand exactly why water, which is indispensable to life, is attributed to Miriam’s merit. From here we learn a great lesson concerning a woman’s role in the Jewish home, of which she is the focal point. She is constantly with her children, raising them from their first days on earth. By her own conduct she establishes the foundations of the Jewish home in regards to modesty and kashrut, as well as with acts of generosity and kindness by practicing hospitality and other mitzvot. Hence she is compared to water, which is absolutely indispensable to life.

– Tuv Ta’am

