



THERE IS NO END TO THE HOLY TORAH

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The Path To Follow

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE

Still Forbidden

It is forbidden to tell Shimon, "Why didn't you help me? Levi told me that you helped him," for by saying this, Shimon will end up resenting Levi. Sometimes, even if we do not explicitly tell Shimon that Levi said this, it is still forbidden if Shimon can determine on his own that this information could only have come from Levi.

– The Chafetz Chaim

Regarding the verse, "I was then His nursling, I was then His delight every day, playing before Him at all times" (Proverbs 8:30), the Sages have explained in the Aggadah: "Nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the creation of the world, the Torah was written and placed in the bosom of Hashem, and it sang His praises with the ministering angels, as it is written: 'I was then His nursling' " (Avoth D'Rabbi Nathan, ch. 31).

We shall try to explain why the Holy One, blessed be He, rejoiced with the Torah during all these years, giving it to created beings only after nearly a thousand generations had passed. It is because Hashem wanted to announce to the inhabitants of the world that although the Torah had been written close to a thousand generations earlier, it was still His delight every day, and He still found, as it were, precious stones within the Torah, stones that He had not discovered until then. That being the case for the Holy One, blessed be He, how much more is it the case for those born of women, for those who – even if they lived forever – could not understand the Torah even to the extent of a drop in the ocean!

The words of the Torah are compared to water, as it is written: "Everyone who is thirsty, go to the water" (Isaiah 55:1). Just as water has no end, the words of the Torah have no end. The Sages say that it is impossible for there to be a session in the Beit Midrash without novel teachings arising from it (Chagigah 3a). King David said, "I will walk in broad pathways" (Psalms 119:45), and Rashi explains that King David walked in a very broad Halachah. Like an expanse that grows to a great degree, the holy Torah is very large, and no created being can say: "I have reached the end of the Torah and have understood everything to the very end." Even King Solomon said in his wisdom, "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), and yet of him it was said: "G-d gave wisdom and considerable understanding to Solomon, and greatness of heart as the sand upon the seashore" (1 Kings 5:9). The Sages have explained that Solomon's wisdom was equivalent to the wisdom of all the Children of 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). If all the Children of Israel had been placed on one side of the scale, and King Solomon on the other, his wisdom would have exceeded theirs. Nevertheless, his wisdom was not greater than that of the Torah, and he could not understand it to the very end. Thus he said, "I said, 'I will be wise,' but it was far from me. What existed is elusive and so very deep. Who can fathom it?" Furthermore, even Moses, the father of all 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 (Vayikra Rabba 22:1) – even from Moses the words of the Torah were hidden, the Sages tell us, for he did not completely understand them during his lifetime (Menachot 29b).

The Sages have said, "When Moses ascended on high, he found the Holy One, blessed be He, fixing crowns on the letters. Moses said, 'Master of the universe, Who stays Your hand?' He answered, 'At the end of many generations, a man by the name of Akiva ben Yosef will arise, and he will expound upon each point [of every crown] heaps and heaps of laws.' Moses said, 'Master of the universe, permit me to see him.' He replied, 'Turn around.' Moses went and sat down behind eight rows. Not being able to follow their arguments, he felt uncomfortable. Yet when they came to a certain subject and the disciples said to the

master, 'How do you know this,' the latter replied, 'It is a law given to Moses at Sinai,' and he was comforted. He then returned to the Holy One, blessed be He, and said: 'Master of the universe, You have such a man, and you give the Torah through me?' He replied, 'Be silent, for such is My decree' " (Menachot 29b).

It is possible that this idea is alluded to in the following teaching of our Sages: "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? Because they are things that have a beginning (reshith), but not an end. When a person starts going to the Beit Midrash and studies Torah, he cannot stop learning by saying, "I have reached the end of the Torah," for King Solomon, the wisest of all men, would contradict him. As for the fear of Heaven, it is impossible for a person to completely achieve it in this world, for no one feared Heaven more than Moses. As the Gemara tells us, "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 disappear from the world, that they only have a beginning, 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). This is why Hashem began the Torah with bereshith, which can be divided into beit-reshith, teaching us that the world was created for two (beit) things that are called reshith, the Torah and Israel. Commenting on Genesis 1:1, Rashi states: "This verse calls for a midrashic interpretation, as our Sages said: For the sake of the Torah, which is called 'the beginning [reshith] of His way' [Proverbs 8:22], and for the sake of Israel, who are called 'the first [reshith] of His crop' [Jeremiah 2:3]."

The principle here is that no man can say, "I've finished the Torah," for he must draw a logical conclusion from the Holy One blessed be He. That is, if Hashem studied it for 1,000 generations and rejoiced in it during all that time, and yet it never became old to Him, how much more should that be the case for a being of flesh and blood! The Mishnah states, "Turn it over and over again, for everything is in it" (Pirkei Avoth 5:21). The wisdom of the Torah is infinitely superior to all other forms of wisdom. The more a person studies other forms of wisdom, the more he understands them, and he will eventually be able to completely master them. Yet that is not the case with the words of the Torah, for the more a person studies them and plumbs their depths, the more he realizes just how infinitely deep they are! 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, as it is written: "Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea" (Job 11:9).

We must not make the mistake of thinking that in the future, all Jews will know the entire Torah and no longer have to study it, for the prophet states: "Torah shall emanate from Me" (Isaiah 51:4). In the Aggadah, the Sages explain this to mean that the renewal of the Torah will come from Hashem (Vayikra Rabba 13:3). This teaches us that even in the future, Hashem will provide us with new Torah teachings.

Thus the holy Torah will never have an end; it has only a beginning. Just as the Torah is eternal and without end, likewise the Jewish people are eternal and without end, as the prophet states: "The eternity of Israel does not lie" (1 Samuel 15:29).

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

A Pearl From the Rav: Repentance Replaces Sacrifice

It is written, "Cain said to the L-RD, 'My iniquity is greater than I can bear'" (Genesis 4:13).

This verse has always surprised me, for why could Cain not have brought a sacrifice to Hashem to atone for the sin of having murdered his brother Abel?

I would like to explain this according to a statement of our Sages: "Cain said to Abel, 'Let us divide the world. He agreed. Abel took his flock and Cain took the earth to work it, and they decided to have nothing in common'" (Tanhuma, Bereshith 9). When Cain saw that Hashem did not accept the sacrifice he had brought from the produce of the earth, he realized that only an animal offering was acceptable to Him. Yet now that he had murdered his brother Abel, he could no longer take animals and sacrifice them to Hashem. This was because any animal that he would have taken belonged to Abel, since they had divided the world between them, with Abel taking the animals. Hence Cain did not want to benefit from a stolen animal, for we cannot bring a sacrifice that stems from theft.

What did he do? Cain knew that in the absence of sacrifice, prayer atones for sin, as it is written: "We will offer our lips instead of bulls" (Hosea 14:3). Our Sages have explained that the Children of Israel said, "Master of the universe, we used to offer sacrifices and obtain atonement when the Temple stood. Now, however, we can offer nothing but prayer" (Bamidbar Rabba 18:21). Cain therefore began confessing his sin and praying. He said, "Master of the universe, my iniquity is too great to bear. It is clear before You that I cannot offer a sacrifice, since I gave all the animals to Abel my brother, and they are his. I can only pray and confess!" As soon as he did this, his sin was forgiven.

The Sages believe that he said, "Master of the universe, You bear higher and lower beings, and yet You cannot bear my sin?" The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: "You have repented. By your life, I shall annul the decree against you!" (Tanhuma, Bereshith 25). Furthermore, Adam learned from Cain how to repent when sacrifice is impossible, as the Sages state: "Adam met [Cain] and asked him, 'How did your case go?' He replied, 'I repented and I am reconciled.' At that point Adam began beating his face, crying: 'So great is the power of repentance, and I did not know'" (Bereshith Rabba 22:13). Thus we do not find that he offered a sacrifice.

Bereshith

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

In the sixth chapter of tractate Avoth, it is said that the Holy One, blessed be He, created five acquisitions in His world: Torah, heaven and earth, Abraham, Israel, and the Beit Hamikdash.

This acquisitions, writes Rabbi Yossef Gabai Zatzal of Bujad in his book Bigdei Shesh, can be found in the term Bereshith: Beit – the Beit Hamikdash; Resh – Eretz (earth); Aleph – Abraham; Shin – Shamayim (heaven); Yud – Israel; Taf – Talmud Torah (the study of Torah).

In this way, Scripture alludes to the fact that by the merit of these things, the laws of heaven and earth were created.

Measure for Measure

It is written, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18).

The Sages say, "If he is worthy, she is a help to him. If he is not worthy, she is against him" (Yebamot 63a). In his book Chesed L'Avraham, Rabbi Avraham Azulai Zatzal states that these two situations are like all of Hashem's middot, measure for measure: In the way that a man acts with the Holy One, blessed be He, his wife will act with him. Thus our Sages said, "If he is worthy, she is a help to him. If he is not worthy, she is against him," for she will rebel against him just as he rebels against his Creator. Hence every ben Torah whose wife does not listen to him must realize that the real cause is his own conduct towards Heaven. He should therefore not get angry with

his wife, for he himself is to blame for it.

Rabbi Avraham Azulai Zatzal notes, "This applies only to the tzaddikim. For evildoers, this principle does not apply because they are naturally feared and obeyed."

By the Hei

It is written, "These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created" (Genesis 2:4).

The Sages have interpreted the term behibarim ("when they were created") as behe baram ("He created them by the hei").

Rabbeinu Bechaye Zatzal wrote that all but one of the 22 letters of the Torah require an effort to pronounce. The only exception is the letter hei, which can be pronounced solely through breathing, without the movement of the mouth or the tongue, and without any effort. This is exactly the same way that the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world, without any effort, solely by the breath of His mouth, as it is written: "By the word of the L-RD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their hosts" (Psalms 33:6). Although every act in Creation involved "making," Scripture teaches us here that this only required the breath of Hashem's mouth: "By the word of the L-RD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their hosts."

Why is the Left Hand Weaker?

It is written, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26).

Rabbi Yaakov Hagiz, the author of Responsa Halachot Ketanot, was once asked why the left hand is weaker than the right.

He answered based upon a verse from this week's parsha: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." He said, "When Alexander traveled to a certain kingdom, he was told that it was fitting to honor the side of the heart, which is why these people considered the left hand to be more important than the right. It seems logical that the left comes first, since the Holy One, blessed be He, is before us and we are like a mirror-image of the Shechinah, if we may express ourselves in this way. This is what constitutes, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness' – that His honor should be reflected on us. Hence in reciting Oseh Shalom we first turn to the left. Since we are a reflection, what appears in us, so to speak, is a heart from on high. The heart of the wise man is to his right, like the reflection of a face in water, for it reflects an image that does not truly correspond to the face before it, since it is a mirror image."

Rabbi Yaakov Hagiz Zatzal ended his response by saying, "It is possible that the left hand is weaker because of the fear of the Shechinah, for 'I have placed the L-RD before me always.'"

Allusions

The Term Bereshith

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

We may say that this contains an allusion to the beginning of a person's learning. Actually, bereshith begins the Torah, and it is a term that contains, as we know, all the beginnings of the world. In other words, it contains the alphabet that a child learns at the very start, for the letters of bereshith are the same as those of tashir aleph-beit (sing the alphabet).

– Eliyahu HaIsh

Noah's Humility

It is written, "Noah found favor in the eyes of the L-RD" (Genesis 6:8).

The term matza ("found") has the same numerical value as anava ("humility"). This alludes to the fact that Noah found favor in the eyes of the Holy One, blessed be He, on account of his humility. Thus it is written, "I am with the despondent and humble in spirit" (Isaiah 57:15) – the Holy One, blessed be He, loves the humble.

– Tzohar HaBayit

IN THE TENT OF THE RIGHTEOUS

A JOURNEY INTO THE UKRAINE AND MOROCCO

VISITING THE GRAVES OF THE TZADDIKIM WITH THE GAON AND TZADDIK RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA

There were many positive responses and enthusiastic reactions from those who had participated in the journey of our teacher the gaon and tzaddik Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita to Essaouira, Morocco for the Hilloula of our teacher the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto Hagadol, may his merit protect us all.

Prior to the Hilloula, during the month of Elul, Rav David Pinto Shlita went with a group of disciples to pray by the graves of the tzaddikim in the Ukraine. They visited the graves of the Baal Shem Tov, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (known as the defender of Israel), Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, and others.

For two entire days, almost without stop, the group traveled from one town to the next, and from one grave to another, trying to find time to recite still another prayer by the graves of the tzaddikim, asking that they intercede for them and their families among the Jewish community in the coming year. The Rav Shlita then traveled to France, where an international gathering had been scheduled for everyone who wanted to participate in the Hilloula of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto in the Moroccan city of Mogador (Essaouira). Among the participants were people from Brazil, Mexico, France, Argentina, and various parts of the United States. The number of people who wanted to participate in the Hilloula reached more than 5,000, though not everyone was able to attend. When the organizers realized that it would be impossible to lodge everyone who wanted to go, the number of participants was reduced to 1,000. Two airplanes left France for Mogador, where they landed on a military base. For Rav Shlita and his companions, the King of Morocco had given these planes special permission to land there, for in prior years these planes had landed in Casablanca, which forced participants to travel hundreds of miles in order to reach Mogador.

Thursday, Elul 18

An official visit from the authorities took place at the military base, and as soon as the group reached the hotel (which was located near the cemetery), the Rav officially opened the event. Also participating was the governor of the province of Essaouira, along with leaders of the police, ministers of the king, and dignitaries who had come to pay homage to generations of the Pinto family.

Our Rav Shlita spoke some words of Torah as he encouraged the participants to strengthen their faith in Hashem. At the same time, he discussed current topics and included amazing stories about our teacher the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto. In the middle

of the evening, the Rav Shlita recited the “blessing for kings” for the King of Morocco on a live radio feed. He then went into the mausoleum with the governor of the province and dignitaries from the government and army, and there he prayed for the welfare and success of everyone present.

Friday, Elul 19

After the public prayer of Shacharit, the participants got ready to visit the graves of the tzaddikim located around Mogador, among them being the grave of the holy tzaddik Rabbi Nissim ben Nissim, known for his holiness and extraordinary piety.

Shabbat of Parsha Ki Tavo

Finding oneself near Rav Shlita during Shabbat of Parsha Ki Tavo was, according to one of the participants, “a foretaste of the World to Come.” Prayers were read with tremendous emotion and fervor. The Shabbat meals (eaten by participants wearing djellabas, in the finest Moroccan tradition) were intermingled with powerful singing, hymns and sacred songs that sprang from the depths of the heart. This motivated people into taking upon themselves the yoke of the Torah and mitzvot, thereby strengthen themselves in the observance of Torah.

Without a doubt, the highlight of the meal was the speech given by the Rav Shlita, who moved the participants with amazing stories about the life of the tzaddik Rabbi Haim Pinto and the holiness that he spread among the community in Morocco, without mentioning the miracles done by the tzaddik, by whose merit miracles still occur today.

The spiritual elevation reached its climax upon the conclusion of Shabbat, when the main part of the Hilloula by the grave of the tzaddik took place. Adding to the event was the participation of Jews from the Casablanca community, who joined the Hilloula at the end of Shabbat. The fervor of the moment spared no one, as all the participants witnessed a special sanctification of Hashem’s Name by the grave of the tzaddik. A constant outpouring of tears took place during the prayers, and then during selichot, which were recited by a huge crowd.

After the recitation of selichot, the Rav Shlita recited Mishaberach for all the participants and the entire Jewish people. During that entire night, as well as on the following day, the Rav Shlita received people until the time for the flight that was to bring him and his companions back to France, from where he would return to Eretz Israel.

THE WORDS OF THE SAGES HOW COULD THEY KNOW?

It is written, “She took of its fruit and ate, and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate” (Genesis 3:6).

Here Rashi says that Eve gave it to her husband, lest she alone would die and her husband would live and marry someone else. Yet how could Rashi know what Eve was thinking? We have heard of the intelligence of Menashe of Elya, the five-year-old boy who astonished his teacher.

The gaon Rabbi Menashe of Elya Zatzal, a disciple of the Vilna Gaon, was known from early childhood for his keen abilities and tremendous intelligence in Torah. At a young age, he astonished everyone who saw him, people who predicted a brilliant future for the child. At the tender age of five, he read the following verse to his teacher: “The woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise. She took of its fruit and ate, and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.” After reading this, the boy also read Rashi’s explanation.

The boy then turned to his teacher and innocently asked, “Rabbi, how does Rashi know what Eve was thinking, and that it was for this reason that she gave her husband to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, so that he wouldn’t live and marry another woman? Maybe it was just because she loved her husband that she wanted him to taste and eat the fruit of this tree, which was, according to the verse, ‘good for food and...desirable to make one wise’?” To this question, the teacher immediately replied that Rashi learned this from the words of our Sages in Bereshith Rabba.

“And how did our Sages know what Eve was thinking?” asked the boy.

This last question astonished his teacher, who became angry with the boy in front of everyone and said: “Our Sages knew everything, even the thoughts of Eve, and it is forbidden for a child like you to ask questions like this!”

However the young Menashe, with his great intelligence, was not satisfied with his teacher’s answer, and he gave him an astute reply:

“I don’t believe that our Sages knew everything all on their own. I have the impression that they learned this from the words of the verse itself, which states: ‘She gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.’ It seems that the words ‘with her’ are redundant, for according to the Torah’s language, they are difficult to understand. It should have said, ‘She gave also to her husband, and he ate,’ without the words ‘with her.’ What then does the verse want to tell us by saying, ‘She gave also to her husband with her, and he ate’?”

The five-year-old boy continued: “From the words ‘with her,’ we learn that she tried to eat together with her husband, not to eat before him. Eve did not want to eat before her husband because she was afraid of dying right away as a result of eating from the Tree of Knowledge. She did not want to die while her husband remains alive and takes another wife. That’s why the verse specifies, ‘She gave also to her husband with her’ – so he would eat it with her, together – for she thought: ‘If the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge brings death to those who eat it on the very day they eat it, then let me die with him.’”

SHABBAT BERESHITH THE POWER OF RENEWAL

This Shabbat, which begins the new year, is called “Shabbat Bereshith.” It seems to have special significance, for there is no “Shabbat Shemot” or “Shabbat Beshalach.” That being the case, why do we have “Shabbat Bereshith,” and how is this Shabbat more special than any other parsha in the Torah?

The book *Eleh HaDevarim* from Rabbi Eliyahu Schlesinger Shlita provides us with a beautiful explanation:

Commenting on Orach Chaim 292, the Tur states that three special prayers were instituted for Shemoneh Esrei on Shabbat: *Ata Kidashta* (“You have sanctified us”), *Yismach Moshe* (“Moses rejoiced), and *Ata Echad* (“You are One”). The expression *Ata Kidashta* corresponds to the Shabbat when the Torah was given, for according to all opinions the Torah was given on Shabbat. The expression *Ata Echad* corresponds to a future Shabbat, to a time when Hashem will be One and His Name One, as it is written: “On the third day He will raise us up, and we will live before Him” (Hosea 6:2). We may say that the greatness of Shabbat Bereshith lies in the fact that Hashem infused it with an abundance of blessing and holiness, and that it can transfer this abundance to all the Shabbats of the year.

Insofar as all the needs and wishes of man are concerned, each Shabbat contains the special strength and power of the initial Shabbat. This is especially true for Torah study, since Shabbat is a particularly well-suited time for a person to understand and deepen his understanding of Torah. It is a time when he can give marvelous teachings that stem from the power of renewal that exists in Shabbat.

According to all this, we can understand the differences that exist between the weekday and Shabbat prayers. During the weekday prayers we recite: ‘Enlighten our eyes in Your Torah and make our hearts cleave to Your mitzvot.’ We first ask for enlightenment in the study of the holy Torah, and then for our hearts to cleave to the mitzvot. However the formulation is different in the prayers of Shabbat: “Sanctify us with Your mitzvot and grant us our portion in Your Torah” – we first ask for sanctity through Hashem’s mitzvot, and only then do we make a request with regards to the Torah. Why the difference?

The explanation resides in the fact that incredible power emanates and descends into the world on Shabbat. This power enables a renewal in Torah, and it is a segula that is hidden within each Shabbat on account of Shabbat Bereshith. For this reason, in the prayers of Shabbat we first ask for the sanctity of mitzvot and for our hearts to cleave to it, and only then do we mention the Torah. This is because the very essence of Shabbat contains the power of renewal in Torah. Such is not the case for the other days of the week, which do not benefit from this segula. Hence during the week we need extra strength in Torah, and therefore in our prayers we recite: “Enlighten our eyes in Your Torah.”