



Yesodos m' ha Sedra

LESSONS IN HASHKAFKA & HALACHA FROM THE PARSHA

In memory of R' Shmuel Shmelka ben HaRav Moshe Kizelnik z"l



From the desk of
the Rosh Kollel...

Welcome to all our new subscribers!

Yomim Noraim through Simchas Torah in the kollel was uplifting. From the tefilos to the simchas beis ha'shoeiva and hakafos, it was a very inspiring period of time. The energy should spill over into the coming months as the kollel returns to its regular schedule next week

This year, the Yesodos will feature the "Seven Uppers", which will recount and summarize each of the seven aliyah's, integrating inspiration and lessons in hashkafa at each juncture. We hope you enjoy this new twist.

In Elul, the kollel began our 18th year! Since its inception, the kollel has impacted many people from all walks of life; from the avreichim, to the local baalei batim, and neighborhood youth. Thank you to all those who have supported us on this journey. To find out how to make a good thing even better, email us at info@torahkollel.com

We have replaced the 'Sugyas ha'sedra' section with a new series called 'Zechus ha'Shabbos'. If you missed the explanation why, email us to find out!

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- Rabbi David Lewin

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בראשית

תשפ"ז

"SEVEN UPPERS"

(Kohein) The first aliyah recounts the six days of Creation, one at a time, from the state of the world just before the first day, all the way to its completion and the 'rest' which followed on the seventh day.

The pesukim themselves only paint a general picture of each day of Creation and Chazal's elaboration of it is not only almost equally secretive, but often seems at odds with our understanding of science and the world we live in. Chazal tell us that the world was created in two parts: conception and birth, and while the original plan to create the world may have been conceived in Tishrei, it wasn't actually created until Nisan (and according to another opinion, the opposite may be true). R' Shimon Schwab zt"l explains that when Chazal paint a picture which seems to be negated by science and nature, it wasn't that they were wrong; rather, they are telling us what Hashem's original plan was. The way He actually fashioned the world was often different, and that is what we see and know as the world in which we live.

Rashi also notes that Hashem had an original plan for Creation which was different than the way He actually created it: Initially, Hashem wanted to create the world utilizing only the midas ha'din, but when He saw that such a world couldn't survive, He enjoined the midah of rachamim as well.

What emerges from this is that our world is one of mercy, but when Chazal speak of Creation, they are choosing to tell us about Hashem's original plan and we need to understand why. Perhaps then, we can also appreciate that the natural world order is tempered with His tremendous rachamim.

(Levi) The Torah then goes to tell of the Creation of Adam, the father of mankind and is comprised of physical body taken from the earth and a spiritual neshama which comes from the kisei ha'kavod. Hakadosh Boruch Hu placed him in Gan Eden to work and guard it, essentially giving him a single mitzva that he should not to partake of the fruits of the eitz ha'daas.

While Hashem did allow Adam to eat the fruits of the entire garden, there was seemingly one other tree that He ultimately did not want him to eat from - the eitz ha'chaim; after he and Chava stumbled and ate the fruit of the eitz ha'daas, Hashem banished them from Gan Eden "lest they eat from the eitz ha'chaim and live forever". Since Hakadosh Boruch Hu knew what would transpire, it would seem to make sense to have included the eitz ha'chaim in the initial prohibition as well, but, as R' Dovid Goldberg shlit"a explains, then the yetzer ha'ra would have tried to make Adam stumble in eating it as well, and he would be left with a tikun for his neshama - something that death would have allowed for and by eating from the eitz ha'chaim, Adam would have lived forever. Man lives, errs, does teshuva and then ultimately achieves full kapara when he leaves this world.

(Shlishi) Every species of animal was brought in pairs before Adam and he realized that he was the only one without a mate, and so Hashem made him fall asleep, surgically removing part of his body and fashioned it into a woman. When Chazal

say that 'ishto k'gufo' - that a man's wife is like part of his body, they are telling us that a man should be connected to his wife as if she is part of his body, as was the case with Adam and Chava.

Out of jealousy, the nachash tricked Chava into eating the fruits of the eitz ha'daas, convincing her that Hashem had only forbidden it out of jealousy, lest man become like Him. After she fell into the nachash's trap, she convinced Adam to taste some as well. Immediately, they became aware that they weren't wearing clothing and now that the yetzer ha'ra had penetrated into them, they realized that this was something to be embarrassed about, and so they quickly covered themselves with the fig leaves nearby. The Netziv explains that they were more motivated by the yirah and kavod of the Shechina than embarrassed.

When Hashem confronted Adam, he blamed Chava for giving him the fruits, and she likewise passed the buck, blaming the nachash for seducing her. Each of them were sentenced to a different punishment: The nachas would now slither on the ground and eat dirt. Chava and all her female descendants would endure discomfort and pain throughout pregnancy and childbirth, and Adam would have to work hard to procure the food he needed to sustain and nourish his body.

The Baalei ha'Tosfos note that while not every man is included in Adam ha'rishon's punishment - as kings and princes, among others do not have to work hard for a living - all women must experience the curse of Chava. This is due to the fact that Chava's sin was greater because not only was she guilty of violating Hashem's command, but she caused others to as well.

(Revi'i) After Adam and Chava were banished from Gan Eden, the Torah tells us about the birth of Kayin and Hevel, which had already taken place before they ate from the eitz ha'daas.

Hevel became a shepherd and Kayin worked the ground, and one day he decided to offer some of his produce as a korban, but Hashem didn't want it. Then, Hevel offered some of his better sheep as a sacrifice and it was readily accepted. Upset at the one-uppedness of his brother, Kayin rose up and killed his brother, however, before he did so, Hakadosh Boruch Hu spoke to Kayin, warning him not to listen to his yetzer ha'ra. R' Zalman Sorotzkin explains from here we see that a person can succumb to his yetzer ha'ra, even if Hashem tries to stop talk him out of it, and we shouldn't think that had Hashem intervened, Adam would have never eaten from the eitz ha'daas. This is the reality of the strength of the yetzer hara that we live with.

As a punishment, Kayin had to wander from place to place, but Hashem protected him from harm.

(Chamishi) Lemech was a direct descendant of Kayin. The Torah tells us that Lemech had two wives, Adah, who he had designated for procreation, and Tzilah, who he designated as a companion and for his own enjoyment. Despite his plans, Lemech also fathered children through Tzilah: Tuval-Kayin who made weapons, thereby 'improving' Kayin's murderous ways, and his sister, Na'amah.

Some say that this was the same Na'amah who married Noach and she was named such because her ways were pleasant. Accordingly, she merited to be the progenitor of all of humanity which survived the mabul, and it therefore makes sense why she is mentioned by the Torah.

However, others disagree and say this was not Noach's wife. This Na'amah, was in fact the mother of the sheidim and evil spirits. We should wonder then, why the Torah mentions her specifically.

Perhaps the answer lies in a medrash cited by the Chidah that relates how the descendants of Sheis wouldn't marry the descendants of Kayin, since they had murderous tendencies. One day, Lemech met Adah who was already married to one of Sheis' descendants and wanted to marry her. He ended up killing her first husband and marrying her. When the man's son came to try to save his father, Lemech killed him too, taking the son's wife, Tzilah as well. This was in fact the impetus for Lemech's speech to his wives, trying to convince them to remain loyal to him, despite the fact that he had killed both of their first husbands.

Perhaps the Torah is teaching us that a marriage built on jealousy and controlling tendencies will result in children who will themselves bring destruction to the world. Therefore, the Torah stresses that it was specifically Tzilah, who was intended for Lemech's own pleasure, ended up giving birth to two children, a boy who perfected the tools of murder, and a girl who became the mother of spiritual destructive forces.

(Shishi) The Torah lists the generations of mankind, starting with Adam all the way up to Noach. The pesukim read with pretty much of an identical pattern: So and so lived a certain number of years before he had a child, he continued to live after his son's birth for a certain number of years, had more children, to a total number of years, and then he died.

In one instance, however, the pesukim deviate from this norm: After Chanoch begot Mesushelach, the Torah tells us that 'Chanoch walked with Hashem'. Then, after tallying his total years of life, the posuk repeats 'vayishaleich Chanoch es ha'Elokim', adding that 'he is no longer, because Hashem took him'.

The Chasam Sofer explains that Chanoch lived with incredible deveikus to Hashem and ultimately, he became a malach. This however, isn't as great as it sounds, because the Torah testifies 'veineno' - that he is no longer, meaning that he didn't leave a mark on society. This, explains the Chasam Sofer, is why the generations after him became so depraved that Hashem had to bring upon the waters of the mabul to destroy them.

This, is the difference between Avraham Avinu, whose entire life's drive was to influence others in the service of Hashem, and Chanoch, who was most happy coming closer and closer to Hakadosh Boruch Hu. The true ratzon Hashem, he explains, is to bring others close to Hashem even when it is at the expense of one's own elevated status.

(Shevi'i) After introducing us to Noach the Torah tells us about some of the depravities of his generation, to the point where Hashem, so to speak, regretted the Creation of man and wanted to destroy the world.

Noach, however, found "chein" (favor) in Hashem's eyes. R' Moshe Feinstein zt"l that "chein" is a lot more than just earning Hashem's mercy. "Chein", he explains, is an approach to avodas Hashem that becomes a way of life. A person who is b'simcha tamid, happy to do the ratzon Hashem at every juncture, whatever the costs and challenges, choose life and finds favor in Hashem's eyes. Perhaps it was for this reason that Hashem not only chose to spare Noach, but to rebuild a new world order from him.

Although Shabbos is a "day of rest", Hashem gave us the gift of Shabbos so that we could take a break from our regular worldly lives and focus on more spiritual pursuits, and, while it is true that there is a mitzva of oneg Shabbos and it is actually a mitzva to indulge and enjoy food and rest, it is meant to enhance our spiritual experience, not replace it. Therefore, one should grab the opportunity afforded by extra hours to learn Torah. The Zohar writes that every motzei Shabbos, a Jew's neshama yeseira returns to shomayim to report its spiritual accomplishments of the day, and there is a special reward for those who merited to come up with chidushei Torah on Shabbos. The seforim explain that this also includes a new understanding of any piece of Torah by the person learning it, even if it is obvious to others. This is something that everyone can have a part in as there is always something new to be learned by learning through the weekly parsha.

The gemara (Berachos 8) tells us that a person must finish learning the parsha together with the tzibur, reading the actual pesukim twice and its translation (Targum Onkelos) once. The gemara is clear that it is to be done every week, and one should not save everything for the end of the year, nor should he do everything in advance either. The Aruch Hashulchan posits that was in fact enacted by Moshe Rabeinu at the same time he instituted krias ha'Torah.

Although the gemara doesn't tell us the reason, some suggest (Levush, others) that it is so that people will become experts in Torah. The Aruch Hashulchan writes that it is in preparation for krias ha'Torah, so that when he hears the parsha read from a kosher Sefer Torah on Shabbos, he will understand it and then his Torah learning will ascend to a higher level.

According to some, one should read each parshas (i.e. pesucha or stuma - those pei's and samech's printed in your chumash) twice and then read its targum. The basis for this approach seems to be that each parsha was given to Moshe as a full unit. Accordingly, even when there is a parsha break in the middle of a posuk (a few rare occasions) one should stop there. (Aruch Hashulchan, Shelah). Others, maintain that one should read each posuk twice and then its targum. (See Aruch Hashulchan who proves this from the wording of the gemara). Some say that one should read the entire weekly sedra (i.e. the entire parshas Noach, for example) twice and the targum. All of these approaches are valid, and one may choose any approach. See also the Aruch Hashulchan who maintains that one can alternate from week to week and it has been reported that many gedolim combined different approaches such as reading a parsha once and then breaking it down posuk by posuk. (According to R' Yaakov Kaminetsky, this is in fact the preferred approach since the first reading of the posuk is to simply read it and is therefore better when grouped together. The second reading goes together with the Targum and was instituted in order that one should understand what he is reading.) Accordingly, one should choose which ever combination motivates him more and gives him a better understanding of the pesukim, which will both enhance his Torah knowledge and make krias ha'Torah more meaningful and enjoyable. It is also worth mentioning that the Yesod v'Shoresh Ha'Avodah says that during krias ha'Torah one should listen and have in mind to be mekabel everything as it is being read. While doing so is not an obligation, it is highly praiseworthy and proper preparation of the parsha would make doing so possible.

According to the Levush and many others, one may read the Targum in the middle. Accordingly, one who reads along with the baal korei in shul (which, is a separate issue whether or not he should or should not) can fulfill his obligation of the second reading, even if he already read the Targum. (See Aruch Hashulchan who explains that even the Beis Yosef considers this an option and his comments to the contrary were only meant to express that one cannot fulfill a second reading by merely listening to krias ha'Torah if he doesn't read along)

One should not begin the coming week's parsha until Motzei Shabbos or Sunday, although some permit beginning Shabbos after mincha. Some have the custom to divided up the parsha into seven sections, (not necessarily as the aliyos are marked), learning one section each day, while some wait until erev Shabbos to learn the entire parsha, and some even have a minhag to read it from a kosher sefer Torah if they have one available and know how to read all of the pesukim correctly.

The Tur writes that learning Rashi (on the pesukim which have his commentary) serves in place of the Targum, although the Beis Yosef only recommends doing so in addition, for perhaps the obligation is to read the Targum specifically because it was also given to us a Har Sinai. Nowadays, reading the Targum works backwards for many of us as it helps us increase fluency in Aramaic, making learning gemara easier. Accordingly, many contemporary authorities recommend learning the Rashi's or at least a good English commentary or translation so one can better understand the pesukim he is reading.

Many people are careful not to interrupt while they are reading 'shanyim mikra'. However, the Aruch Hashulchan writes that while one should never unnecessarily interrupt his Torah study, there is no special prohibition of doing so as relating to shanyim mikra and there is no real basis for this chumra. Therefore, while doing so uninterrupted is certainly commendable, in this author's opinion one should not hesitate to adopt the more lenient approach as more often than not, this leads to bitul Torah, or 'worse' causing one to give up the practice of shnayim mikra, which the gemara states is obligatory.

Although many hold that the ideal time for shenayim mikra is on erev Shabbos, this is not practical for most people, especially in the winter months. The Gra was accustomed to doing a little bit of the parsha every day after Shacharis. This is more practical for most people (although they might delay it until later during the day or evening), and one who does so gains tremendously on several counts: First, the parsha is relevant for him all week long. He also gains by being prepared for krias ha'Torah as mentioned above, and he certainly has understood more than the person who tries to quickly get through the pesukim and Targum on Shabbos afternoon, just to fulfill his technical obligation.



THE BLUZHEVER REBBE

1 Cheshvan 5750

R' Yisroel Spira, was the son of previous Bluzhever Rebbe, R' Yehoshua Spira and the great-grandson of the Bnei Yisaschar. Born in Cheshvan of 5650 (1889) in Reisch (Galitzia), it was clear from a young age that R' Yisroel would become someone great. Just after his bar mitzva, he received semicha from the rav of Brezhan, the Maharsham.

Shortly after his marriage to his first wife, Perel Unger, he was appointed as rav of a small town of Istrik (southern Poland) and his name spread throughout the region as people from all over came to ask halachic questions and seek his advice. After his father's passing in 5691 (1931), he took over his father's role as rebbe of Bluzhev.

When the Nazis occupied Poland, he was sent to the Janowska concentration camp. Later, he was transferred to Belzec, but he managed to escape and return to Janowska, and was eventually transferred to Bergen-Belsen.

While he lived through the horrors of the holocaust, R' Yisroel lost his wife, children, and grandchildren. Yet, in the darkness, his personality and special neshama shone. In the camps, he took every opportunity to do chesed for a fellow Jew, and encouraged and was mechazeik everyone in emunah.

One Chanukah in Bergen-Belsen, R' Yisroel lit candles, and after he finished reciting the berachos, another Jew asked him how he could make the beracha of shehecheyanu under such horrific circumstances. Instead of criticizing the questioners, he replied with love and emotion: "I myself wondered the same, but then, I saw the large crowd that had risked their own lives to watch me light the Chanuka candles, and I realized that the very fact that Jews are prepared to risk their lives for this mitzva, is reason enough to recite Shehecheyanu."

On April 15, 1945, the Bluzhever rebbe was liberated from Bergen-Belsen and he got married again to Rebbetzin Bronia, whose first husband, R' Yisroel Avrohom Koshitzki, was murdered in the Belzec extermination camp. They eventually settled in Williamsburg, and then later moved to Boro Park.

The rebbe often said that the reason he remained alive was so that he could tell future generations what happened to the Jews during the holocaust. He was an amazing storyteller, whose stories emanated from a pure and holy heart, entered the hearts of his listeners, who could never forget what he said.