

***Yad Avraham Institute***  
**Weekly Torah Commentaries Series**  
**Portion of Bereishis**

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**Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita***

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**About the Yad Avraham Institute**

The Yad Avraham is a Torah learning institute located in midtown Manhattan. Classes are offered every day during the week starting at 5:50am and throughout the day. Classes in Chumash, Halacha, Hashkofa, Gemara, and general topics are well attended by businessmen, professionals, and students. The Yad Avraham invites you to participate in our extensive offerings of classes and events.

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## Bereishis

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

### 1. G'd's Obviousness in Creation

The Portion of Bereishis begins, "***Bereishis bara Elokim...In the beginning G'd created...***" The Midrash asks, "Why does Creation begin with the letter '*bais*, which is the second letter of the alphabet' and not with the letter '*aleph*' which is the first letter? It is because the word '*arur* (cursed)' begins with the letter '*aleph*' and '*baruch* (blessed)' begins with the letter '*bais*.' G'd said, 'I will create the world so that it should emanate from an expression of '*baruch* (blessed)'. Despite the fact that G'd created the world with the expression of '*baruch* (blessed)' we see that man nevertheless angered his Maker. If G'd had created the world with the letter '*aleph*' representing '*arur* (cursed)' how much more so would have man angered his Maker. Another reason G'd created the world with the letter '*bais*' (which is the numerical equivalent of two) is to teach mankind that there are two worlds; this world and the world to come. One who engages in goodness in this world will have benefit from it in this world and the world to come...."

The Midrash presents a logical inference that despite the fact that G'd created the world through an expression of 'blessed,' man angered his Maker. How much more so would he have angered Him had the world been created with the letter '*aleph*' which represents an expression of 'cursed.' Seemingly, one would think to the contrary. Had G'd created the world through an expression of 'cursed' it would emanate from His Attribute of Justice, which does not tolerate any degree of deviation from the proper path. Thus, the correction would have been made and rectified immediately. Man would not have time to enrage his Maker. However, G'd created the world through the expression of 'blessed' which connotes His Attribute of Mercy that is tolerant of man's misbehavior. Man, consequently, will continue to fail, even to an unacceptable level.

Because the world came into existence through the expression of "blessed," man is able to perceive G'd's imprint upon every aspect of existence. The Attribute of Mercy deemed that man should be able to easily recognize G'd as his Creator. G'd's participation as the Creator is not concealed and can therefore be perceived continuously

through one's daily experiences. This is to provide a less difficult context and setting for man to exercise his free choice. Despite the obviousness of G'd in creation, man chose to ignore His Presence and thus he has a greater degree of culpability. Had G'd created the world through the expression of 'cursed (*arur*)' His Presence would not be easily detected. Consequently, man's likelihood for failure would be greater. Although the Attribute of Justice would be implemented immediately, the suffering that will be experienced will not be attributed to Divine Retribution.

G'd created existence with the letter '*bais*' so that His Presence should be obvious in the world. The Mishna in Ethics of our Fathers tells us that "The physical world is the equivalent of a corridor leading to the world to come, which is the equivalent of a large banquet hall..." The letter '*bais*' represents the totality of all existence which includes within it, two levels: the physical world, which is a developmental stage in order to merit the objective, which is the world to come. Man's purpose in existence is to utilize the physical world, by making proper choices, in order to advance and perfect his spirituality. This will qualify him to have relevance to a spiritual existence. Because G'd allowed His Presence to be detected in the physical existence by creating it with the letter '*bais*' (which represents the number two and alludes to the world to come), He made man's objective more obvious and thus more attainable.

We say in our prayers, "how numerous are your works (*ma rabu maasecha*)..." Ramak explains in his work Tomer Devorah that this verse does not mean "how numerous are your works" but rather "how profound and great is Your imprint upon creation." G'd's unlimited wisdom can be seen in every aspect of Creation. This is a manifestation of the world being created through the spirituality of the letter '*bais*.' Despite G'd's irrefutable Presence in Creation, man nonetheless chooses his own path and perspective, which causes G'd to be angered.

King David writes in Psalms, "The Heavens speak G'd's Glory ..." King David was able to perceive G'd's imprint on every aspect of creation. This is something that we are not able to come upon. Why is this so? If one is not able to see something, which is seemingly obvious, it is

only because one is plagued with spiritual occlusions that do not allow one to view existence in a spiritual context. One must be spiritualized in order to perceive G'd's Hand in Creation. The Torah itself was the blueprint for the design of existence as Chazal tell us "G'd gazed into the Torah and created the world." There is a direct correlation between the truths which one comes upon through the study of Torah and recognizing the ultimate objective and purpose of every aspect of the universe.

## 2. The Innate Capacity of Every Jew

The Torah states, "These are the chronicles of heaven and earth when they were created (*elieh toldos hashemiyim v'aretz...*)" The Midrash states, "Every mention of the word '*toldos* (chronicles)' in the Torah is written in a deleted form with the letter 'vav' omitted (to indicate the plural form of the word, a 'vav' is inserted before the last letter of the word in its Hebrew spelling) except in this instance, where it is written in its full form. The word '*toldos*' is also written in its full form in the verse, 'These are the chronicles of Peretz .....' (Peretz was the son of Yehudah from who King David descends and ultimately Moshiach). Reb Yehudah HaLevy Bar Shalom says, 'The letter 'vav' (whose numerical value is six) is deleted from the word '*toldos*' to reflect the six aspects of man and creation that were diminished as a result of Adam's sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge.' What are the six aspect of man and the world that were diminished? As a result of the sin of Adam, the radiance of his countenance was dimmed. His stature/dimension of person was also lessened. This was reflected by his height, which initially towered above existence and was later reduced. Initially, man was meant to be an eternal being, however as a result of his sin, he became a limited and finite being who is subject to death. The fruits of the earth were no longer the same. Adam was driven out from the garden of Eden. The sun and the moon no longer provided the same degree of light that they initially provided."

The Midrash continues, "At the end of time, G'd will restore creation to its original form. From where do we see that the radiance of man will be restored after the coming of Moshiach? It states, 'Whoever will see them (the Jewish people) will recognize them.' How will the stature of man be restored? It is written, 'The height of every Jew will be one hundred cubits.' Reb Shimon Ben Yochai says, 'Every Jew's physical dimension will be two hundred cubits'..." Chazal tell us based on the verse from the prophet Yechezkel that after Adam sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge, he forfeited his classification of "adam (man). He had lost his unique spiritual profile

that enabled him to bring existence to perfection. It was the Jewish people who later, at Sinai with the receiving of the Torah, assumed the classification of "adam." As it states in Yechezkel, "You (the Jewish people) are *adam* ..." Chazal explain that this verse implies that the Jewish people are classified as "adam" but the nations of the world are not. Because the Jewish people assumed the spiritual capacity of Adam before the sin, they have the ability to bring about perfection within themselves and existence.

King Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes (Koheles), "G'd created man to be straight (*yashar*), but he sought out many intrigues." This is referring to Adam, who was created by G'd to perceive and understand existence correctly. He would thus understand the value of following G'd's Dictates and Service. However Adam chose to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, causing him to become conflicted and could no longer perceive G'd's world within an objective context. He had forfeited his characteristic of "straightness" (*yashar*). The Jewish people, because of the spiritual achievements of the Patriarchs, Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov possess the characteristic of "*yashar*."

King David writes in Psalms, "The dictates of G'd are straight (*yesharim*), they bring joy to the heart." Because the words of the Torah are innately proper/straight they bring joy to the heart of the Jew, whose essence is "*yashar*." It is because of the unique spiritual capacity of the Jew, who assumed the classification of "adam (who was initially created to be *yashar*)", that he has relevance to the Torah which is "*yashar*." The nations of the world, because they do not have the spiritual profile and capacity of the initial man/Adam, have no relevance to the Torah.

It will only be the Jewish people who will be fully restored to the initial stature of Adam (before the sin) after the coming of Moshiach. As the Midrash tells us, "It is every Jew who will be one hundred cubits in height, as Adam had been before the sin." It is only the Jew, whose classification as "Adam" who will have the radiance of Adam before the sin. Chazal tell us the radiance of Yaakov our Patriarch had a semblance of the radiance of Adam. The Gemara in Tractate Nidah tells us that before a Jewish child is born an angel teaches him the entire Torah. The Gemara explains that the child in utero has an illuminating light above his head and he is able to see from one end of the world to the other. There is nothing beyond his grasp. This is only referring to the Jewish child, who has the equivalent standing of Adam, before he had partaken of the fruit of the Tree. The characteristic of "*yashar*" can

only be honed and perfected through the mechanism that was gifted to the Jewish people by G'd, which is the Torah itself.

### ***3. Man Created in the Image of G'd***

The Midrash states, “ King Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes (Koheles), ‘I have come upon that G'd made man to be straight (*yashar*).’ The only reason G'd created man in His image is so that he should be able to reflect His characteristic of righteousness and straightness. If this is so, then why did G'd create man with an evil inclination? As it states, ‘man is evil from the moment he is cast out from the womb...’ Does the human being have the capacity to transform the evil within him to goodness? G'd said, ‘It is man who takes the inclination that was given to him and makes it evil.’ How is this so? A child from the time he is born through the age of nine has no inclination to sin. He does not seek out to transgress against G'd. However, from the age of ten and onward he begins to contemplate sin and it is the time that he begins to develop and groom his evil inclination.” It is interesting to note that the Mishna in Ethics of our Fathers tells us that one begins to teach a child the Written Law (Five Books of Moshe) at the age of five. At the age of ten, one begins to teach the child the Mishna (Oral Law). It is specifically at the time that the child begins developing his evil inclination that one begins the study of the Oral Law (Mishna). Why is this so? The Gemara states, “I (G'd) have created the evil inclination and the Torah as its antidote.” The evil inclination can only be defused, countered and incapacitated through the study of the Torah/Oral Law.

The Midrash continues, “What if one comes to the point where he cannot control his desires and inclinations? G'd says, ‘You were the one who did this to yourself. Why did you allow yourself to develop into something that is truly evil?’ The infant did not initially sin; however, as he developed he began to transgress and transform the inclination that he was given into something that is evil. There are many things in existence that are more bitter than the evil inclination, but man takes the initiative to sweeten them (so that he could partake of them). There is a bean that is extremely bitter. One can sweeten it by cooking it seven times in order to make it edible. G'd has created the mustard seed and capers that are bitter, but man takes the initiative to sweeten them for his own purpose to accommodate his needs. G'd says, ‘How much more so should you put the effort in sweetening the inclination that you were given.’ However, man does not sweeten it, rather

he makes it more bitter (by sinning).” Man will go to every length to attain something that he believes is in his best interest, regardless of the effort that it requires. Yet, he will not make the effort to subdue his inclination because he does not perceive the value of the result as something worthwhile pursuing. It is rather seen as an imposition.

If one understands that his spirituality supersedes and transcends his physical needs, one would surely devote himself to developing his spirituality as prescribed by the Torah. As the Mishna states, “Reward in this world (for a mitzvah) does not exist.” Ramak in his work *Tomer Dvora* writes that the value of the entire existence cannot be equated to the value of one mitzvah. This is because a mitzvah is spiritual and infinite while the physical world is finite and only a means to an end. This concept is something that needs to be internalized. Intellectual understanding of the value of mitzvos is not sufficient to motivate one to dedicate and sacrifice for the sake of one's spirituality. One may truly believe that the value of mitzvos is the ultimate, but to amass the material to accommodate one's physical needs takes precedence over the spiritual. It is because when one does not address what one desires, one feels deprived. However, when one does not address his spirituality, one does not feel lacking. Man was only created to develop his spirituality through making proper choices that are prescribed by the Torah. Just as G'd is righteous and straight, man was created to be righteous and straight. He created man in His image in order to give him the capacity and potential to develop spiritually. Man was endowed with the image of G'd to communicate to him that his capacity, potential, and purpose is to achieve and reflect His characteristic of righteousness and straightness.

### ***4. The Vulnerability of Eve***

The Torah tells us that Adam and Eve (Chava), despite the fact that they were the handiwork of G'd and were endowed with a unique level of spirituality and clarity, sinned by eating of the Tree of Knowledge. Chazal tell us that their level of understanding of existence was so great that they were able to see from one end of the world to the other. Although she had an exceptional level of clarity, the serpent was able to persuade Chava to eat of the forbidden fruit. The serpent had told her that the reason G'd had forbade her from eating of the Tree was because of its creative powers. Meaning, the one who eats from the Tree of Knowledge would achieve the same level of creative power as G'd. In fact, G'd Himself became the Creator only because He had eaten from the Tree. Just as

any artisan belonging to a guild does not want competition, so too G'd did not want them to eat of the Tree because He does not want them to become His equivalent. The serpent had said, "Although G'd had said, 'On the day you will eat from the Tree you will die, it is something not to be concerned with.'" Chava was thus persuaded by the serpent and succumbed to his seduction. She ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. How could Chava have been so gullible to believe the serpent who had said that when she would eat of the fruit of the Tree she would become the equivalent of G'd? Seemingly, with her unique level of intelligence and grasp, it should have been impossible for her to be so gullible.

We find that before the destruction of the First Temple, the Prophet admonished and encouraged the generation to repent and return to G'd. Despite his urgings, they had told the Prophet that they had no hope to repent because they had fallen to a level of sin from which they are not able to recover. No degree of repentance would be sufficient to reinstate them and cause them to be seen as meritorious. Reb Yisroel Salanter z'tl asks, "How is it possible that we, who have no relevance to relate to the spiritual level of members of the First Temple period, are able to experience stirrings of repentance the moment we hear the blast of the Shofar and that generation was not able to repent? Why did they believe that repentance is an impossibility and we see it as being not so difficult?" He answers that when a Jew, in our era sins, he has no relevance to appreciate the consequences and ramifications of his actions. All that he can appreciate is that he had transgressed the Will of G'd. He is not able to internalize the fact that transgression is the equivalent of destruction on the most profound level.

Transgression causes intense levels of spiritual impurity to be brought into existence that we cannot fathom. The consequence of sin results in the destruction of spiritual worlds of holiness and sanctity. If one would be able to internalize the level of destruction that sin brings about and is able to visualize the spiritual void and vacuum that it causes, one would have difficulty believing that even sincere repentance could restore and reinstate what had existed before the sin. We are only able to repent without difficulty because we do not see or relate to the devastation that is caused by our sins. However, the generation of the First Temple, because of their dimension of spirituality, understood the spiritual havoc that they had brought about through their multiple sins. Therefore they said to the Prophet that they were not able to repent.

Chava, the creation of G'd, was the most unique creation within existence. She was fully aware, because of

her dimension of being, that she was endowed with powers to be able to create unlimited spiritual worlds whose effect is eternal and infinite. She understood and appreciated that the creative ability that she possessed emanated from the fact that she was created in the image of G'd. Just as He is a Creator, she too as a human being was created with a similar ability. She understood that through her positive and negative actions she was able to create worlds or destroy them. Therefore, when the serpent persuaded her to eat of the Tree of Knowledge so that she should ascend to the level of Creator, as G'd Himself, it was not seen as sheer nonsense, but rather it was within the realm of feasibility. It was only an advancement to another level.

The reason we are not motivated to perform mitzvos as we should, is because we do not appreciate the value and ramifications of performing a mitzvah. When a Jew performs even the most simple mitzvah, the ramification of his action creates unlimited worlds and edifices of holiness. Conversely, it is exactly for the same reason that we can easily transgress, because we do not appreciate the level of spiritual destruction that is brought about by even the most minor sin. Because of our limited understanding, we must seek out ways to perceive the value of a mitzvah and the detriment of a sin in order to address our spirituality in a responsible manner.

**YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Monday Through Friday**

5:50- 6:00 am	Chumash with Rashi
6:00- 6:15 am	Pirkei Avos (Maharal)
6:15- 6:30 am	Mishna Berurah
6:30 -6:45 am	Mussar – Path of the Just
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Chulin –Gid Hanasheh
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi- Bava Basra
2:00pm	Mincha

**Special Weekday Classes**

**Monday**

11:30 – 12:30pm	<b>Talmud: Megilah</b> Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 <sup>th</sup> FL.) Enter on 54 <sup>th</sup> Street
1:00-2:00 pm	<b>Ramchal: Derech Hashem</b> Location: Cedarview Capital 1Penn Plaza ( 45 <sup>th</sup> FL. )

**Tuesday**

12:10 - 1:10pm	<b>Torah Insight Based on the Parsha</b> Location: Yad Avraham
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**Wednesday**

11:30 – 12:30 pm	<b>Talmud: Megilah</b> Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 <sup>th</sup> FL.) Enter on 54 <sup>th</sup> Street
1:00—2:00 pm	<b>Daas Tevunos</b> Location: Yad Avraham

**Thursday**

11:00 –12:00pm	<b>Duties of The Heart</b> Location: Yad Avraham
12:30 – 1:30 pm	<b>Talmud: Megilah</b> Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 <sup>th</sup> FL)