

# Bereishis

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*P*arashas Bereishis . . . *again*. The cycle begins . . . *again*. The amazing thing, at least for me, is how there is a whole new excitement . . . *again*. Usually, I cannot read a book twice (and my own books, not even once), except for Torah books. On the contrary, each time I begin the Torah again, it feels like a whole new opportunity that was previously unavailable.

After all, there are seventy faces to Torah (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 13:15). Torah can be learned on four levels, *Pshat*, *Remez*, *Drush*, and *Sod*—Simple, Hint, Elucidation, and Mystical (*Sba'ar HaGilgulim*, Introduction 11). Each time you learn something it is a opportunity to climb to a higher rung of understanding of Torah, and therefore a higher understanding of life. As understanding of life deepens, quality of life increases, and that *is* exciting.

Here's an idea worth considering. It's called *Sheviras HaKeilim* in *Kabbalah*, which means the "Breaking of the Vessels." Two words (in Hebrew) that allude to one of the most fundamental ideas in all of history without which free will could not exist, and therefore neither would Creation. Free will is not eternal, but the brief time we have it is the reason of all of Creation. *All of it*.

It is too long and complicated to explain here in any detail, so I have books that do it, such as "Highest Knowledge Ever" (Amazon.com, Thirtysix.org). For now, I am more interested in some of the *mussar* behind the idea that everyone can apply in daily life.

Basically, *Sheviras HaKeilim* was a pre-pre-Creation state of existence. The story of physical Creation with which the Torah begins (on a *Pshat* level at least), and with which everyone is familiar is closer to the middle of the story. It is also called Tikun

*Ma'aseh Bereishis*, or the *Rectification of the Act of Creation*, because it was built by God from the spiritual mess (“*tobu*” in the Torah) that resulted from the *shevirah*—breaking. This is what made possible the eventual existence of evil, a crucial component for the existence of man’s free will.

This is why the *Zohar* says that the second verse about the creation of chaos is really the first verse historically (*Zohar, Bereishis* 16a). It just wouldn’t read right if a person didn’t know what came before Creation, so the Torah writes it where it makes most sense on a *Pshat* level. As the *Gemora* says, chronological order is not top priority in the Torah (*Pesachim* 6b).

The rest is even deeper *kabbalah*. But there is still a nice *mussar* point that can be taken from all of this, especially at this time of year after the *Aseres Yemai Teshuvah* and *Succos*. It’s another good reason for starting the Torah again from scratch on *Simchas Torah*.

## **Shabbos Day**

WHEN YOU LOOK into the mirror, who do you see? Yourself, of course. The bigger question is, *who are you?*

A silly question? I would be willing to bet a lot of money that the vast majority of people can’t really answer that question, at least accurately. They will tell you who they *think* they are, but that answer more than likely will just be about who they have become, not who they are. . . in essence.

The essence of a person is their soul, but a “person,” with which we communicate and share lives is a combination of their soul and body. Both are main influencers in a person’s life and self-perception, and their personality at any given moment in time will be the product of the current balance, or imbalance, of the two.

It is easy to tell which is the dominant player in a person’s life by what they prioritize. All noble traits and missions in life come from the soul. Material goals are the body’s, unless for a spiritual purpose. But unless a person lives on a deserted island by themselves, even the most spiritual person can’t help but be influenced by their bodily drives and the world around them, and each thing. . . and there are many. . . is like adding more make-up and clothing; it just becomes hard to be the *real* you.

Some people just go through life like that and never change it or get to the bottom of who they are. They just live as they think they are, as what they have become and not necessarily as what they are supposed to be. Most people probably go their entire lives like this, until their very last when, they say, “they” show a person the

difference.

Ouch. Nothing is worse than discovering missed opportunity. And we're not talking about the kind of opportunities that you can afford to have passed up. Getting life right is not one of those kinds of opportunities, no matter how big a blast the wrong life was. What good is a delicious food if the last bite was spoiled and left a bad taste in your mouth.

The same is true about life, and its end. At some point a person has to wake up to the reality of what they were supposed to have been, and what they lost by not making the effort to be it. And that's when *Sheviras HaKeilim* and the *Yemai Norayim* come in.

### **Seudas Shlishis**

BEGINNING WITH ELUL, but primarily during the *Aseres Yemai Teshuvah*, we're supposed to go through our personalized version of *Sheviras HaKeilim*. It's the time of year to take ourselves a part, to pull off all the superfluous layers of personality to get to our essential self. It is not just a time of introspection, but the time to go inside to become re-acquainted with our most basic spiritual drive.

That's what allows us to become like angels on *Yom Kippur*. That's what an angel is, just pure good, pure expression of the will of God. Having gotten to our essence during the previous nine days, and then going the final distance on *Yom Kippur*, we can get in touch with our inner being and restore a more accurate perception of ourselves.

That is the pleasure that we feel, or supposed to feel, after *Yom Kippur*. Yes, we're happy the fast is over. Yes, we're grateful that we have completed our *machzorim* for the year. But the real existential pleasure we feel *Motzei Yom Kippur* is what life feels like when you can feel your essential self.

This is why a *tzaddik* does not require all the external pleasures of the material world to help them to be happy. Being themselves in essence provides them with more than enough internal joy to forsake the external joy. It is not only superfluous for them; it even detracts from the joy they have.

And that is why *Succos* is *zman simchasaynu*—the time of our joy. As the *GR"A* says, the walls of the Succah represent the body, and the person living in it corresponds to the soul. The building of the *Succah* is really the perfect metaphor for the rebuilding of the person after their "*shevirah*" on a foundation of self-honesty and purity.

There is nothing more joyous than this, than consciously building yourself based upon essence. Most people have a difficult time believing this is the greatest pleasure, especially coming from such a materially-enhanced world, because they have seldom done it, or will ever have done it. Succos, if they celebrate it at all, is just another holiday to be celebrated, endured, and then said goodbye to for another year.

This is why it is so perfect that we close out this series of holidays with *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah*. The first celebrates the *yichud* with God achieved by becoming your essential self, and the second, the *yichud* with Torah which allows us to achieve this and maintain it. Like the Torah, which we begin again with *Bereishis*, we also begin again with our *bereishis*, and carry the joy into the rest of the year.

### ***Ain Od Milvado, Part 68***

AIN OD MILVADO was not an issue for Adam *HaRisbon* while still in *Gan Aiden*. He spoke to God directly, and he lived in a world that exuded the reality of God. Yet, even still, the snake talked to Chava as if God wasn't there, and she acted the same way in the end. How was that possible?

The *Lesbem* explains that this was already after the sin had begun. The first stage of the sin was not eating or even picking the fruit. The first part of the sin that got everything going was Adam's investigating of the tree a little too closely. He had wanted to rectify it, eliminate its potential for evil, but instead became a victim of it.

It was Adam's part of the sin that had opened the door to the Garden for the snake to come in and convince Chava to eat. He had become defiled, and had caused all of Creation to become more physical, greatly lowering it spiritually and making it more vulnerable to evil. Eating the forbidden fruit became inevitable from that point onward.

It was the distance between man and God that resulted that made *ain od Milvado* a *mitzvah*. Man was no longer holy enough to have direct line to God, so God inserted a chain of angels to act as go-betweens, making the reality of God a lot more vague, leaving room for confusion about His existence.

This is why the *Gemora* says that this tree was the origin of Amalek. Amalek equals *suffek*, or doubt, in *gematria*. Just like with people, it is easier to remain clear about a relationship when you see each other all the time. It is easier to begin to doubt a relationship, and even forget about the other part of it if distanced from each other for an extended period of time.

Therefore, living according to the reality of *ain od Milvado* is not only a *mitzvah*, it is also a *tikun* for the sin of the *Aitz HaDa'as Tov v'Ra*. It is world rectification, because it has the effect of reducing some of the distance between the person and God. God not only appreciates this, He takes advantage of it, giving the person a greater sense of His being than others ever know.