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 Bereishis

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WE SAY *Kol Nidrei* on Yom Kippur night three times in a row, except that each time the *Chazzan* increases his tone. This emphasizes that this is not just repetition for repetition's sake. Rather, something else is supposed to be increasing each time we say it.

The *Ba'al Koreh* does not read *Parashas Bereishis* each year a little louder, but it feels like the same thing. It feels as if we should be getting more out of the *parsha* than we have in previous years each year that we return to it. We're not just starting the Torah again. We're starting a whole new level of Torah for the first time.

With respect to *Kol Nidrei*, it is more like waking up your child for school. First you say "Wake up" in a normal tone, and when that doesn't get through to your sleeping child, you up the tone a bit. When that fails to get your child up and out of bed, you might go drastic and shout, "WAKE UP!"

But the Torah is different and especially *Parashas Bereishis*. It has so many layers of understanding that one lifetime is not enough to get to even just most of them. The deepest of secrets are embedded in even just the first seven words, and seemingly meaningless details cloak some of life's greatest mysteries.

For example, the word “*Bereishis*” is really two words, *bara* and *shis*. The first means, “He created,” and the second word (in Aramaic) means “six.” So, when the Torah says “in the beginning,” it is also telling you what actually happened at that beginning.

Six? Six *what*? The six *sefiros* of *Chesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tifferes*, *Netzach*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*, alluded to by the six words that follow the first word, “*Bereishis*.” Oh, but what’s a *sefirah*? Only the key mechanism God created to allow all of Creation to exist, man to live, and history to keep going day after day.

Simply put, God’s light is too infinite for anything finite to exist. Therefore, to reduce that infiniteness, God created a system of spiritual entities called *sefiros* from the light to *deal* with the light. Each *sefirah* has the miraculous capacity to receive one level of light and reduce it to a lower level of light until the world not only exists, but it is even ridiculously possible to be blind to the reality of God.

Yesod, therefore, is the result of the light being filtered by *Hod* above it, which is the result of the light being filtered by *Netzach* above it, etc. And *Chesed*? It is the result of the light being filtered by the *sefirah* above it, which is *Binah* and to which the word “*Bereishis*” refers.

(In fact, when the verse says, “*He seats the barren woman of the house as a happy mother of children*” (*Tehillim* 113:9), it refers to more than human mothers. It refers, *kabbalistically*, to *Binah* which is considered to be the mother of her six “children,” that is, the six *sefiros* of *Chesed* through *Yesod* that came from her. Personally, I love when such seemingly obvious verses have deeper kabbalistic meanings.)

Therefore, when it says, “*In the beginning, God created...*” it really means, “*Binah* created the six *sefiros* of *Chesed* through

Yesod,” the basis of our six thousand years of history. And that is just one *kabbalistic* layer. There are many more.

And not just the first verse. All the verses talk on the same level, alluding to some other *kabbalistic* aspect of Creation. It’s like what the Gemora says, “People see, but they do not know what they see” (*Chagigah* 12b). Likewise, year after year after Simchas Torah people return to *Parashas Bereishis* but remain oblivious to what they are really looking at.

Does it make a difference in the end? Yes, a *huge* difference.

The same people who do not bother to delve deeper into Torah are the same people who tend to take the events of life and history at face value. They may know that God runs the world, but they live and react to it as if He doesn’t.

It’s like two people who go to see a play, one who has read the book before and one who has not. For the person who has not read the book, every scene will seem to spontaneously evolve. But for the person who knows the entire story already, they will better understand what is happening in the present because of their knowledge of the future.

Perhaps when it comes to a play, not knowing the story will make the plot more suspenseful. But when it comes to life, that suspense often gives us ulcers or worse. God may not have told us everything about what He has done and plans to do. But He told us enough to help us survive it if we make the effort to understand what He has shared.

Good Shabbos and a healthy winter, b”H.

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