

IN THE BEGINNING

by Shlomo Katz

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**Parashat Bereishit
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Today's Learning:

Menachot 5:6-7

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Sanhedrin 24

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Shabbat 73

Introduction to Parashat Bereishit from Midrash Hagadol by R' David ben Amram z"l (Aden; 14th cent.)

"With the permission of the One who created His world in six, by His Will and His Word, not with effort or physical action.

May His Name be blessed, He who made the sea and the land, He is our G-d, and there is no other like Him, exalted in holiness.

He blessed the seventh and sanctified it, and gave it to His nation as an inheritance, to be for rest and pleasure from the work of hard times.

So may He sanctify us, our Rock, forever, and may we never be ashamed; may He bring our redemption close and bring out the cornerstone [see Zechariah 4:7].

May He return us to our borders, plant us [there] and not abandon it; may he renew our days as of old, for His sake and for the sake of the patriarchs three,

As it is written [Yishayah 65:17], 'Behold I am creating new heavens and a new earth.'

"I am calling to the G-d Who saves His people from all of their troubles, Who performed many wonders and miracles before their eyes.

May He remember the covenant of the patriarchs and establish it for their children after them; may He support [them in] their lot and not let their legs falter.

May He strengthen their arms vis-a-vis His Torah and let them not release their hands' [hold on it]; may He send them a redeemer who is great and will enlighten their faces.

Then they will understand and will believe that Hashem their G- d (Elokim), He who created their hearts as one and understands all their deeds,

He is the Creator of the heavens and earth and everything in between, as it is written [in today's haftarah - Yishayah 42:5], 'So said the G-d, Hashem, Who creates the heavens and stretches them forth'."

"In the beginning of Elokim's creating the heavens and the earth . . ." (1:1)

Rashi comments: "It does not state 'Hashem created' because ideally G-d would have placed the world under the Attribute of Divine Justice [alluded to by the Name 'Elokim']. However, He knew that the world could not endure thus; therefore He gave precedence to Divine Mercy [alluded to by the Name 'Hashem'], allying it with Divine Justice. It is to this that the verse (Bereishit 2:4) alludes: 'On the day that the Hashem Elokim made earth and heaven'."

R' Ben-Zion Rabinowitz shlita (the Biala Rebbe) writes: This joining of the Attributes of Justice and Mercy alludes to the two paths we have for serving the Creator - Ahavat Hashem / Love of G- d and Yirat Hashem / Fear of G-d. In fact, we need to follow both paths simultaneously, for an important rule in serving G-d is that one know the limits within which he is supposed to act and not try to reach levels that are not appropriate for him. Our love of G-d impels us to climb higher and higher towards Him, but our fear of G-d is meant to temper that love and hold us back.

R' Rabinowitz continues: This lesson is alluded to by the concept of an eruv, as well as by the very word eruv. A person who has no eruv worries about transgressing the prohibition of carrying on Shabbat, and he therefore may choose to sit at home and not go out. He lives a life filled with fear. On the other hand, an eruv allows us to carry and thus promotes social interaction. In short, an eruv

increases love among people. However, there is still room for fear, for every eruv has a boundary that must be observed, and most Shabbat prohibitions are unaffected by the existence of an eruv.

This is alluded to by the word "eruv" (ayin-reish-vav-yud-bet): The letters "ayin-bet" have a gematria of 72, equal to the word "chessed", a trait closely associated with love. The remaining letters of "eruv" - "yud-raish-vav" - have a gematria equal to the word "yirah" / "fear." This alludes to the fact that an eruv causes love and fear to act together.

(Mevasser Tov: Shaarei Avodat Hashem)

"And now, lest he put forth his hand and take also from the Tree of Life, and eat and live forever." (3:22)

It seems, writes R' Yaakov Yosef z"l (Chief Rabbi of New York; died 1902), that it was not a concern before that Man might eat from the Tree of Life. Why? We learn from here that Adam recognized the importance of enacting extra precautions intended to distance himself from sinning. Adam said to himself, "G-d has commanded me not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, lest I die." Therefore, I will not eat from the Tree of Life either, for once I have the ability to live forever, I will have no incentive to refrain from eating from the Tree of Knowledge."

Then why was it necessary for G-d to expel Adam from Gan Eden to prevent him from eating from the Tree of Life? Because Adam no longer had a reason to refrain from eating. Since he had already sinned and incurred the penalty of eventual death, the precaution he had enacted against sinning served no purpose. To the contrary, he had every incentive to eat from the Tree of Life in order to regain what he had lost (i.e., life). G-d did not want this, lest it "undo" His decree of Adam's death, but why was it not enough for Him to command Adam not eat from the Tree of Life? Indeed, before Adam sinned, he refrained from eating from the Tree of Life although it was not prohibited! Why expel him from the Garden? The answer is that sin defiles a person's soul, and he can no longer be trusted to act properly.

(L'veit Yaakov: Drush 9)

Shabbat

According to some authorities, one is obligated by Torah law to use wine for kiddush on Shabbat, whereas there is no such obligation on Yom Tov. What is the nature of the special connection between Shabbat and wine?

R' Menachem Simcha Katz shlita (Brooklyn, NY) explains: We read in the haftarah for Shabbat Shuvah (Hoshea 14:8), "They shall return, those who sit in its shade; they shall refresh themselves like grain; they shall blossom like the vine, its aroma [literally, 'its memory'] like the wine of Lebanon." What is the connection between the teshuvah / return, on the one hand, and a vine and grains, on

the other hand? R' Zvi Elimelech of Dinov z"l (the Bnei Yissaschar) explains that wine and grain are unique among all foods. All other foods either lose their unique berachah when they are processed or, at best, keep the same berachah. (For example, an orange that is made into juice or an apple that is made into sauce loses its "ha'etz." Instead, the more general blessing "she'hakol" is recited.) Only grapes and grains "step up" to more unique berachot when they are processed - grapes, from "ha'etz" to "ha'gaffen," and grain, from "ha'adamah" to "ha'motzi." Teshuvah, writes the Bnei Yissaschar, has a similar effect. Specifically, when one is motivated by his love of Hashem to repent, all of his former sins are counted as if they were good deeds. His sins "step-up," so-to-speak, to a higher level.

R' Katz continues: Shabbat is considered to be a propitious time for teshuvah, especially teshuvah me'ahavah / return motivated by love of G-d. Therefore, wine is an especially appropriate drink with which to introduce Shabbat. In fact, the verse which is given as the source for reciting kiddush over wine (Shmot 20:8), "Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it," does not even mention that drink. Where we do find the concept of remembering connected to wine? In the verse about teshuvah quoted above: "Its memory, like wine of Lebanon."

The foregoing may also explain why so many of our ceremonies involve wine, R' Katz concludes, for returning closer to Hashem is the ultimate goal of all mitzvot, according to the Talmudic sage Rava (Berachot 17a).

(Simcha L'ish p.25)

"Hashem G-d took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden." (2:15)

The Midrash comments: "He gave man the mitzvah of Shabbat."

R' Shalom Noach Brazovsky z"l (the Slonimer Rebbe; died 2000) explains: The Midrash is teaching that observing Shabbat is equivalent to entering Gan Eden, for Shabbat is G-d's sanctuary, so-to-speak. In this way, Shabbat is similar to the just ended holiday of Sukkot. Indeed, the initials of the phrase (Vayikra 23:42) "ba-sukkot teishvu shivat [yamim]" / "You shall dwell in Sukkot seven [days]" are the letters of the word Shabbat.

(Nesivos Shalom: Sukkot p.190)

R' Aharon Markus z"l

R' Aharon Markus was born in Hamburg, Germany on 12 Shevat 5603 / January 13, 1843. He received both a secular and a Torah education, the latter under R' Baruch Lifshitz (son of the author of the Mishnah commentary, Tiferet Yisrael) and R' Isaac Bernays (teacher of R' Samson Raphael Hirsch, among others). After completing high school, young Aharon opted to attend yeshiva in Boskowitz

instead of entering university, and in that yeshiva he was introduced by a fellow student to the chassidic movement. Bucking the then prevalent trend which saw Eastern European Jews seeking out Western values, R' Markus began traveling to chassidic rebbes, especially the rebbes of Chortkov and related dynasties. Beginning in 1862, R' Markus spent four years studying under R' Shlomo of Radomsk, who commented that the young student was capable of translating his (the rebbe's) teachings into German without losing a nuance. R' Yehoshua of Belz, whom R' Markus also visited, called him the chassidic movement's protector against those who sought to mischaracterize and defame it.

R' Markus wrote several books, of which the best known is *Der Chassidmus*, a treatise in German showing the depth of chassidic and kabbalistic thought. He also wrote works on Jewish history and other works in German that attempted to demonstrate the beauty of traditional Judaism. R' Markus earned his living as an accountant and merchant, including as the agent in Galicia for Carmel Wines, and he turned down all offers of rabbinic posts, including from Glasgow, Scotland. He also was an early leader of the Mizrachi movement, but he later left it in disappointment and joined Agudat Yisrael. Although he hoped to settle in Eretz Yisrael, he never did. He lived for many years in Krakow, but in 1914 moved to Hamburg and then to Frankfurt am-Main, where he died on 1 Adar Bet 5676 / 1916. (Source: Encyclopedia Le'Chachmei Galicia)

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