

# ONE WORD, ONE WORLD

*by Rabbi Pinchas Winston*

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This week's parshah sheet is dedicated in honor of Yitzchak Issar ben Ultra Rifka by Judith and Barry Shapero. May the learning of this week's "Perceptions" be a merit towards his quick refuah shlaimah.

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## FRIDAY NIGHT:

*In the beginning, G-d made Heaven and Earth.* (Bereishit 1:1)

Thus begins another cycle. The Yomim Tovim are behind us and the winter is ahead of us. We have fought for our lives and now we enter the season of death. The Talmud says that Adam watched the days get shorter and darker, and thought that Creation was gradually coming to an end until he saw the trend gradually reverse itself during the month of Tevet. To celebrate, he made an eight-day holiday (Avodah Zarah 8a), right around the time we celebrate Chanukah each year.

It is during this period of darkness that the month of Cheshvan comes along, or rather, Mar Cheshvah, as in "Bitter Cheshvan". For, Cheshvan is the only month of the Jewish year not to have some kind of holiday or fast day in it, something, anything to focus us on G-d and His master plan for history. Maybe the month itself is bitter since it was supposed to have had a holiday - Shemini Atzeret - but it didn't since that holiday was moved up into the month of Tishrei, right after Succot.

But alas, nothing is what it seems to be on the surface. Mankind is prepared to dig miles below the surface to find oil and precious minerals, but it will barely scratch the surface when it comes to spiritual ideas. When they see bitter, they can only assume it is bitter; when they see sweet, they assume it is sweet, through-and-through, even though life experiences often show otherwise, even though so many times we have learned that what we saw is not what we got.

Not so in Judaism. The starting point is, knowing that the surface is only the source of the questions. The answers lurk somewhere below it. The entire Talmudic process is one of intellectually digging deeper and deeper in search of the "bottom line". Life is about building a perception, about taking the vision with which we are born and enhancing it, tweaking it, until it comes as close to G-d's vision as is humanly possible.

That is Premise #1. Premise #2 is that if after all our effort to get to the "bottom line" of life, we still cannot fathom what it is, then we have to turn our attention back to G-d. We have to be satisfied with

our results and use them to the best of our ability, but at the end of the day we only have G-d's will as expressed through His Torah.

Thus, the Jewish people are compared to a "yonah" - a dove (Shabbat 53b). Ironically, the word "yonah" is comprised of the word "yavan" - Greece, and the letter "Heh". The word "yavan" itself is comprised of the letters Yud-Vav-Nun, each being in the form of a line that progressively gets longer than the previous one. In succession, the Yud penetrates downward a little, the Vav even more, and the Nun, the longest of the three letters, even extends even further than the Vav, making the combination a symbol of the process of investigation the Greek people employed to better understand the world.

But, even the Nun goes only so far and then it stops, and so does the investigation of the scientific world. Observations are noted, conclusions are made upon which lifestyles are designed. Never mind the fact that incomplete observations can lead to inconclusive conclusions and, by default, faulty lifestyles - thousands of years of faulty lifestyles and meaningless ventures.

That is why the Jewish people add the "Heh" after the Nun, always an allusion to G-d, as if to say, "When you're finished with the Nun, its back up to the Heh again and G-d." Because, and here is the beautiful part, it is where the investigation is supposed to lead a person, and it is the jumping off point for the real deep insights, as it says:

*Secrets of G-d to those who fear Him. (Tehillim 25:14)*

It is the Yud (wisdom) that leads one to the Vav, and the actualization of wisdom which results in Nun - understanding. But not to have just any understanding, but the specific understanding that G-d is the One Who makes it all happen, because below the surface there is nothing but miracles. This, then, leads a person to the Heh, to G-d Himself and His "secrets". For, as we have said on many other occasions previously, the word for "fear" and "seeing" are the same, so that the posuk can really be read: Secrets of G-d to those who SEE Him.

Now, for some of those secrets...

## **SHABBAT DAY:**

*The secrets of G-d to those who fear Him. (Tehillim 25:14)*

The Tikunei HaZohar never ceases to amaze me. Not that I am well-versed in such Torah resources, but I have seen enough to know that there is a lot going on in this work of the great, great Kabbalist, Rebi Shimon bar Yochai.

One of the things that makes the Tikunei HaZohar so remarkable and relevant to this week's parshah is that it is primarily an elucidation of a single word from the Torah: Bereishit. It offers no less than seventy different interpretations of the very first of the Torah over the course of many pages, which obviously contains countless allusions to what the rest of the Torah spells out in more detail. The

following is one such example.

BEREISHIT (Bait-Raish-Aleph-Shin-Yud-Tav) are the letters YERA (Yud-Raish- Aleph) BOSHET (Bait-Shin-Tav) - fear embarrassment; WOE TO SaMaE"L (the angel who plays the role of the Satan) from all the humiliation and punishment he is going to receive WHEN THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED IS HE, COMES TO REDEEM THE SHECHINAH (Divine Presence) AND ISRAEL HIS CHILDREN in the time of Moshiach. HE WILL CLAIM AGAINST HIM AND IMPOSE AN OATH ON THE NATIONS AND THEIR APPOINTED who oppressed Israel in exile, REGARDING ALL THE SUFFERING THEY CAUSED ISRAEL IN EXILE; he will have to give an accounting. FOR, BEFORE HE EXILED THEM AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SECOND TEMPLE, THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED IS HE, REVEALED TO HIM THAT IN THE FUTURE ISRAEL WOULD BE EXILED AMONGST THEM, i.e., that Israel will be oppressed by the nations of the world in exile, and when the time comes to go out, meaning that the main punishment will be because G-d revealed to them that the exile would not last forever, and that every place they would go they would still be called "Children of The Holy One, Blessed is He" Š Therefore, anyone who treats them well would be destined to be rewarded. HE REVEALED TO HIM AND THE SEVENTY APPOINTEES UNDER HIS CONTROL THE REWARD THEY WOULD GET IN THE FUTURE IF THEY HONOR ISRAEL IN EXILE, AS IT SAYS, "G- D BLESSED THE HOUSE OF THE EGYPTIAN BECAUSE OF YOSEF" (Bereishit 39:5); likewise did G-d want the nations to honor Israel while in exile. HOWEVER, NOT ONLY DID SaMaE"L AND HIS APPOINTEES NOT HONOR ISRAEL, BUT RATHER THEY DISGRACED THEM AND THE SHECHINAH, acting sharply toward us and blaspheming SAYING TO THEM EACH DAY, "WHERE IS YOUR G-D?" (Tehillim 42:4): they said that G-d does not pay attention and leaves everything to circumstance, G-d forbid. BECAUSE OF THIS A VOICE GOES OUT EACH DAY FROM SHAMAYIM that is, from Zehr Anpin which is called "Shamayim" to Samae"l, AND SAYS "YERA BOSHET": YOU SHOULD BE EMBARRASSED BEFORE THE SHECHINAH which is the level of yireh; "YERAI SHAMAYIM": YOU SHOULD BE EMBARRASSED BEFORE THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED IS HE, WHO IS SHAMAYIM, AS IT IS WRITTEN, "AND YOU, THE HEAVEN, WILL HEAR" (I Melachim 8:32), that is Zehr Anpin which hears the prayers of Israel. (Tikunei HaZohar, Tikun 7, p. 24a)

Thus, amazingly in the very first word of the Torah which is starting of the wondrous story of the creation of existence, there is already an allusion, not just to the sin of Adam and Chava in the Garden of Eden, but to the exiles of the future Jewish people, and how they will be treated by the nations of the world during these exiles. Rearrange a few letters, and we gain a preview of the judgment waiting for the Satan at the end of history.

Furthermore, we gain a new level of understanding of what happened with Yosef while he was in his personal exile in Egypt. The favoritism he gained from his Egyptian master was not just private to Yosef and his situation, but an example of the good that occurs for the gentile world when they treat the Jews in their care with respect and honor. History bears this out, and if the gentile world only knew what is waiting for them if they treat us with care, and what is waiting for them if they don't,

history would have been more HIS story than our own.

### **SEUDAT SHLISHIT:**

*The faith of your times will be the strength of yours salvation, wisdom and knowledge; fear of G-d is his treasure. (Yeshayahu 33:6)*

Another example of the depth of the word "Bereishit" is the following, which once again emphasizes the importance of developing the all-important trait of "Yirat Shamayim" - fear of G-d:

BEREISHIT is the letters B-REISHIT; the letter "Beit" is in the shape of an opening, since it is closed on three sides and open on one side, and it alludes to the Yesod of the Malchut, the beginning point through which the souls of the righteous ascend from Olam HaBeriyah to Olam HaAtzilut. In reference to this it says, "THIS IS THE GATE OF HASHEM THROUGH WHICH THE RIGHTEOUS COME" (Tehillim 118:20). THIS IS THE GATE OF THE RIGHTEOUS WHO HAVE PERMISSION TO ASCEND THROUGH IT, b'sod aliyat M"N. THOSE WHO ARE NOT RIGHTEOUS who come there to cause M"N to ascend ARE PUSHED AWAY FROM IT because of their bad actions, because the "guards" of the walls of the Yesod d'Malchut push them away and do not allow them to enter. (Tikunei HaZohar, Tikun 1, p. 18a)

To make some sense of this, let me explain a few concepts.

Though time may seem to move horizontally, in truth life is a spiritual free-way of Divine light moving upward and downward. When we perform good deeds, we cause Holy Sparks to ascend Heavenward and they in turn receive additional light from the levels of above before descending to increase the blessing of those responsible for initiating the process. The process of Sparks ascending is "Aliyat M"N" i.e., "Main Nukvin," which is Aramaic for "Female Waters," a reference to the sparks that originate from the level of the sefirah called "Malchut".

Since every sefirah has ten sefirot of its own, Malchut has a level called "Yesod d'Malchut" which we are being told has some kind of spiritual portal through which the Sparks ascend. It is being called "the gate of Hashem through which the righteous come," alluded to by the posuk from Tehillim, and by the "Beit" of "Bereishit".

However, it is not a gate that is open to just anyone. In general, the Yesod being a place from which Divine light is emitted is a magnet for spiritual impurity that wishes to latch on to derive spiritual sustenance from this pipeline to the upper worlds. The unremoved foreskin of a baby represents the attachment of impurity which is why Brit is so crucial for a Jewish child.

Therefore, in general, the level of Yesod must be protected from the K'lipot, the reality of spiritual impurity in the world. Hence, Yesod, on any level in the Sefirot, has the ability to repel that which has no right to enter its gate to the upper holy worlds. This is what the Tikunei HaZohar is teaching us, and whether or not you relate to the Kabbalah behind its words; the point being made here is how the word "Bereishit" is an allusion to a wealth of concepts and insights that give us a far deeper

understanding and appreciation of the world that G-d made with that word.

## **MELAVE MALKAH:**

Nefesh HaChaim, Chapter 5

G-d decided to place man over the Upper Worlds, which must respond to him, for the following reason:

It is well known in the Zohar and the writings of the Arizal regarding the interconnectivity of the worlds, that each world and all that occurs in it is governed according to the world above it in very much the same way a soul directs the body. This is the way it occurs in all the worlds all the way up to G-d, Who is the "soul" of all the worlds.

This idea is what the Zohar refers to when it says:

Regarding all the worlds ... the Upper and Lower Worlds, from the foremost hidden point above to the lowest level below - each one encompasses the one above it. (Bereishit 20a):

The Idra reiterates:

All the lights grasp light, this light within this light and that light within that light; each light illuminating the next light... The light that is revealed is called the "Clothing of the King" and the innermost light ... (Idra Zuta 291b)

(The details of this idea are explained in Aitz Chaim in the section, "P'nimiut and Chitzoniut," Drush 2, and in Pri Aitz Chaim, in the introduction to the section on Shabbat, in Chapters 7, 8, and 24, where it states that the outermost part of every partzuf and world emanates into and is clothed by the partzuf and the world below it, and as a result becoming its inner section and soul.)

All the worlds are divided into four sections called: Ophanim, Chayot, Kisei Kevodo, and His holy Atzilut. The soul of each one is the world above it, as it says in Yechezkel:

"When the Chayot went up ... the Ophanim went up too because the spirit of the Chayah is in the Ophanim, they moved together, and together they stood ..." (Yechezkel 1:19)

The Chayot in turn are governed by the world of Kisei above them, like the rabbis taught: The Throne carries those that which carries it.

The Zohar Chadash also states that:

The Chayot carry those who carry them ... The Kisei HaKadosh (Holy Throne) carries the Chayot ... and the Living Soul of the Throne is in the Hidden Supernal root of the collective soul of Israel, which is even higher than the Kisei. This is why Adam is on the Throne, as it says, "And on the image of the Throne ..." (Yechezkel 1:26). (Yitro, Ma'ase Merkava, 31a)

This is also what the Zohar means with respect to:

"Back and front You have restricted me ..." (Tehillim 139:5); "back" refers to the works of creation, and "front," to the creation of the Merkava. (Yitro 70b)

With respect to the creation of the body, man came last. However, with respect to the Upper Source of his Living Soul, man preceded even the Merkava, as well as the world of Kisei, for the Living Soul is considered to be the "breath of G-d's mouth," so-to-speak, as will be discussed, G-d willing, in Chapter 15.

Hence, the worlds respond to the actions of man, which according to their leaning rouse the root of the upper soul which is above them, and which is their living spirit. When he moves, they move; if he remains stationary they are silent. This is the underlying intent of the words: When He blew into his nostrils a living soul, which is higher than the Worlds and their essences, then the man became a living soul to those Worlds. Rabbeinu Chaim Vital, in Sha'ar Kedushah, Section 3:3, similarly writes that the soul of man is the innermost of all of them. (End of Chapter 5.)

The main point of the Nefesh HaChaim is to show how the soul of man is really the soul of all the worlds, making them responsive to his will just like a body responds to the will of the soul inside of it. We look at ourselves and see ourselves as being tiny compared to the vast physical universe, and how much more so compared to the even more vast spiritual universe. If anything, we feel controlled by them, not the other way around.

Nevertheless, our bodies conceal the real and awesome truth: by virtue of our soul, we are "larger" than all the worlds that exist, and as a result of this, we have tremendous control, and with that, tremendous responsibility with respect to the entire universe - both physical and spiritual.

*Have a great Shabbat Bereishit.*  
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