

THE EDA AND DAVID SCHOTTENSTEIN EDITION

In honor of our parents, Tuvia and Lea Schottenstein and Rabbi Yisroel and Chana Sirota

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ערב שבת פרשת בראשית, כ"ח תשרי, תשפ"א

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A Day That Brightens a Year

Bereishit Bara Elokim – In the beginning G-d created... (Bereishis 1:1)

The word *bereishit* can be read as *bet reishit*, “two beginnings.” For there is a material *bereishit*, namely, the beginning of the universe, and there is a Torah *bereishit*, the start of the Torah.

The purpose of these two beginnings—the world and the Torah—is *bara Elokim*: The word *bara*, “He created,” is related to the word for clarity, and *Elokim* refers to the G-dliness that is concealed within creation. *Bara Elokim* means to clarify and reveal the ultimate purpose of this concealment.

The supernal *sefirot* (Divine attributes) similarly contain two heads: The *sefirah* of *keter* and the *sefirah* of *chochmah*, each of which is referred

to as *reishit*, a beginning. However, whereas the *keter*-beginning is concealment, the *chochmah*-beginning is revelation, as in the verse, *The beginning of wisdom is the fear of G-d* (Psalms 111:10).

On Shabbat Bereishit, the light and vitality of *chochmah* shines forth and flows across the entire subsequent year. Each day of the year, be it an ordinary weekday, a Shabbat, a festival, or a private festival celebrated by an individual—such as the day a child is first introduced to *cheder*, the day of his bar mitzvah, and other auspicious occasions or events in his life—receives its light and vitality from Shabbat Bereishit.

Focus: Your spiritual conduct on this first Shabbat of the year will directly influence your spiritual performance during the rest of the year.

חומש תניא ורמב"ם

CHUMASH, TANYA & RAMBAM SYNOPSES

Study Cycle for
Shabbos Day

Chumash

Bereishis, 7th reading: Despite Chanoch’s positive example, humanity continued in its downward spiral of moral degeneration. The angels also tried to redeem the earth—by having G-d allow them to assume physical form—but could not. Eventually, G-d saw that the only remedy was to give humanity a fresh start, and decided to wipe out the world with a flood, after which He would repopulate the world from No’ach, the only righteous individual of that generation.

Tanya

Igeres HaKodesh #25: While G-d’s Essence is entirely unaffected and His oneness is not compromised by the various contractions, the radiation (*ho’ora*) and flow (*hamshacha*) of Divine energy, however, is concealed to different degrees and various levels.

Takeaway: All “changes” in G-d, are only from our perception, (i.e., the perception of creation, so that it can exist with all its limitations); from G-d’s perspective there is no change, it is all an expression of His infinite Being.

Rambam

Zmanim, Brochos Ch. 10 – General Blessings. The many blessings for various occurrences. (This includes the blessing for something new, good news, bad news, rainfall, thanksgiving, a place where a miracle occurred or where idolatry was uprooted, seeing a Jewish settlement or a multitude of people, beautiful creations, a rainbow or the new moon, the sun, powerful winds, thunder and lightning). Specific situations where a combination of these blessings is needed. General rule: Pray for the future and offer thanksgiving for the past (*Hilchos Berachos*, Chapter ten).

Tranquility

Among the spiritual benefits of bitachon (trust) is tranquility of the soul, which is free of worry as a result of his reliance on G-d, just as a servant is bound to place his trust in his master. For a person who does not place his trust in G-d places his trust in an entity other than G-d. If a person places his trust in something other than G-d, then G-d removes His Divine Providence from him and leaves him in the hands of the entity in which he placed his trust. (introduction)

Commentary: The first benefit of bitachon is that bitachon brings you to a state of tranquility, which allows you to dedicate yourself to the service of G-d. The Chovot Halevavot explains this with the parable of a servant, who must rely on his master to take care of all of his needs and is only concerned with his responsibility to his master. In a similar vein, as servants of G-d, we trust that G-d will take care of our needs, and we, therefore, only concern ourselves with fulfilling our duties towards Him.

A person's existence is dependent on G-d's Providence and kindness. When he chooses not to acknowledge this and places his trust in something other than G-d, then G-d, so to speak, responds in kind: "If you do not acknowledge this reality and you do not need me, then I will indeed remove My Providence from you, and your destiny will be in that which you place your trust." Trust in

G-d has its own inherent benefit. The Ba'al Shem Tov teaches that a person has to pray for his trust to be strengthened, because when G-d desires to punish, He begins by removing that person's trust in Him (*Keter Shem Tov*, sec. 382).

This can be understood in light of a statement by R. Shmuel, the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe, known as the Rebbe Maharash: A Jew is never deficient in sustenance; rather, he is deficient in his trust of G-d. There is an abundance of sustenance prepared for every Jew; however, if a person is deficient in trust, the sustenance does not reach him (*Torat Shmuel* 5626, p. 168).

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that bitachon is like a faucet: When we have it, the faucet is open and our blessings pour through. However, when we lack it, the faucet is closed (*Torat Menachem*, vol. 9, p. 124).

Higher than the Angels

The fallen ones were on the earth in those days. (Bereishis 6:4)

Angels are spiritual creatures, normally invisible to us. They are typically either a personification of some Divine attribute or an emissary created by G-d to perform some mission.

When the angels took on physical form and entered the physical world, they "fell"; they could not resist the materialism and arrogance of the world.

An angel does not have the spiritual wherewithal to exist in the world and at the same time remain attached to Divinity.

Only human beings, who are created in G-d's image, can, like G-d, unite heaven and earth.

(Likutei Sichot, vol. 15, p. 15.)

וַיִּצְמַח ה' אֱלֹקִים מִן־הָאֲדָמָה כָּל־עֵץ נֹחֵמֵד לְמִרְאָה וְטוֹב לְמֵאֲכָל וְעֵץ הַחַיִּים בְּתוֹךְ הֶגֶן וְעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע

And the L-rd G-d caused to sprout from the ground every tree pleasant to see and good to eat, and the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden, and the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. (Bereishis 2:9)

Driving question: What is the significance of the order in which the two trees in the garden are mentioned?

Main idea: The Tree of Life alludes to faith, while the Tree of Knowledge refers to understanding. It is imperative that faith precede knowledge, and only then can the two be united as one.

The two trees mentioned in this verse correspond to faith (אמונה) and knowledge (דעת).¹

[The tree of life corresponds to faith, as gleaned from the verse,² “וַיִּצְדִּיק בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ יְהוָה” — “...but the righteous shall live by his faith,” which equates faith and life.]

The order of the trees as they are written in the verse is very specific, mentioning the tree of life before the tree of knowledge. This teaches us that only if faith precedes knowledge, will the knowledge itself be alive and sustained.

This concept of having a “living” knowledge, where one’s intellect is based on his faith, can also

1. Generally speaking, the Torah is divided into two categories: (a) The revealed elements of Torah, which include the laws and customs of Judaism. This facet of the Torah is the rational, legal perspective, and is therefore referred to here as ‘knowledge’; (b) The inner facet of Torah, known as Kabbalah - the secrets of Torah. The ideas discussed in Kabbalah are generally esoteric, and are thus accepted as faith. These are the two trees mentioned in the verse.

There is a way to unite the two and bring the esoteric into the realm of comprehension, and this is through the study of Chassidus. Chassidic philosophy brings the lofty concepts of Kabbalah within the realm of understanding.

The idea discussed here is how to bridge the gap between faith and understanding. At the outset of our intellectual pursuits of Torah (knowledge), we need to ensure the foundation is deeply rooted in our faith, because otherwise, intellect alone can lead one way off course.

2. Habakuk 2:4

be understood from the teaching of Rav Yosef in the Talmud³ on the verse:⁴ “And you shall show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.” Explaining the words “And you shall show them” (“וְהוֹדַעְתָּ”), Rabbi Yosef explains that this is referring to the source of life. The word וְהוֹדַעְתָּ stems from the same root as the word דַּעַת, referring to knowledge, and this, according to the Talmud, is related to life,⁵ i.e., a knowledge built on the foundation of faith which is alive and sustainable.

This idea is also alluded to in the order of the six books of the Mishnah. The Talmud⁶ expounds the verse:⁷ “וְהָיָה אֱמוּנַת עַמֶּיךָ חֶסֶן יְשׁוּעַת חֻקְמַת וְדַעַת יִרְאַת יְהוָה” - “And the faith of your times shall be the strength of salvations, wisdom and knowledge; fear of the Lord, that is his treasure” to be referring to the six books of the Mishnah.⁸ The first word “אמונת” – “the faith” refers to the first book of *Zera'im* and

3. Bava Metzia 30b

4 Exodus 18:20

5. The reading of the Talmud is בית חייהם, which Rashi explains as a source of livelihood.

6. Shabbos 31a

7. Isaiah 33:6

8. The Mishnah is divided into six general sections. Each section discusses one general topic. For example the order of Mo'ed deals with laws regarding Shabbat, Holidays and other special days.

the final word “וְדַעַת” - “**and knowledge**” refers to the last one - *Taharos*.

We can see from here as well that faith comes first, and only then can there be knowledge in the proper way.⁹

When it is in this order specifically, the two ‘trees’ mentioned in this verse can be connected together as one.

This foundation of faith, which anchors one’s knowledge, is also seen in the prophecy regarding Moshiach’s qualities and the era of Moshiach, as the prophet first states:¹⁰ “...and **faith** the girdle of

his loins,” and a few verses later he continues,¹¹ “... for the land shall be full of **knowledge** of the Lord as water covers the sea bed.”

(Likkutei Levi Yitzchok, Igros Kodesh end of page 413)

Conclusion: The two trees in the Garden of Eden representing faith and knowledge, can and should be united, but only by strictly following the order as they appear in the verse.

9. To further understand the connection between faith and knowledge, see Likkutei Sichos, vol. 1 page 240.

10. Isaiah, 11:5

11. Ibid, 11:9

גאולה

GEULAH

Shabbos

Following each day of creation, the Torah states, “*It was evening, it was morning, one day*,” “*It was evening, it was morning, a second day*,” etc. For the seventh day, there is no such statement. G-d inaugurated each day except for the seventh, which He will inaugurate in the future, as stated in Zechariah, “*It will be one day that will be known to G-d, neither day nor night.*” The true nature of Shabbos —

regarding which neither “it was morning,” nor “it was evening” was stated – was never fully revealed. It is known only to G-d. He will reveal the secret of Shabbos in the era that is entirely Shabbos, the Era of Redemption that will be entirely light, without distinction of day and night.

Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer, as per commentary of Radal

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