

# INSIGHTS

## Into The Weekly Parsha

בס"ד

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This week's Insights is dedicated in memory Moshe Chaim ben Avraham  
Aba. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

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29 TISHREI

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS BEREISHIS

## A Lesson in Leadership



The Gemara relates that when the Greek king Talmai compelled seventy Jewish sages to produce a Greek translation of the Torah, all of them made the same change to its very first words. Instead of translating the phrase "Bereishis bara Elokim" directly into Greek, they altered it to read "Elokim bara bereishis." Had they kept the *possuk* in its original form, the wording could have been misconstrued to mean that God Himself was created by "bereishis," perhaps representing some sort of "first cause." By inverting the order of the words in the *possuk*, the sages made it clear that God is the Creator, and that He Himself was not created by any other being.

This begs the question: If it was possible for the *possuk* to be phrased in a less ambiguous way, why doesn't it appear in that way in the Torah? What lesson are we meant to derive from the *possuk* as it appears?

The Midrash makes a fascinating comment on this *possuk*: "Rav Yehuda says in the name of Akilus: It is appropriate for Him [i.e. Hashem] to be called 'God.' It is customary in the world for a mortal king to be praised before he has built bathhouses [and the like, i.e. before he has accomplished anything] ... but the Unique One of the world first acts and then is praised."

This Midrash highlights a fundamental difference between Hashem and, *l'havdil*, a human king. A mortal king acts to benefit the people only after he has been installed in his position of authority. By nature, a human leader's interest is in securing a position of power, and once he achieves that power he will use all authority and resources at his disposal to provide for the people over whom he rules. However, until he has power and resources at his disposal the human king cannot or will not do anything for the people.

The Midrash teaches us that Hashem's approach, so to speak, is the exact opposite: Hashem did not wish to be called *Elokim* until after He performed the "work" of creation, represented by the word *bereishis*.

In effect, Hashem was saying to the world, "I am not interested in being acknowledged as your King in advance. First I will build a world for you, and then, when you are satisfied with the results, you will call Me your King."

This is a powerful lesson for anyone who may hold a position of responsibility or authority of any kind. Imagine an employer who interviews two different candidates for an important position in his organization. One candidate assures the prospective employer that once he is installed in

the position, he will fulfill all the requirements of the job and will satisfy all the organization's needs. The other candidate, meanwhile, tells the employer, "There is no need for you to commit to hiring me right now. Give me a chance to work at this job for three months without pay and you will see what I am capable of accomplishing. Then, when you are satisfied with my work, you can hire me." Is there any question that the second candidate is a thousand times more valuable to the employer than the first?

Thus, in the first *possuk* of the Torah the Master of the Universe sets a powerful example for all of us. The natural tendency is for a human being to take the opposite approach: We all want others to commit to us before we commit to them. The average employee would much prefer to be given a raise and then to improve his performance, rather than to improve his work first in order to earn that raise. We see no logic in making the effort to create something or to perform a job before we are guaranteed compensation for it. But Hashem Himself models a different approach: He commits to us, as it were, before we commit to Him.

# History Reordered

The Torah relates the birth of Kayin and Hevel after Adam and his family were banished from the Garden of Eden for the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Rashi points out that their birth actually took place prior to the sin. This is very odd; why would the Torah place this out of chronological order? The basic rule is that everything is in chronological order unless there is a specific reason to alter the order. What is the reason here?

Adam was created perfect. Chazal teach us that part of this perfection was that he was immortal. In such a situation, it is impossible for a child to eclipse his parents. This is because as the child continues to grow so do his parents. It is only after the sin that Kayin and Hevel can be identified as separate entities because it is only once Adam is mortal that they are assured of one day stepping out of his shadow and coming into their own. Therefore their very existence wasn't relevant until Adam had sinned.



The Midrash tells us that the snake slandered God to Eve when convincing her to eat of the Tree of Knowledge. In other words, the snake introduced *lashon hora* into creation and this led inevitably to the "Original Sin." Our rabbis teach that the sin of *lashon hora* is more severe than the three cardinal sins; murder, illicit relations, and idol worship. Unfortunately, people don't take this as seriously as they should, after all who would you prefer your daughter to marry: 1) a murderer 2) an adulterer or 3)

## Did You Know...

Chazal teach us that Hashem created the sun and the moon to rule the day and the night, and that originally they were both the same size. The moon then complained to Hashem that "two kings cannot share one crown" so Hashem ordered the moon to become smaller.

Just how small did the moon become? The sun is actually a relatively small star in our galaxy and categorized as a yellow dwarf star. Still, you can fit almost 1,300,000 earths inside it. You can fit fifty moons into the earth. This means that the moon is approximately .0024 the size of the sun. Quite a reduction indeed!

In Chazal, the moon represents the Jewish people and the sun represents the nations of the world. A Talmudic example of this is the teaching (*Sukkah* 29a) that a solar eclipse is an evil sign for the nations of the world and a lunar eclipse augurs evil for the Jewish people.

Amazingly, today's Jewish to world population ratio is the same as the size ratio of the moon to the sun!

Perhaps this is why the Talmud (*Shavuot* 9a) states that Hashem asked the Jewish people to "atone for him" for commanding the moon to become smaller, by bringing a sacrifice on *Rosh Chodesh*, which is the beginning of the lunar cycle. In addition the first *mitzvah* given to the Jewish people was that of *Kiddush Hachodesh*, sanctifying the new moon.

a person who believes in Jews for Yoshke or 4) someone who sits in shul and shares juicy stories with his friends during Kiddush?

The question is: Why? Why is *lashon hora* such a severe sin? And why does the transgression of *lashon hora* only apply when one is telling the truth? Isn't telling the truth an important principal of Judaism? In fact, the seal of God is *emes* – truth! What is so terribly wrong about relaying a true story?

