

# INSIGHTS

## Into The Weekly Parsha

OCTOBER 14, 2023

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

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 1

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



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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

*Ask your father and he will tell you, [ask] your grandfather and he will relate it to you (32:7).*

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.

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