

# A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

*This weekly sheet is brought to you by **Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman** of the **New West End United Synagogue** in conjunction with **Shapell's/Darché Noam***

## PARSHAT BEREISHIT

### DVAR TORAH: SMALL BEGINNINGS

Rashi makes two puzzling comments on this week's Parshah. On the words "יהי מאורות – Let there be luminaries" (Bereishit 1:14), Rashi comments: "They were created on the first day, but on the fourth day they were commanded to be hung in the expanse (רקיע)." He makes a similar comment on the similar expression "יהי רקיע – Let there be an expanse" (Bereishit 1:6): "Let the expanse strengthen," he writes, "for even though the heavens were created on the first day, they were still moist. They solidified on the second day from the declaration (literally, from the roar) of the Holy One, blessed be He." Rashi quotes a verse in Iyov that supports this explanation of the development of the heavens.

The Rav of Krakow, Harav Yosef Nechemyah Kornitzer, זצ"ל (1881-1933, in התורה על יוסף נחמיה על התורה), asks a simple question: Why didn't Hashem just create the luminaries and the skies totally finished? Couldn't He have fixed the sun, moon, and stars in their places on the first day? Couldn't the expanse of the heavenly skies been created without moisture that had to be removed by the declaration "יהי רקיע"?

He answers that Hashem made things in this way to teach us a lesson about how the world works. This lesson is encapsulated in a verse in Iyov (Job): "והיה ראשיתך מצער ואחריתך ישגה מאד – And your beginning will be small, but your end will increase exceedingly" (Iyov 8:7). Hashem wanted to teach us that great things are not made instantly; they must develop. Even the heavens and the heavenly luminaries must go through a process to reach their final stage of lofty existence.

People develop. As Iyov said: "עָרַם יָצָאתִי מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי – I left my mother's womb naked" (Iyov 1:21). People begin their lives small and weak and little by little develop into adults. Completion and perfection in all things comes about little by little, and goes through stages of development.

One should not, therefore, despair when one meets difficulties in the beginning of a great venture or project. As the Mechilta (Hachodesh 2) comments on the verses of the beginning of the giving of the Torah. "כל התחלות קשות – All beginnings are difficult." Wise is the person who keeps in mind the statement of the Gemara (Tamid 32a), "Who is wise? One who sees the 'newborn'" – one who has the foresight to realize that the newborn begins weak and helpless but eventually develops into a great and awesome being.

This message is also in the very first verse of the Torah. Rashi explains "בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ" as "At the beginning of the creation of the heavens and the earth ..." Even the heavens and the earth have a beginning that started out with confusion and darkness and needs to be followed by development and growth. The Rav of Krakow suggests that we connect the end of the Torah with its beginning. The last words of the Torah are "לעיני כל ישראל" – to the eyes of all of Israel. This message – "בראשית ברא אלקים" - that beginnings start small – should be before the "eyes of all of Israel."

## SOURCE GUIDE: BREAD OR GRASS?

After the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, G-d told Adam that he would no longer eat the same food he had eaten until now in the Garden of Eden. What was Adam's new food? The Torah seems to give two different answers to this question: bread and grass. This source guide is based on how midrashim deal with this seeming contradiction.

### A. Bread or Grass?

Adam's sin involved eating, as did its repercussions:

<p><b>1. Bereishit 3:17-19</b></p> <p>(17) And to Adam He said, "Because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate from the tree that I commanded you saying, 'Do not eat of it' – the land will be cursed because of you. You will eat of it in sadness all the days of your life.</p> <p>(18) And thorn and thistle it will sprout forth for you; and you will eat of the grass of the field.</p> <p>(19) By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, until you return to the earth that you were taken from. For you came from dirt and you will return to dirt.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>בראשית ג:יז-יט</b></p> <p>(יז) וילאדם אמר כי שמעת לקול אשתי ותאכל מן העץ אשר צויתיה לאמר לא תאכל ממנו ארוה האדמה בעבורך בעצבון תאכלנה כל ימי חייך.</p> <p>(יח) וקוצ ודרדר תצמיח לך ואכלת את עשב השדה.</p> <p>(יט) ביעת אפיה תאכל לחם עד שובך אל האדמה כי ממנה לקחת כי עפר אתה ואל עפר תשוב.</p>
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Before the sin Adam was told by G-d that he could eat of the fruit of the Garden's trees – except, of course, from the Tree of Knowledge:

<p><b>2. Bereishit 2:15-17</b></p> <p>(15) Hashem G-d took the Man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to keep it.</p> <p>(16) And Hashem G-d commanded the Man, saying, "From all the trees of the Garden you can surely eat.</p> <p>(17) And from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil – you should not eat of it; for on the day you eat of it you will surely die."</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>בראשית ב:טו-יז</b></p> <p>(טו) ויקח ה' אלקים את האדם וינחהו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה.</p> <p>(טז) ויצו ה' אלקים על האדם לאמר מכל עץ הגן אכל תאכל.</p> <p>(יז) ומעץ הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל ממנו כי ביום אכלה ממנו מות תמות.</p>
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After the sin Adam's eating was limited – but to what? Bereishit 3:18 (source 1 above) implies that he would now eat grass; but from the very next verse it sounds like Adam would eat bread, though he would have to work hard to attain it.

### B. From Bread to Grass

Apparently, the following passage in the Gemara draws on the difference between the two verses:

<p><b>3. Pesachim 118a</b></p> <p>Said Rabbi Yehoshua son of Levi: When the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Adam, "And thorn and thistle it will sprout forth for you," his eyes started to flow with tears. He said before Him, "Master of the Universe! My donkey and I will eat from the same trough?" When He said to him, "By the sweat of your face you will eat bread," his mind was set at rest.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>פסחים קיה.</b></p> <p>אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: בשעה שאמר הקדוש ברוך הוא לאדם "וקוצ ודרדר תצמיח לך" זלגו עיניו דמעות. אמר לפניו, "רבונו של עולם! אני וחמורי נאכל באבוס אחד?" כיון שאמר לו "בזעת אפך תאכל לחם," נתקררה דעתו.</p>
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Adam worried that after his sin he had descended to the level of animals and would no longer rule over them. He would no longer eat the fruit of the garden but was limited to grass like the animals (see Bereishit 1:29-30). But Adam's worry was unfounded. When he heard Hashem say he would eat bread, Adam was consoled. Rabbi Yehoshua's understanding of "grass of the field" seems to be the same as the Ibn Ezra's:

#### 4. Ibn Ezra on Bereishit 3:18

The meaning of “grass of the field” is bread; for in the Garden of Eden his sustenance was from the fruit of the tree.

אבן עזרא על בראשית ג:יז-יט  
וטעם את עשב השדה הוא הלחם כי בגן  
עדן חיותו מפרי העץ.

Adam’s food would still be distinct from that of the animals. They would eat grass; he would eat bread that begins as wheat grass but requires great effort to become human food. Adam’s supremacy over the animals was still intact, but he would have to work hard to retain it.

Several midrashim develop a similar theme but make a significant addition. Here are two of them:

#### 5. Avot D’Rabbi Natan 1:8

When the first Adam heard the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, “And you will eat the grass of the field,” his limbs immediately began to tremble. He said before Him, “Master of the Universe! My animal and I will eat from one trough?” The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, “Since your limbs trembled, by the sweat of your face you will eat bread.”

#### Bereishit Rabbah 20:10

When the first Adam heard this his face broke out into a sweat. He said, “What? I will be tied to a trough like an animal?” The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, “Since your face broke into a sweat you will eat bread.”

#### אבות דרבי נתן א:ח

כיון ששמע אדה"ר שאמר לו הקב"ה  
"ואכלת את עשב השדה" מיד נודעזעו  
אבריו. אמר לפניו, "רבוננו של עולם! אני  
ובהמתי נאכל באבוס אחד?" אמר לו  
הקב"ה, "הואיל ונודעזעו אברייך בזיעת  
אפיך תאכל לחם."

#### בראשית רבה כ:י

כיון ששמע אדם הראשון כן הזיעו פניו.  
אמר, "מה, אני נקשר לאבוס כבהמה?"  
אמר לו הקב"ה, "הואיל והזיעו פניך  
תאכל לחם."

These midrashim take a different reading of these two verses than the Gemara does. At first Adam was really to descend to the level of animals and eat grass! He was shocked by this, to the degree that he trembled (Avot D’Rabbi Natan) – or broke out into a sweat (Bereishit Rabbah). It was **because** Adam had such a severe, visceral reaction to the thought of being animal-like, that G-d retracted and allowed him to eat human food, bread.

The Midrash now enables us to give new meaning to the words “בזיעת אפיך תאכל לחם – By the sweat of your face you will eat bread.” Said G-d to Adam: **As a result of** the sweat of your face when you heard you would eat grass – you merit eating bread. It was man’s deep fear that sin had reduced him from a dignified and lofty being to an animalistic creature that caused G-d to restore his higher status.

## COMPLETION BY RABBI MENDEL FARBER

Why is the bride referred to as a Kallah? At the root of the Hebrew word כלה is כל. What does the word כל mean? It does not merely mean “all things” or “everything.” We can learn a more precise meaning of כל from the end of the creation story, where the Torah says, “ויכלו השמים והארץ” and “ויכלו” וישיב. ביום השביעי. ויכל in that verse does not mean that the heavens and the earth were finished, but that they were completed. ויכל does not mean that God finished creation, but that he completed it. It means that He made creation into a כל, a completed organism.

When a woman marries she completes the human form. The many qualities and talents that a man may have are all disjointed as long as he remains unmarried. The man lacks the quality that can join his disparate parts into a single unified entity. Until the couple is married, neither of the two is complete and neither of them can be referred to as “Adam.” Together, though, they create the human form as we were at creation. The Torah so clearly describes this: “זכר ונקבה בראם ויברך אותם ויקרא את שמם אדם ביום הבראם” - He created them male and female and He blessed them and called their names Adam on the day He created them,” (Bereishit 5:2).

Though only the two of them together complete the human form, they do not play identical roles in this process. The man is the basis of that form, bringing all of its parts to the marriage; and the woman is its completion. She arranges all the parts in their proper places, creating an efficiently functioning organism.

The wedding is the completion of the human form. The husband and wife are now, together, a complete human being. But this is only the beginning of a process. Their goal has not yet been achieved. Only now that they are a complete human being can it start to function. They are now ready to begin their lives.

### Two Types of Joy

There are two Hebrew words that express the joy and happiness of a Chatan and Kallah, ששון and שמחה. What is the difference between ששון and שמחה? We find the answer in the words of the first blessing of the Shabbat morning Keriat Shema, referring to the heavenly bodies: “שמחים בצאתם וששים בבואם – They are joyous – שמחים – when they go out, and joyous – ששים – when they come in.” The joy and satisfaction we experience when we “go out,” when we are actively involved in attempting to achieve our goal and purpose in life, is called ששון. שמחה is what we feel when we return home with the satisfaction of having succeeded in reaching our goal. שמחה, the joy of attempting to achieve our goal, precedes ששון, the joy we feel after having achieved it.

In the blessings of the wedding, though, שמחה surprisingly precedes ששון. Why do we first speak of the קול שמחה – the sound of ששון – before the קול ששון? The Chatan and Kallah have achieved their goal of becoming an “Adam,” fulfilling the purpose of creation. They are filled with ששון, the satisfaction of achievement. But that accomplishment is not an end but a new beginning, a beginning that is followed by the dynamics of actively growing and constantly reaching new heights and accomplishments. They are now filled with שמחה, the happiness of a life full of opportunities to reach even higher goals. Becoming complete brings ששון. Using that completion to strive for higher goals brings שמחה.

Each of our Avot were blessed with the blessing of כל, as we say in Birkat Hamazon, “ כמו שנתברכו אבותינו – בכל, מכל – just as our forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov were blessed – מכל, מכל – with all, from all, all.” Their lives were not a series of disjointed events. Every event in their lives joined together to create a meaningful single unitary life, devoted to achieving the purpose for which it was created. כל is an indivisible story of devotion to an ideal and its successful implementation.

May Hashem bless all of our Chatanim and Kallot to create families with many parts that all come together – each forming a totality that will be an instrument of Kevod Shamayim, the honor of Heaven.

[Adapted from “Kol Sasson V’kol Simcha: A Collection of Wedding Divrei Torah by Rabbi Menachem Farber”]

שבת שלום ומבורך

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*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v’Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples’ programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at [www.darchenoam.org](http://www.darchenoam.org) +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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