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# פרשת בראשית

## Parshat Bereishit

# אשרינו Ashreinu

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



## LET'S BE MASSIVE

RABBI RAPHAEL STOHL

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REBECCA ADLER ('23)

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BENNY FRANK (21')

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LIZI BUGAY (22')

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EZRA COHEN (23')

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Adam HaR-  
ishon was  
huge. Chazal  
say (Sanhe-  
drin 38b) that  
he spanned  
from one side  
of Earth to the  
other. But then  
he sinned. And

Hashem made him mini-Adam (Sanhedrin  
ibid.). That's right, mankind was massive... and  
then we became tiny bits of who we could have  
been.

Rav Hutner points out (Pachad Yitzchak, Rosh  
Hashanah 20:13-14) that the same thing hap-  
pened  
after the *mabul* and after the *Dor Haflagah*  
(Tower of Bavel, end of Parashat Noach). Man-

kind was massive. And then we sinned...and we  
became tiny caricatures of the people we could  
have been. How sad, no? To minimize ourselves  
from giants to peas? Yet, unfortunately, we all  
see people doing this to themselves all the time.

A student can go to a top yeshiva or seminary.  
He or she can become an amazing ben Torah...  
a  
remarkable bat Torah... absolutely HUGE. But  
rather than realizing our potential, we mini-  
mize  
ourselves.

It's up to us: we can choose to be huge...to span  
from one side of Earth to the other... or we can  
kick back, munch on some small, forbidden  
fruit, and become mini-people. It's up to us.

If a person thinks small, he or she will be small.

But if you think MASSIVE, you can BE massive. Of course, it takes work, but you have it in you! You are a GIANT, not a little pea!

What does it mean to be massive? It means becoming the best YOU that you can become. God

created you with potential to be giant...to span from one side of Earth to the other. To follow the

WHOLE Torah...to follow ALL of *Shulchan Aruch*...to fill your ENTIRE potential. All too often, I've been told: "Rabbi, I know it's right...but I'm not on that level." So the Torah comes along and tells us: "No! You ARE on that level! You can be MASSIVE!! Don't sell yourself short!"

Certainly, nobody grows into a giant overnight. It takes time, and it takes effort. But set the bar

high. Be big. Be huge. Be MASSIVE. I know you can. YOU know you can! You are a GIANT.

## LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

REBECCA ADLER ('23)

וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תוֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ  
אֱלֹקִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים יְהִי  
אוֹר וַיְהִי אוֹר

"And the earth was desolate and void, and darkness was upon the waters. And God said, let there be light and there was light" (Bereishit 1:2-3).

In this week's parsha, Parshat Bereishit, the opening pesukim start out with Hashem creating the world. On the first day, Hashem differentiated between darkness and light. First, there was darkness, then Hashem brought light into the world; the light came after the darkness. This may seem to be a straightforward narrative of creation, but there is actual-

ly a valuable lesson that we can learn from it.

First, the entire creation is purely from God; no human could have created such an incredible and detailed world. Specifically here, Hashem says, "Let there be light" and there was light—a pure miracle! When we are in a state of darkness, we should remind ourselves Who is in charge and Who is constantly looking out for us.

For the past seven months, as we are all experiencing a global pandemic, it is fair to say that we are living through an era of darkness. But as these pesukim teach us, Hashem will bring us light and help us through these challenging times. Hashem has the power to bring light into this world. But similar to creation, the darkness will come first, and then the light will follow. Although it is frustrating that it has been seven long months of "corona", with no end in sight, we still need to believe completely in Hashem. We need to remember that in the end, He will bring us light. Whether the light is something as drastic as a cure or vaccine, or simply a new perspective on life, we should recognize how powerful Hashem is and what He is capable of.

Elie Weisel, a famous Holocaust survivor, said, "Even in darkness, it is possible to create light." This is coming from a man who survived both Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps and experienced the horrors of the Holocaust, and yet he is still able to look for the light.

Although it seems like an era filled with darkness, Hashem will bring us light, just like He did on the first day of creation. If a man who endured so much during the Holocaust can truly believe the message of these pesukim, then surely we can too.

# NO CONNECTION

BENNY FRANK (21')

When Adam and Chava ate from the *Eitz HaDa'at*, they, along with the snake, were punished. Along with all of humanity for the rest of time, Adam would have to work hard for his food and Chava would have pains in childbirth. But the most interesting punishment is that of the snake. Hashem tells the snake that it will eat the dust of the earth all the days of its life. At first glance, this sounds like a pretty harsh punishment because the dust on the ground is disgusting and dirty, and no one would want to eat dust. But at second glance, maybe it isn't so bad -- and might even be a blessing! If the snake eats the dust of the earth, he will have an endless supply of food because dust is found everywhere, making it almost impossible for the snake to ever be hungry. Why would Hashem do this seeming kindness for the snake if it really deserved to be punished?

Rabbi Elias Schwartz offers a fantastic answer to this question. He says that what looks like a blessing in this case is actually a curse. By giving the snake an unlimited supply of food, God is really taking something away that is much more valuable than anything else in the physical world: a connection to Hashem. By providing the snake with everything it needs, it has no reason to ask Hashem for help, and consequently has no relationship with the Creator of the universe. The opposite is also true: by giving someone a challenging situation in life, Hashem is actually giving that person a reason to ask Hashem for help, a relationship with God. In these unstable times, let us not forget that, although Hashem may give us struggles, they are also an opportunity

to reconnect to Hashem and deepen our relationship with Him.

# ALWAYS THERE

LIZI BUGAY (22')

לֹא מוֹת תָּמֹתוּן כִּי יִדְעַ אֱלֹקִים כִּי בַיּוֹם אֶכְלֶכֶם מִמֶּנּוּ  
וְנִפְקַחוּ עֵינֵיכֶם וְהִיִּיתֶם כְּאֱלֹהִים יִדְעֵי טוֹב וָרָע

We learn in Parshat Bereishit that on the sixth day, God created Man. Adam was lonely so God created Chava as well. God told Adam and Chava that they could eat from any tree, but if they decided to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, they would die. The serpent tells Chava:

“You are not going to die, but God knows that as soon as you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like divine beings who know good and bad” (Bereishit 3:4-5).

The commentaries concur that this implies that if Adam and Chava eat from the tree, they will become like angels. Chava believes the snake's words and gives some fruit to her husband. Rashi (Bereishit 3:6) explains that Chava did not want to die and Adam remain alive and take another wife. This is a selfish act that led to both of their downfalls.

The snake is a symbol of the *yetzer hara*. Chava could not put a stop to her desire and allowed her wants to come before her spirituality. She should have listened to God because He had her best interests at heart and, similarly, He knows what's best for us. Sometimes we are like Chava in the sense that we do not realize what God really plans for us, and while we think we know what we want, it is not always what we need. We blindly follow our *yetzer hara* which causes us to sin. Without a doubt, we should put our faith in Hashem and follow His ways

God proceeded to curse the serpent by removing its legs and making it a searcher for its own food. Next, He cursed Chava and gave her pain while bearing children. Lastly, Adam was punished when Hashem cursed the ground, causing him to have to work the soil. These punishments are very fitting to their sins, which helps us understand how just and reasonable God is. Even when we sin, we believe that God will always be fair and won't hold any grudges against us. "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.."

## SHABBAT BLESSING

EZRA COHEN (23')

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹקִים אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשׁ אֹתוֹ

(Bereishit 2:3).

Tehillim 92, the Song for the Day for Shabbat, does not mention the word Shabbat! How did it become the Tehillim for Shabbat? The midrash says that when Adam sinned on Friday, he was supposed to die on Shabbat. Shabbat pleaded to Hashem and said, "Don't have Adam die on this day. How will I be sanctified?" Hashem ended up canceling the death sentence. Adam responded by wanting to praise Shabbat, but Shabbat said to praise Hashem instead. Therefore, Tehillim 92 is about praising Hashem, not Shabbat. The amount of chessed Hashem does for us every day is astronomical. Yet, we forget to thank Him and appreciate everything He does for us. Shabbat is a time to truly appreciate all that Hashem does, especially since we can not ask for anything on Shabbat. The day is specifically made so that we can appreciate and focus on what Hashem already does for us.

We must take this idea into our everyday lives by thanking Hashem. We should thank Him especially now for the health He provides during these hard times. Shabbat Shalom!



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### FACULTY ADVISOR

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### DEVELOPERS

ATARA KEEHN (' 23)

ABBY ROSENTHAL (' 23)

A KYHS PARSHA PUBLICATION



RAVH@YESHIVAHS.ORG