



Parshas Bereishis

October 13, 2017

# A Taste of Torah

## Right from the Start

by Rabbi Yaakov Zions

A *rosh yeshiva* (dean) of one of today's prominent yeshivos was asked to host a Q&A session with a group of unaffiliated Jewish college students. He acquiesced, but laid down two prerequisites. One, the fact that this complex world was created by intelligent design is not up for debate. Second, in an intelligently designed world, there must be a manual that comes along with it. It would simply be inconceivable, he said, for billions of smart creatures to be dumped into a world without the slightest directive as to their mission.

Our parsha, besides the obvious distinction of being the first in the Torah, is also a great source in providing basic direction in this world.

The *Sefer Ha'Ikkarim* (by Rabbi Yosef Albo, [1380-1444]), a 15<sup>th</sup>-century classic, was, and still remains, a primary source of Jewish theology. (It was first printed in 1485, only ten years after the first book was printed in Hebrew and only 45 years after Gutenberg invented the movable-type printing press!) The underlying argument of the work is that there are three primary pillars of *emunah* (faith/trust) in Judaism: the existence of Hashem, the divinity of Torah, and a reckoning for one's actions. He argued with the Rambam, who counted thirteen principles of faith, known by the name of their abridged version, the *Ani Ma'amins*. However, as Rabbi Albo himself notes, there is little debate as to the importance of the Rambam's principles; the disagreement was how to define them.

In section 1, chapter 11, Rabbi Albo raises two major questions on our parsha. First, the first verse in Chapter 5 seems out of place. The previous four chapters detail the six days of Creation

and Shabbos (1:1-2:3), the four rivers (2:4-14), the rise and fall of Adam and Chava (2:15-3:24) and their progeny (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 begins "*Zeh sefer toldos Adam*," "this is the book of the developments of Adam [or Mankind]," and begins detailing Adam and Chava's creation and their offspring for the remainder of the chapter. Why are we beginning the story again?

Second, the Name of Hashem throughout these chapters seems inconsistent. In the chapter of Creation (which we will refer to as part one), He is referred to as Elokim. From that point until Chapter 4 (part two), He is called Hashem (the four-letter name or the Tetragrammaton) and Elokim, and throughout Chapter 4 (part three), He is called only Hashem.

Rabbi Albo answers that the first section of the Torah is the overview; it is presenting the three primary pillars mentioned earlier. Part one highlights the existence of Hashem, and therefore uses the name Elokim, which indicates that He is All-Powerful.

Part two highlights the divinity of Torah. True, the Torah would not be given for another two thousand years, but the groundwork was being laid now. We are introduced here to the primacy of Mankind in Creation, His mission to keep Hashem's commands and the challenges inherent in doing so in this world. For this lesson, the name Hashem Elokim shows not only that He's all-powerful in the physical sense (Elokim), but that there is an infinite amount of profound wisdom He possesses (Hashem).

The third part is the presentation of personal responsibility and reckoning for one's actions. This was demonstrated with Kayin's murder

## Stories For The Soul

### A Perspective of Gratitude

Rabbi Dovid Bender was the *menahel* (principal) of Yeshiva Torah Vodaas in New York. A prestigious Torah scholar and beloved educator, it came as a great shock when he passed away suddenly of a heart attack in 1965 at the young age of 52.

His father, Rabbi Avraham Bender, had immigrated to Eretz Yisrael some years before. Family members living in the Holy Land, concerned that, at Reb Avraham's age, the news could be harmful to his health, did not immediately inform him of the tragedy.

Eventually, Reb Avraham realized something was amiss, and the family, after evading his questions for some time, decided to inform him of the terrible event. His nephew Rabbi Shlomo Berman, a great Torah scholar, gathered some family and friends in Reb Avraham's apartment. Reb Avraham looked at the crowd and immediately understood what had occurred. He removed his shoes and sat down on the floor, in accordance with the laws of mourning.

He told the assemblage, "I have something to tell you. Nearly fifty years ago, when my Dovid'l was three years old, he was very sick - he nearly died. Hashem, in His infinite mercy, saved him. He gave me a precious gift - he gave me my Dovid'l for fifty years, fifty wonderful, precious years.

"Do you have any idea how much *nachas* I have had from my Dovid? Do you have any idea how much *nachas* I have from his children, my grandchildren? I must thank

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## Kollel Happenings

### WHOSE RIGHT & WHO'S RIGHT?: THE DEBATE OVER THE TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY

Join J. Joshua Kopelman, MD, FACOG, FACS, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore this emotionally-fraught and sensitive subject. Wednesday, November 1, at 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

### LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact [rmh@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org).

### HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit [denverkollel.org](http://denverkollel.org) or email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org).

# Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** The Torah begins with the word *bereishis*. In Torah scrolls, the first letter (*beis*) is enlarged. What else is unique about the writing of this word in Torah scrolls?

**A:** There is a seemingly universal custom to begin all columns of the Torah scroll with the letter *vov*. There is another, seemingly older, custom to begin six special columns with words whose acronym in Hebrew is *בִּי ה' שְׁמִי* ("with Kah His name"). We therefore begin all columns with a *vov*, with the exception of five columns. (The sixth column, beginning with a *vov* regardless, obviously

does not need an exception.) One of them is the first column, which begins with *bereishis*.

Sources: Rema Yoreh De'ah 273:6 and Ba'al Haturim Bereishis 49:8.

**This week's question:** There are some words in the Torah scroll which are pronounced differently than they are written. This is known as *k'ri-k'siv* (literally, "read-written"). What is the first example of this phenomenon in the Torah, and what is the source of our tradition in these matters?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email [ryz@denverkollel.org](mailto:ryz@denverkollel.org).

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Aryeh Leib Gunzberg, The Shaagas Aryeh - Part III

The enraged governor ordered his men to bring him the hand of the man who had defied his commands. Rabbi Aryeh Leib fled the forces of the governor. He wandered, along with his wife, for some years from town to town. Some say he deliberately went, incognito, into self-imposed exile as a means of penance. During his wanderings, he studied in the

local *bais medrash* while his wife earned a bit of money doing odd jobs.

In 1765, Rabbi Aryeh Leib was elected the rabbi of the city of Metz, France. There is a story behind his appointment, though there are different versions of what actually occurred. We will attempt to give over the basic story.

## A Taste of Torah

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of Hevel and the results that ensued. For this lesson, the name Hashem is used, to imply His infinite wisdom which provides *hashgacha pratit* (Divine providence). Only after the overview (i.e., these pillars) does the body of Torah begin, "*Zeh sefer toldos*

*Adam.*"

As we begin our journey through the Torah once again, let us attempt to utilize this opportunity to strengthen our pillars of *emunah*, and may we witness the future redemption, speedily in our days!

## Stories For the Soul

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Hashem for all the good he has given me..."

Reb Avraham continued on this way for half an hour without shedding a tear. Then he stopped, and said, "I think I have expressed my *hakaras hatov* (gratitude) to Hashem. I think you can now appreciate what I have lost. Now I can cry." And he

broke down sobbing.

Our Sages tell us that one aspect of Adam's sin in eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was that he blamed his failure upon Chava, whom Hashem had given him as a wife and helpmate. His ingratitude was part of the reason he was punished so severely.