



RSA Rabbinical Seminary of America

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בעל ה"חפץ חיים"

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We were excited to hear that our dear talmid, Rabbi Shimon Feder Shlita, has decided to publish a Sefer of his original Shmuzim on the Chumash. We have read several of them and were pleased to see that they are true Mussar insights, developed and presented in the same style as we teach here in our Yeshiva. Rabbi Feder learned in our Yeshiva for many years and developed into a true Ben Torah and Yarei Shomayim. Afterwards, he was inspired to reach out to less affiliated Jews and inspire them to see the greatness and beauty of the Torah. He founded a Kiruv center in Boca Raton, FL and Baruch Hashem, through this endeavor has furthered the Yeshiva's mission of bringing Torah to all Jews. This compilation of his many Divrei Torah will allow many more people to benefit from his insights and ideas. We give him a Bracha that he should continue his Avodas HaKodesh, and inspire many more Jews to return to their roots. He should see success for many years to come.

B'hatzlacha Rabba,

Rabbi Dovid Harris

Rabbi Akiva Grunblatt

Rabbi Shaul Opoczynski

The following letter of approbation is reprinted
from the first volume of *Psychology and Personal Growth in Torah*.

ק"ק ישיבה שערי תורה

הלל דיין
1118 East 12th Street
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קס"ג
כ"ג סיון תש"ב

בְּקֶדֶד הַיָּד הַיְהוּדִי מִנֶּגֶד שְׂמֵאלוֹ עֲרִיבֵי אֶלְפָה

אֲתֻמְצָה-קִלְבֵי הַיָּדִים אֲדִימָא מְחִימֵי לִי בְּזִמְתָּ וְכִנְיָ דְּצַבֵּי אֲבִדִי דִּימִים
זְכִיר אֲשֶׁר נָשָׂא זְכִימָה וְעָלִיב הַמְּחִימֵי אֶל דְּצַבֵּי שְׂכָרֵי יְהִי בְּעִינֵי וְחֵלֶם הַמְּחִיב
דִּיז כֹּהֵב אֲבִימָה דְּצַבֵּי אֲדִיבֵי אֲמִימָה לְמִימָה דְּזִמְתָּ אֲשֶׁר יְהִי אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמַח הַיָּד
דְּנִשְׁתָּ וְנִשְׁמַח!
זְכִיר אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמַח וְנִשְׁמַח אֲבִימָה דְּצַבֵּי אֲדִיבֵי אֲמִימָה לְמִימָה דְּזִמְתָּ אֲשֶׁר יְהִי אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמַח הַיָּד
דְּנִשְׁתָּ וְנִשְׁמַח!
זְכִיר אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמַח וְנִשְׁמַח אֲבִימָה דְּצַבֵּי אֲדִיבֵי אֲמִימָה לְמִימָה דְּזִמְתָּ אֲשֶׁר יְהִי אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמַח הַיָּד
דְּנִשְׁתָּ וְנִשְׁמַח!

הַיָּד
דְּנִשְׁתָּ וְנִשְׁמַח
זְכִיר אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמַח וְנִשְׁמַח

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Sefer Bereishis

Dedicated by

David and Rochel Raccah

in honor of our parents

Rabbi and Mrs.

Larry and Elizabeth Feder

BEREISHIS

Preserving Dignity

*Dedicated by Chaim and Samantha Hirsch in memory
of his father Refael Mordechai ben Yitzchak*

בראשית ג, ו: וַתֵּרָא הָאִשָּׁה כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ לְמַאֲכָל וְכִי תֵאֶנְהוּ הוּא
לְעֵינַיִם, וְנִחְמַד הָעֵץ לְהַשְׂבִּיל, וְתִקַּח מִפְּרִי, וְתֹאכַל; וַתֵּתֶן גַּם לְאִשְׁוֹ
עִמָּה, וַיֹּאכַל:

רבינו בחיי: רבי עזריה ורבי יהושע בן לוי אומרים ח"ו לא גלה
הקב"ה אותו אילן לשום אדם ולא עתיד לגלותו, ראה מה כתיב
(ויקרא כ, טז) ואשה אשר תקרב אל כל בהמה לרבעה אותה
והרגת את האשה ואת הבהמה אם אדם חטא בהמה מה חטאה
אלא שלא תהא בהמה עוברת בשוק ואמרים זאת הבהמה שנסקל
פלוני על ידה ואם על תולדותינו חס הקב"ה על כבודו עאכ"ו.

In *Parashas Bereishis*, Adam and his wife violated the one restriction G-d gave them in the Garden of Eden: not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. They were banished from the Garden and punished with mortality, forever changing the course of world history.

*And the woman perceived that **the tree** was good for eating and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that **the tree** was desirable as a means to wisdom, and she took of its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her and he ate. (Bereishis 3:6)*

Q on the
verse

Rabbeinu Bachya is bothered by a question. The Torah refers to “**the tree**” several times but does not tell which kind of tree it was. Do we know what type it was? Why was this information concealed?

A of the
commentator

He cites a Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 15:7) with the approach of Rabbi Azarya and Rabbi Yehoshua, who say, “G-d forbid that we know which tree they ate from.” Hashem will never reveal its identity, because doing so would be insensitive to Adam and Eve by causing them embarrassment.

Q on the
commentator

This Rabbeinu Bachya is hard to understand. We all know that severe repercussions were decreed upon man, including mortality, due to their sin. Is it really more embarrassing if we knew what kind of tree they sinned with? Furthermore, would Adam and Eve really care thousands of years after their deaths?

New
insight

We learn from this Rabbeinu Bachya an amazing lesson. Had the tree’s actual identity been revealed, it would be an unnecessary constant reminder to the world of their sin, which would slightly degrade their dignity. Even though it happened thousands of years earlier and Adam and Eve are no longer alive, such is the importance of maintaining the dignity of others.

Lesson
for life

Human dignity is of prime importance in Judaism; this is illustrated throughout the Torah. Whenever possible, even in difficult situations, we must preserve a person’s good name. Even if one must be reprimanded, we must take extra care and caution to protect his dignity as much as possible. We see the value the Torah places on respecting another person. By improving ourselves in this area, we can generate merit for the entire Jewish People.

“If I Won the Lottery, I Would...”

*Dedicated by Chaim and Samantha Hirsch in memory
of his father Refael Mordechai ben Yitzchak*

בראשית ו, ה: וַיֵּרָא ה', כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ, וְכָל יֵצֵר מַחְשְׁבֹת
לֵבו, רַק רָע כָּל הַיּוֹם:

תנחומא יג: אמר רבי יוחנן, למה היו מורדין, שהיו זורעין שנה אחת
ועושין מזון לארבעים שנה. אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא, וכך אתם
עושים? עוד כל ימי הארץ זרע וקציר. ורבי שמואל בר אבא אמר,
למה היו מורדין, שהיו רואין לעצמן בנים ובני בנים חמשה וששה
דורות ולא היו מתין.

At the end of *Parashas Bereishis*, the Torah tells us that G-d saw the wickedness of man. This paved the way for Him to destroy the world and start over with Noah and his family.

Hashem saw the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every product of the thoughts of his heart was but evil always. (Bereishis 6:5)

Q on the
verse

The *Midrash Tanchuma* is bothered by a question. Why did mankind begin to act wickedly after much time had passed since G-d first created the world? What caused this rebellion?

A of the
commentator

To answer this question, the Midrash brings the approach of Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Shmuel: “They would plant crops for one year and reap the benefits for the next forty years. They lived extremely long lives, seeing five or six generations come from them while they were still alive and healthy.”

Q on the
commentator

This answer is perplexing. Their reasoning shows why the people should have *followed* Hashem, not *rebelled*. It is amazing to only have to work a short time and enjoy the fruits of their labor for decades thereafter. Isn’t it wonderful to have the pleasure of watching even great-great-grandchildren grow up and still be among the living? How does this explain their rebellion?

New
insight

We learn from the Midrash an incredible lesson. Although their livelihood was taken care of and they were assured super-long, prosperous lives, mankind did not properly utilize these extensive years on earth. Surprisingly, these blessings actually brought forth laziness and complacency, which eventually led to rebellion against Hashem.

Lesson
for life

Whenever the lottery swells to an enormous sum, people begin planning all the ways it will change their lives should they merit to win. We may point out how winning such a fortune will come with its own challenges. They respond, “I’ll be able to handle it; just please, G-d, let me win.” The Torah teaches us that too much of a good thing can actually harm us. Understanding how to make the best of our time here is priceless.

NOACH

Cultivating Compassion

Dedicated by the Zimmerman family: Risa and Michael, Aaron, Raquel, and Jacqueline. May the invaluable lessons of this compilation of parashah insights enlighten the entire world

בראשית ז, ב: מכל הבהמה הטהורה, תקח לך שבעה שבעה איש ואשתו; ומן הבהמה אשר לא טהרה הוא, שנים איש ואשתו: רבינו בחיי: והנה ה' יתברך אב הרחמן לא רצה לגזור שיבאו מעצמם לצורך קרבן להיות נשחטים אבל אמר תקח לך שבעה, שישתדל אחריהם ויטרח במצוה. אבל באותם שהיו לחיות זרע היו שנים שנים, והיה גזור שיבאו מעצמם, זהו שכתוב יבואו אליך להחיות.

In *Parashas Noach*, G-d informs Noach that due to the many sins of mankind, He will bring the Great Flood to destroy the world. He instructs him to build an Ark to protect himself and his family and to gather every species of animal in order to repopulate the world once the flood is over.

Of every clean [kosher] animal take unto you seven pairs, a male with its mate, and of the animal that is not clean [non-kosher], two, a male with its mate... (Bereishis 7:2)

Q on the
verse

Rabbeinu Bachya is bothered by a question. Why does the Torah use the word “**take**” with regard to the kosher animals but not with regard to the non-kosher animals?

A of the
commentator

He answers that G-d caused the non-kosher animals, whose sole purpose was to repopulate the earth, to enter the Ark on their own. However, the purpose of the seven pairs of kosher animals was to be brought as future offerings. Therefore, not wanting them to march to their deaths, G-d did not make them come on their own. Rather, Noach had to go out and collect them.

Q on the
commentator

This Rabbeinu Bachya is difficult to understand.

- The Torah tells us in several places that the highest calling for an animal is to be brought as an offering, so wasn't it a huge merit for them?
- While aboard the Ark, these animals would be saved from immediate death, so what difference would it make if they came aboard themselves or if Noach collected them?
- These animals weren't going to be brought as offerings for at least another year. So why did Noach need to show them extra compassion if they didn't know what was going to happen?

New
insight

We learn from Rabbeinu Bachya a tremendous lesson in sensitivity. Although the animals wouldn't sense impending doom by marching aboard, and the result would be the same whether or not they came on their own, G-d was showing how sensitive we must be toward the plight of others. This is such a fundamental lesson for mankind to learn that Noach had to expend an enormous amount of time and energy just to accomplish this feat.

Lesson
for life

If this is the sensitivity we must have toward animals, how much more so toward other people! We must calculate our words with extreme care and always be on guard not to hurt people's feelings. Let us be mindful to use our speech and actions to be an uplifting, positive influence on others.

To Be a Mensch

Dedicated by the Zimmerman family: Risa and Michael, Aaron, Raquel, and Jacqueline. May the invaluable lessons of this compilation of parashah insights enlighten the entire world

בראשית ת, יד-טז: ובחדש, השני, בשבעה ועשרים יום, לתדוש
יבשה, הארץ. וידבר אלוקים, אל נח לאמר. צא, מן התבה—אתה,
ואשתך ובניך ונשי בניך אתך:

רבינו בחיי: יבשה הארץ. ואעפ"כ לא יצא עד שהורשה לצאת
ואמר לו הקב"ה צא מן התבה כי מפני שבא לתוכה מפני מצות
ה' יתעלה לא רצה לצאת משם כי אם במצותו. ואמרו במדרש כי
מכאן למדו חנניה מישאל ועזריה שלא רצו לצאת מתוך כבשן
האש עד שצוה להם המלך.

In *Parashas Noach*, G-d instructs Noach to take his family and all species of animals and board the Ark for protection from the Great Flood. After the flood, Noach sends out a dove to assess if the earth has sufficiently dried. The dove returns with an olive branch as evidence that it is now safe to leave the Ark.

And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was fully dried. G-d spoke to Noach, saying, "Go forth from the Ark: you and your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives with you." (Bereishis 8:14-16)

Q on the
verse

Rabbeinu Bachya is bothered by a question. If Noach knew that the earth was fully dry, why did Hashem need to instruct him to go forth from the Ark? After being cooped up for a year, wouldn't he rush to leave?

A of the
commentator

He answers that since Noach had been commanded by Hashem to board the Ark, he did not feel it was right to leave without a command from G-d to do so. To illustrate this concept, Rabbeinu Bachya brings the story of Chananya, Mishael, and Azarya, who were miraculously saved when thrown into a furnace by the command of the evil King Nebuchadnezzar, but would not leave the fire until commanded to do so by the king.

Q on the
commentator

This Rabbeinu Bachya is difficult to understand. Hashem had commanded Noach to board the Ark to save himself, his family, and the animals from extinction while the Great Flood was raging. However, once the flood was finished and it was clearly safe to leave, why shouldn't they get off? Furthermore, since Noach and his Ark companions were saved to rebuild, repopulate, and replant the earth, shouldn't they put all efforts into this responsibility immediately?

New
insight

We learn from this Rabbeinu Bachya an incredible lesson. Although logically, there was no reason for Noach to wait, he understood that it was *derech erez* (proper etiquette) to wait for Hashem's command to leave the Ark. Acting with *derech erez* by being decent, polite, and respectful is expected of us in any situation and is a foundational attitude to Torah observance.

Lesson
for life

Derech erez takes us one step beyond being a rule follower, to being a true *mensch*. Whether at work or at home, we must ask ourselves what we can do to act in the most ideal way possible, thus bettering ourselves and those around us. From the smallest gestures, like holding the door open for another, to Noach's interaction with G-d after having spent a year on the Ark, we can all find ways to act with integrity and honor in every given situation.