



## The Shabbat following Succot Is Called “Shabbas Bereishis”

# The Torah Reading on “Shabbas Bereishis” Begins with the Word “Bereishis” the Foundation of the Torah and All of Yisrael throughout the Generations

The auspiciously approaching Shabbat Kodesh is referred to universally by the Jewish community as “Shabbat Bereishis.” This appellation denotes the fact that the Torah-portion we will read is parshat Bereishis. In the words of the Levush (O.C. 669, 21): **The Shabbat after “chag” (Succot) is called “Shabbat Bereishis,” since we read parshat Bereishis on it.** But why is this the only Shabbat of the year that is named after its parsha?

In Divrei Yechezkel, the esteemed Rabbi of Shinaveh, zy”a, brings down in the name of his esteemed father-in-law, Rabbi Aryeh Leibush, the head of the Beis-din of Vizhnitz, zy”a, a practical explanation for this unique designation: **Here is the explanation. During the holy “Yamim Nora’im” (the High Holidays), every human being entertained thoughts of teshuvah, and accepted upon himself some particular good behavior—every person according to his ability and spiritual level. Therefore, it is called “Shabbat Bereishis,” since a person is reminded that what has passed has passed, and from this moment on, he is starting a new chapter; and he should strive to be better from now on.**

### “Bereishis” for the Sake of the Torah and for the Sake of Yisrael

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by explaining Chazal’s rationale for naming this Shabbat specifically after the name of the parsha that will be read on it—parshat **Bereishis**. They wished to emphasize the importance of this Shabbat. We, Bnei

Yisrael, who received the holy Torah on Har Sinai, are privileged to begin the reading of the entire Torah with the special word “**Bereishis**”: **בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ**.

Now, we have a fundamental principle (Eitz Chaim, Sha’ar 4, 4): **“כי הכל הולך אחר ההתחלה”—everything follows suit from its beginning.** Accordingly, this implies that the first word of the Torah—“**Bereishis**”—is the basis and foundation of the entire Torah. In fact, in his introduction to the allusions inherent in the term “בראשית”, the Agra D’Kallah writes: **אמר רבותינו ז”ל שכל התורה אמרו רבותינו ז”ל שכל התורה כולה נכללה בבראשית—our Rabbis of blessed memory said that the entire Torah is encompassed by the term “Bereishis.”**

Let us embellish this notion based on Rashi’s commentary: **בראשית ברא, אין המקרא הזה אומר אלא דרשני, כמו שדרשוהו רבותינו ז”ל, ובשביל התורה שנקראת (משלי ח-כב) ראשית דרכו, ובשביל ישראל שנקראו (ירמיה ב-ג) ראשית תבואתו.** Rashi is telling us that this passuk cannot be taken literally; it is linguistically incorrect; it begs to be expounded. Therefore, our Rabbis of blessed memory expound the verse as teaching us that the world was created for the sake of two “**reishit**”s—for the sake of the Torah and for the sake of Yisrael, both of whom are referred to by this term.

We can now begin to comprehend the tremendous significance of this Shabbat—“**Shabbat Bereishis**”—that is named after the parsha that we will read this Shabbat. By opening with the word “**Bereishis**,” it highlights the fact that the world was created for

the sake of the Torah and for the sake of all the neshamot of Yisrael.

### Reconciling an Apparent Contradiction: Did HKB”H Create the World with the Letter “Beis” or with the Letter “Hei”?

Since we are discussing the word “בראשית”, the first word of the holy Torah, the foundation of the Torah, it is fitting that we present a fascinating inquiry to our esteemed audience. Did HKB”H create the universe with the letter “Beis” or with the letter “hei”?

According to the Midrash: The Letters of Rabbi Akiva, all of the letters of the aleph-Beis petitioned HKB”H to have Him create the world with them. They entered one by one, beginning with the last letter of the “aleph-Beis,” the letter “tav,” and proceeded in reverse order down to the letter “aleph.” HKB”H rebuffed all of their petitions until the arrival of the letter “Beis.” To make its case, the letter “Beis” cited numerous pesukim from Tehillim, which begin with it, which people in every generation use to praise Hashem. HKB”H was convinced and agreed to create the world with the letter “Beis.” Hence, He began the Torah with the words: “בראשית ברא אלקים.” Here is the pertinent passage from the Midrash related to the letter “Beis”:

“אחר כך נכנס בי”ת לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא ואמר לפניו, רבונו של עולם רצונך שתברא בי את עולמך, שבי משבחין לפניך באי עולם בכל יום, שנאמר (תהלים פט-נג) ב’רוך ה’ לעולם אמן ואמן, (שם קג-כ) ב’רכו ה’ מלאכיו וגו’, ואומר (שם כא) ב’רכו ה’ כל צבאיו וגו’, (שם כב) ב’רכו ה’ כל מעשיו וגו’, ועתידין כל דורות העולם לומר לפניך (שם עב-יח) ב’רוך ה’ אלקים אלקי ישראל, ואומר (שם יט) וב’רוך שם כבודו לעולם וימלא כבודו וגו’, מיד קיבל הקדוש ברוך הוא ממנו ואמר לו (שם קיח-כו) ברוך הבא בשם ה’, וברא בו את עולמו כבי”ת שנאמר בראשית ברא אלקים.”

Nevertheless, the commentaries point out a blatant contradiction concerning this matter. Although this Midrash teaches us explicitly that HKB”H created the universe with the letter “Beis” of “בראשית”, we are taught in the Gemara (Menachot 29b) that the world was created with the letter “hei.” They base this conclusion on an elucidation of the passuk (Bereishis 2, 4): “אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם, אל תקרי בהבראם אלא בה” (2, 4): “These are the generations of the heavens

and the earth בהבראם.” Do not read the word as (it is actually written) בהבראם but rather as בה’ בראם (meaning that He created the heavens and the earth with the letter “hei”).

I thought of a wonderful way to resolve this contradiction. We will rely on the precious teachings of our holy teachers, zy”a, to guide us in the right direction. We will begin with Rashi’s comment in the name of the Midrash: “בראשית ברא אלקים, ולא אמר ברא ה’, שבתחילה עלה במחשבה לבראותו במדת הדין, וראה שאין העולם מתקיים, והקדים מדת הרחמים ושתפה למדת הדין, והיינו דכתיב ביום עשות ה’ אלקים.” The opening passuk of the Torah employs the name Elokim rather than Havaya; this indicates that the Creator initially intended to create the world based on the midah of “din.” He foresaw, however, that the world could not survive based on this strict standard. Therefore, he preferentially partnered the midah of “rachamim” with the midah of “din.” This partnership and preference for “midat harachamim” are evident in the passuk (ibid. 2, 4): “ביום עשות ה’ אלקים” ארץ ושמים.” (Note that in this passuk both divine names are employed, but the name of rachamim precedes the name of “din.”)

The commentaries are perplexed by Rashi’s comment. After all, HKB”H foresees everything from beginning to end. So, how can he assert that the Almighty originally planned to create the world based on “midat hadin” and then changed His mind? Undoubtedly, He knew from the onset that the world could not endure based on this strict standard.

### “There is nothing new beneath the sun”

It appears that we can reconcile the better by referring to a statement from Shlomo HaMelech (Kohelet 1, 9): “מה שהיה הוא שיהיה ומה שנעשה הוא שיעשה ואין” “**whatever has been is what will be, and whatever has been done is what will be done. There is nothing new beneath the sun!** Clearly, the wisest of all men is teaching us a vital principle: Everything that is destined to be when the complete tikun is accomplished at the end of days was already revealed once at the beginning of creation in keeping with the notion of: “סוף מעשה במחשבה תחילה”—**last in deed, but first in thought.**

Along these lines, we can better comprehend Chazal's statement in the Gemara (Chagigah 12a): "אור שברא הקב"ה ביום ראשון אדם צופה בו מסוף העולם ועד סופו, כיון שנסתכל הקב"ה בדור המבול ובדור הפלגה וראה שמעשיהם מקולקלים, עמד וגזז מהם שנאמר וימנע מרשעים אורם. ולמי גזזו לצדיקים לעתיד לבוא, שנאמר וירא אלקים את האור. **Regarding the light that HKB" H created on the first day, Adam could survey with it from one end of the world to the other end; however, when HKB" H looked at the generation of the mabul and the generation of the dispersion, and He saw that their deeds were perverse, He proceeded to conceal it from them, as it says (Iyov 38, 15): "And light was withheld from the wicked." And for whom did he conceal it (the light)? For tzaddikim in the future, as it says (Bereishis 1, 4): "G-d saw that the light was good."**

This is also somewhat difficult to comprehend, seeing as HKB" H knew that there were going to be wicked people in the world. Hence, He could have simply waited to reveal that phenomenal light until le'atid la'vo. In keeping with what we have just learned, however, since HKB" H intended to reveal that sequestered light—"ohr haganuz"—le'atid la'vo, He created it at the beginning of creation in keeping with the notion of: "סוף מעשה במחשבה תחלה". Thus, by means of our virtuous deeds, we would be able to reveal the "ohr haganuz" once again at the end of days.

Now, according to our sacred sefarim, we are taught by the Arizal that in Olam HaZeh, the halachah accords with Beis Hillel; le'atid la'vo, however, the halachah will accord with Beis Shamai. This is so based on the fact that Hillel's teachings were rooted in "midat hachessed"; hence, he was extremely humble and performed many acts of chesed. The teachings of Shamai, on the other hand, were rooted in "midat hadin"; hence, he was extremely strict and rigid. Therefore, in Olam HaZeh, the halachah follows the rulings of Beis Hillel rather than Beis Shamai—"midat hachessed" rather than "midat hadin." For, as we have learned, the world cannot survive based on the strict standard of "din."

Accordingly, the Arizal teaches us an incredible chiddush. Le'atid la'vo, when the world will be rectified, and the yetzer hara will be thoroughly

eliminated, it will no longer be necessary for the world to be based on "midat hachessed," above and beyond the strict standard of "din." On the contrary, the world will be managed based on "midat hadin," and people will be rewarded even based on "midat hadin." Hence, le'atid la'vo, the halachah will accord with Beis Shamai rather than Beis Hillel.

This illuminates for us Rashi's comment (Bereishis 1, 1): **Initially, He thought to create it with "midat hadin."** This was because the purpose and goal of creation was for the situation that will exist at the time of the future geulah, when HKB" H will manage the world with "midat hadin." Therefore, His first instinct was to create the universe with "midat hadin," just as it will be at the end of days, at the time of the future geulah. **Yet, He foresaw that the world could not endure based on "midat hadin" prior to the final, total tikun.** Hence, **He prioritized "midat harachamim" and partnered it with "midat hadin."** Understood this way, we see that the Almighty's initial intent was not discarded; however, it would only materialize fully le'atid la'vo, when He would, indeed, manage the world with "midat hadin."

### The World Was Originally Created with the Letter "Beis" of בראשית

Following this line of reasoning, we will proceed to reconcile the contradiction introduced above: Was the world created with the letter "Beis" or the letter "hei"? Clearly, the passuk that suggests that HKB" H created the universe with the letter "Beis" is the first passuk in the Torah: "בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ". As Rashi explains, this passuk teaches us that HKB" H initially planned to create the world with "midat hadin," as it will exist le'atid la'vo. Therefore, HKB" H initially created the world with the "Beis" of בראשית, which alludes magnificently to the end of days, as we will explain.

On the other hand, the passuk that suggests that HKB" H created the world with the letter "hei," appears at the end of the chronicle of creation (ibid. 2, 4): "אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם ביום עשות ה' אלקים ארץ ושמים". They expounded on this passuk in the Gemara: "**Do not read the word as (it is actually written) בהבראם**

**but rather as** בַּה' בְּרָאָם (indicating that He created the heavens and the earth with the letter “hei”).” In contrast to the first passuk, this passuk alludes to the fact that Olam HaZeh cannot endure based on the standard of “midat hadin.” Hence, HKB”H prioritized “midat harachamim” over “midat hadin,” as indicated by this passuk. Therefore, at this point, HKB”H created the world with the letter “hei.”

With this understanding, we will now explain why HKB”H created the world with the letter “Beis” when He intended to create the universe with “midat hadin,” whereas He created the world with the letter “hei” when He felt it necessary to prioritize “midat harachamim” instead of “midat hadin.” We will begin by introducing the Gemara (Menachot 29b) that explains the significance of the letter “hei”:

“ומפני מה נברא העולם הזה בה”י, מפני שדומה לאכסדרא שכל הרוצה לצאת יצא” ומאי טעמא תליא כרעיה דאי הדר בתשובה מעיילי ליה.”

**And why was Olam HaZeh created with the letter “hei”? Because it resembles a pavilion** (Rashi: it is open underneath); **so that anyone who wishes to leave** (go astray) **can leave** (to lead a life of sin). Then the Gemara asks: **And for what reason is the left leg of the “hei” hanging** (i.e., it is not connected to the top of the “hei”)? **So that if he performs teshuvah, they can bring him back in** (through the upper opening between the suspended leg and the top of the “hei”).

Furthermore, consider the nature of Adam HaRishon prior to the sin. In Rashi’s commentary on this weeks parsha, he explains (ibid. 2, 25): “ואף על פי שניתנה בו דעה: **—and although man was given the knowledge to name the animals, he was not endowed with a yetzer hara until he ate from the tree; then the yetzer hara entered his being.**

The Nezer HaKodesh on the Midrash (B.R. 34, 12) questions this assertion. For, it seems implausible that HKB”H would create Adam HaRishon without a yetzer hara. If that were the case, then what would it have mattered whether or not he abided by Hashem’s mitzvot? Even more difficult to understand is that if Adam HaRishon was not under the influence of

a yetzer hara, then what prompted him to disobey HKB”H’s command and partake of the Eitz HaDa’at?

To explain the matter, he relies on a contradiction concerning the yetzer hara. On the one hand, several sources indicate that the yetzer hara exists in man’s heart, as it is written (ibid. 8, 21): **“כי יצר לב האדם רע—since the “yetzer” of man’s heart is evil from his youth.** This is supported by a teaching in the Gemara (Berachot 61a): **“יצר הרע דומה לזבוב ויושב—the yetzer hara resembles a fly, and sits between the two gateways of the heart.** On the other hand, other sources indicate that the yetzer hara is a malach. This is supported by another teaching in the Gemara (B.B. 16a): **“הוא שטן, הוא יצר הרע, הוא מלאך המות—he is the Satan; he is the yetzer hara; he is the Malach-HaMavet.**

### Prior to the Cheit Adam HaRishon Only Had an External Yetzer HaRa

The Nezer HaKodesh explains the matter as follows: In truth, both are true of the yetzer hara. He is both an internal enemy and an external enemy. Man’s internal yetzer hara located in his flesh and bones stems from the corruption and perversion of his corporeal being. Additionally, man has an external yetzer hara that is an actual malach. He and his forces are well-known and are depicted by the passuk (Tehillim 12, 9): **“סביב—רשעים יתהלכו—the wicked walk on every side.** They are a constant bad influence aimed at leading man astray from the paths of life to the paths of death.

He analogizes the situation to a country that is attacked by an external enemy. In that situation, it is still easy to overcome the enemy. If, however, the enemy has also infiltrated the country, then it is much more difficult to defeat the enemy. In this manner, he explains the situation of Adam HaRishon prior to the cheit versus after the cheit:

**Without a doubt, even before the cheit, Adam had freedom of choice and had a yetzer hara urging him to commit aveirot for the sake of reward or punishment. However, at that time, he only had an external yetzer hara but not an internal yetzer hara. For G-d created man**

**just and upright; at that time, his material self was pure and untainted by the contamination of evil. Therefore, at that time, it was easy to escape from it.**

**After the cheit, however, man was also affected by the perversion of the internal yetzer hara. By eating from the Eitz HaDa'at, which contained the source of evil, the force of evil infected him and his body, and it became more material due to the corruption of evil. His garment of light (his body before the sin) was transformed into a garment of skin—namely, the skin of the contamination of the serpent that the serpent inserted in Chava, as explained in the Zohar in several places. As a consequence, man became surrounded by an internal enemy and an external one.**

This explains the precise language employed by Rashi beautifully: **“לא נתן בו יצר הרע עד אכלו מן העץ ונכנס בו יצר הרע.”** He specifies that the yetzer hara was not initially within him—**“bo”**—because the yetzer hara approached him only externally, as a malach disguised as the nachash. After he ate from the tree, however, **“the yetzer hara entered him.”** **“Bo”**—it entered his heart. Since then, man has been besieged both by an internal yetzer hara inside his body and a second, external yetzer hara, a malach.

### **Prior to the Cheit the World Was Created with the Letter “Beis” Its Closed Bottom Was Meant to Prevent Man from Falling Spiritually**

We can now resolve our inquiry as to which letter HKB”H used to create the world. Indeed, initially, before Adam HaRishon sinned and had an internal yetzer hara, HKB”H opted to use the letter **ב**. That was because this letter is closed on three sides and is only open on the left, which is its north side. As we know from the passuk (Yirmiyah 1, 14): **“מצפון תפתח: מן הצפון תפנה”**—**from the north the evil will be released**—the yetzer hara and its evil forces have access from the north. They have no access from the other three sides unless a person falls into its trap and allows them to enter.

Now, let us consider the shape of the letter **ב** with which the world was initially created. Its lower line constitutes a barrier preventing a person from falling easily and descending to the spiritual depths. In a sense, a person is standing on firm, solid ground. Thus, he need only heed that the yetzer hara not be allowed to enter from the open, left side of the letter **“Beis.”** This is in stark contrast to the shape of the letter **ה**, which is open below, suggesting that a person can easily fall through this opening.

A person can protect himself and prevent the yetzer hara from entering through the left side of the **“Beis”** by studying Torah assiduously. For, as we have learned in the Gemara (Kiddushin 30b), HKB”H said to Yisrael: **“בני בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תכלין, ואם אתם עוסקים בתורה אין אתם נמסרים בידו”**—**My son, I have created the yetzer hara, and I have created Torah as its antidote. If you engage in Torah-study, you will not be delivered into its hand.** In other words, Torah-study is a bona-fide, proven method for warding off the yetzer hara and its negative influences.

Let us elaborate. As we know, the letter **“vav”** of the name **Havaya** alludes to the holy Torah. Hence, Torah she’b’al peh consists of six orders, the gematria of the letter **“vav.”** Thus, when a person studies Torah, represented by the letter **“vav”** (a straight line, like a board), he is able to close and board up the open left side of the letter **“Beis,”** and deny the yetzer hara access.

This explains magnificently why HKB”H began Torah she’b’chtav with the **“Beis”** of **“בראשית”** and concluded Torah she’b’al peh with the closed **“mem”** of **“בשלום”**. [As we learn in the Mishnah at the end of Masechet Oktzin: **“לא מצא הקב”ה כלי מחזיק ברכה אלא השלום, שנאמר ה’ עוז לעמו”**—**HKB”H did not find a vessel better suited for preserving berachah for Yisrael than “shalom,” as it states** (Tehillim 29, 11): **“Hashem will give His nation strength; Hashem will bless His nation with shalom.”**] By means of Torah-study, we close the open left side of the letter **“Beis,”** so that it resembles the closed letter **“mem”**—**מ**. Thus, we prevent the yetzer hara from entering. We can suggest an allusion to this in the first passage

of Kriat Shema. There we find the words (Devarim 6, 7): "וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָּם"—**and you shall speak of them**—ב"ם. We can interpret this as saying: You should engage in the study of Torah from the beginning of Torah she'b'chtav—the "**Beis**" of "בראשית"—until the end of Torah she'b'al peh—the closed "**mem**" of "בשלוש"—the combination of the two letters of ב"ם.

Accordingly, we can better appreciate the profound words of our blessed sages in the following Gemara (ibid.): "תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל, בני אם פגע בך מגוול זה משכהו לבית המדרש"—**a Baraita was taught in the Academy of Rabbi Yishmael: If this despicable character engages you, draw him into the Beis Midrash.** The "despicable character" under discussion is the yetzer hara; to disarm it and avoid it, we are advised to draw it into the letter ב"ת—alluded to by the **Beis Midrash**, where we engage in Torah-study. There it cannot survive, as we have learned (Kiddushin 30b): "אם אבן הוא נימוח, אם ברזל הוא מתפוצץ"—**if he is like a stone, he will dissolve; if he is like iron, he will shatter.**

This was the situation prior to the cheit of Adam HaRishon; the yetzer hara had not yet invaded his physical being. This is also how it will be le'atid la'vo, after the yetzer hara's existence will be terminated. The situation changed, however, after Adam sinned by eating from the Eitz HaDa'at. That enabled the yetzer hara to invade his body and take up residence in his

heart. Consequently, the floor of the letter "**Beis**" that prevented him from falling to the spiritual depths—"she'ol"—was thoroughly shattered. His being and essence related to the universe created with the letter "**Beis**"—which is closed below—was corrupted.

Notwithstanding, HKB"H had mercy on Adam and provided him with a means of tikun via teshuvah. HKB"H renewed the world with the letter "**hei**" by moving the bottom line of the "**Beis**" and standing it upright on the left side of the letter. Thus, the "**Beis**" was transformed into a "**hei**." Thus, the world was created anew to accommodate the fact that man now had an internal yetzer hara residing in his heart. As such, he would be much more likely to sin, chas v'shalom, and fall to "she'ol" through the opening at the bottom of the "**hei**." Yet, all was not lost! Man was afforded the opportunity of tikun via teshuvah by climbing up spiritually and reentering the healthy world of life through the aperture at the upper left side of the letter ה'. In conclusion, both viewpoints represent divine truth. Indeed, the world was originally created with the letter "**Beis**" to prepare for the future geulah, when the world will be managed based on "midat hadin," without the interference of the yetzer hara. After Adam HaRishon sinned, however, the creation of the world was renewed with the letter "**hei**" to provide mankind with a means of tikun via the process of teshuvah.



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