

# NEFESH SHIMSHON



DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM  
THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה.   
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM  
FROM THE PARSHAH

## The “Robbery” Claim

בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא (בראשית א, א)

**In the beginning of creation. (*Bereishis* 1:1)**

**R. Yitzchak said:** The Torah only needed to begin with, “This month shall be for you...” which is the first *mitzvah* that was commanded to the Jewish people.

**So what is the reason it began with Creation? Because of (*Tehillim* 111:6):** “He told the power of His deeds to His people, to give them the inheritance of the nations.” If the nations of the world will say to the Jewish people, “You are robbers, because you conquered the lands of seven peoples!” the Jews will reply, “The whole world belongs to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. He created it, and gave it to whom He saw fit. By His will, He gave it to them, and by His will, He gave it to us. (*Rashi*)

Rashi says that the Torah begins with *Bereishis* in order to show that *Hashem*, Who created the entire world, had the right to give *Eretz Yisrael* to His people.

This explains the need for the first chapter or two of *Bereishis*. But what about the whole rest of the *Chumash*? According to Rashi’s reason, it should be enough to just tell the story of Creation, which shows that the whole world belongs to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, thus He may do with it as He pleases, and that refutes the false claim of the nations of the world.

There is another question we could raise: why is it only the nations of the world who bring up this issue of “robbery”? Why wouldn’t we ask ourselves?

The ancients denied that G-d created the world *ex nihilo*, out of absolute nothingness. They believed that there was a primordial, formless matter that always existed, and out of it, G-d created the world. Shame on them for saying such a thing.

It is our faith that *Hashem* created the universe out of a state of total nothingness. The Torah alludes to

this with the word *Bereishis*, which indicates that the world has a beginning.

Now, there is another truth that the nations of the world deny. They don't believe in Divine Providence, in what we call *Hashgachah Pratis*. They claim that G-d created the world and set it up in such a way that it runs on its own. They don't believe that every big and little thing that happens in the world is from G-d, although He might perform a rare miracle here and there.

A person can deny *Hashgachah Pratis* only if he first denies that *Hashem* created the world *yeish mei'ayin*. Because if *Hashem* created the world out of nothing, it only makes sense He also keeps it existing at every moment, since without *Hashem*, nothing should exist at all. He is the Source of all existence.

It follows that *Hashem* is supervising and running all that takes place in the world. He does everything. Only someone who denies that the world was created

can argue that the world runs on its own, independent of *Hashem*.

The accusation of "robbery" can be made only by someone who denies that *Hashem* runs the world. Because once we realize that *Hashem* controls every detail of everything that happens, then also the Jewish people's acquisition of *Eretz Yisrael* is an act of *Hashem*. So how can it be said that this acquisition was an act of "robbery"? Only someone who thinks that things happen without *Hashem's* involvement could say such a thing.

The Torah answers the non-Jews by showing them that *Hashgachah Pratis* is real, by giving concrete examples of how *Hashem* runs the events of the world. This is the content of *Chumash Bereishis*. It is full of stories of *Hashgachah Pratis*, especially in the lives of the *Avos*, thus demonstrating again and again how *Hashem* is in control of every detail. Once people realize this, the claim of "robbery" just evaporates. ●

## Suffering is a Precious Thing

וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד (בראשית א, לא)

G-d saw all that He made, and behold, it was very good (*Bereishis* 1:31)

**"Good" refers to the trait of goodness. "Very" refers to the trait of suffering, because people get to the life of the next world thanks to it, as it says וְדֶרֶךְ חַיִּים תּוֹכָחוֹת מוֹסֵר –**

**"The way to life [is through] the rebukes of suffering."<sup>1</sup> (*Yalkut Shimoni, Bereishis* 15)**

<sup>1</sup> *Mishlei* 6:23.

טוב, "Good," refers to all the good things in the world. מאד, "Very," refers to the possibility for pain,

too, to exist in the world. There is only one path that brings us to the טוב מאד, the "very" good, and that

### לְעִירְוֵי נִשְׁמֹת

מִדְּוָד מֹשֶׁה בֶּן אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַמְּבֹרָךְ ז"ל

וּמִדְּוָד בְּרוּךְ זָאֵב בֶּן נִפְתָּלִי קְרָאוּס ז"ל

גְּדֵבַת נִבְדִּיחִם ~ עֲטֵרַת זְקֵנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים וְהַפְּאֶרֶת בְּנִים אֲבוֹתָם

path leads through suffering.

*Hashem* gave us and gives us many gifts. One of the most beautiful among them is suffering. It holds a central place in a person's life, and is relevant to each one of us. We are talking about the trials and difficulties that we all encounter at every step along the course of life. They connect us to *Hashem*.

If *Hashem* would just constantly shower us with good things, would grant us His goodness and kindness without limit, we might “grow fat and kick,” as it says in *Devarim* 32:15. We might “kick” *Hashem* away, disconnect ourselves from Him. The only thing that prevents this, that keeps us connected to Him, is difficulties and pain.

This may be compared to a father who sees his child walking into the street in front of a speeding car. He stretches out his arm, grabs the child roughly, and pulls him back. The child finds this treatment unpleasant and uncomfortable. He starts crying. But it was not done out of punishment. It was simply to save his life.

Furthermore, a father's love for his child expresses itself more intensely in an act of discipline than it does in giving him a piece of candy. Even a stranger can give a child a candy, but no one is going to give a child a slap on the hand, out of concern for his wellbeing, other than his own loving parents.

When various problems arise in life, we don't readily feel the goodness inherent in them. We don't

feel that *Hashem* is now giving us a “little slap on the hand.” Sometimes there are bigger and more painful problems, because *Hashem* in His great kindness is performing “urgent surgery” on us, in order to save our lives.

The *Vilna Gaon* said that “without suffering, we would not be able to function in this world.” It is so easy to pile up sins – every moment of neglecting Torah study, every word of *lashon hara* – that if not for the cleansing effect of suffering, we would leave this world with countless transgressions.

Once someone came to get a blessing from the *Satmar Rebbe*, and the *Rebbe* said to him, “Who am I to give you a blessing? Go out into the street, and grab any Jew with a number tattooed on his arm (from the concentration camps). He can give you a blessing.” Suffering is truly a great thing. It cleans a person up.

We will never fully realize how beautiful suffering is. We are not capable of appreciating its tremendous worth. But we can catch a little glimpse of it.

If we look back and think about certain moments when it seemed to us that we were in the deepest darkness, we will realize that often, this is when a great thing was born. If we keep this in mind, we will be able to thank *Hashem* not just for the good things but also for suffering.<sup>2</sup> ●

<sup>2</sup> See *Yeshayahu* 12:1.

## Shabbos is a Day of Light

וַיְכַל אֱלֹקִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה (בראשית ב, ב)

**G-d finished on the seventh day all His work that He did (*Bereishis* 2:2)**

We know that the creation of the world did not actually finish on *Shabbos* day. The most that could be said is that it finished on *Shabbos* night, since

*Hashem* created the last few things just a moment before *Shabbos* night commenced. So why doesn't the Torah say, “G-d finished on the seventh *night*”?

The answer is that *Shabbos* does not have a “night” at all, in the usual sense of the word. *Shabbos* is all “daytime.” Nowhere in the Torah do we find the term “*Shabbos* night,” only “On the day of *Shabbos*.”

On *Yom Tov* there is night and day. We take a *lulav* on *Sukkos* day but not on *Sukkos* night. We blow the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah* day but not at night. But when it comes to *Shabbos*, there is no distinction between daytime and nighttime. This is because “night,” the blanket of darkness that hides *Hashem* from us, is not there on *Shabbos*. The “seventh day” is a twenty-four-hour period when it is all day, all light, and *Hashem* may be found everywhere.

What does this mean, practically speaking? Let’s say a person is seeking to attain Torah — *Shavu’os* is the special time for this. If he’s seeking to attain joy, *Sukkos* is the special time. And to attain freedom, we have *Pesach*. What if we’re looking for *Hashem*? The time to find Him is *Shabbos*, when *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is not hidden by the darkness.

And what does it mean to seek for *Hashem*? Sometimes people seek *Hashem* desperately. They’re in trouble, and they really need *Hashem*’s help. What do they do? They try to pray with *kavanah*, begging *Hashem* to save them. Let’s say a family member is sick. His relatives pray fervently and tearfully for his recovery. Or someone urgently needs ten thousand dollars. He prays, “Please help me, *Ribbono shel Olam*. I need the money so badly!”

But is this what *kavanah* is really all about? Having *kavanah* doesn’t mean telling *Hashem* how badly we need something. Rather, increasing *kavanah* in our prayers means increasing our awareness of Who *Hashem* is. We recognize His great powers and appreciate what He and only He can do. We say, for instance, “*Hashem*, I know that only You can help me!”

Let’s say someone approaches a wealthy man for a very large loan and says, “You don’t know how important this is to me! I really need the money.” In such a case, the wealthy man will likely respond, “I understand you need the money, but I can’t right now; try someone else.” To which the prospective borrower might reply, “I looked around and I already

know that there is no one else in the world who can help me — only you. And I know you have a heart of gold, and besides, you are a close friend of mine. You care for me so much.” What is the prospective borrower doing? He is showing that he appreciates who this wealthy man is. He recognizes his unique qualities. He realizes and acknowledges that this wealthy man can do what no one else can.

This little parable illustrates how to increase *kavanah* in prayers. If we speak to *Hashem* and just express with great emotion how much we’re suffering, this is not *kavanah*. If a person goes out to the street, looks around, and says to *Hashem*, “There are so many nice cars on the street. It hurts me to drive around in this beat-up old clunker!” This is not *kavanah*. But if he says, “*Hashem*, You are so good and kind. You give people such nice cars. Don’t You have a nice car for me, too?” — this is *kavanah*.

In olden times, there was a place to find *Hashem* — *Beis Hamikdash*. A lamp burned there continually, and the loaves of bread on the table were always as fresh as when they came out of the oven. This demonstrated how real *Hashem*’s presence was in the *Beis Hamikdash*. If you would go into a house and find the rooms empty and dark, you would understand that no one lives there. But if you see that the light is on, and there’s fresh bread on the table, you know for sure someone lives here.

In Temple times, a Jew would just walk into *Beis Hamikdash* and feel *Hashem*’s presence, and love Him. A person would know that He’s our Father in Heaven, that He’s involved in our lives, and that He loves us and cares about what happens to us. A Jew would understand that *Hashem* is a “living G-d,” not an abstract concept. The source of this awareness was *Beis Hamikdash*.

It is actually a great miracle that man is able not to see *Hashem*, fear Him, and love Him. But there is a way to “rid ourselves” of this miracle and find *Hashem*. On *Shabbos*, the thick blanket of darkness that miraculously hides His overwhelming presence is gone, because *Shabbos* is all “day.” On an ordinary weekday, it is hard to find *Hashem*. But on *Shabbos*, if you truly seek *Hashem* and want to bring Him into your life, you will surely find Him. ●



# A Soul is from Above

וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים (בראשית ב, ז)

**He breathed into his nostrils the soul of life (*Bereishis 2:7*)**

The *Zohar* says that when a person breathes out, he is breathing out something of himself. Accordingly, when *Hashem* breathed the *neshamah* into man, as it says in this verse, this breath contained something of Himself, so to speak.

We know that when rational beings do things, they have a reason for it. Let's say a person carefully and painstakingly designs a plan for a machine and then constructs it according to plan. Someone else comes along and takes the machine apart. When he wants to put it back together, he can't figure out what all of the nuts and bolts are for, so he decides that some of them are just extraneous; they serve no purpose.

But it is not so. The person who designed and constructed the machine was a professional. He put a lot of time and thought into this machine and he planned everything out just right. The other person might not be able to figure out where some of the nuts and bolts are supposed to go, but that doesn't make them extraneous. He just doesn't know.

Here's another example: a person builds a big gasoline receptacle. It has a capacity of a hundred gallons. It is clear that the purpose of this receptacle is to hold a large amount of gasoline. No one in their right mind would think that the

purpose of the receptacle is to hold one gallon.

Now let's get to the point. *Hashem* breathed into us a *neshamah*. This is a very sophisticated instrument and it has a very large storage capacity. Do you know how much Torah a Jewish soul is able to contain? *Hashem* must have had a reason for putting a *neshamah* into us: we are meant to fill it up with endless amounts of Torah.

Every Jew, by his very nature, whoever he may be, can reach infinite greatness. Why? Because he has within him a holy soul, which came from the breath of *Hashem*, which carried with it something of Himself. *Hashem* did not just decree that we should have a soul; He Himself breathed it into us. This endows man's very nature with the ability to reach unending greatness in Torah learning, in *tefilah*, in *yiras Shamayim* and in *avodas Hashem*.

If *Hashem* placed in us this holy *neshamah*, He surely intended that we should utilize its potential. As it says in the first chapter of *Mesilas Yeshtarim*:

Man was created for his state in the next world. Therefore, this soul was placed in him, because for the sake of the soul, it is fitting to work, and it enables a person to receive Heavenly reward in its proper place and time. ●