



## YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Bereishis

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

**The Seemingly Superfluous Word “Es”**

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**The Jewish People Are Compared to Wheat**

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**Acknowledgement of the King of the Universe**

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**The Context of Exactness**

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**Creating the Context of Mercy**

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## Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Bereishis

### The Blueprint of Creation to Actualize G-d's Glory



#### **Man's Role in Existence**

*Torah:* "Bereishis bara Elokeem ais hashemayim v'ais haaretz – In the beginning of G-d created the heaven and the earth..."

*Rashi citing Chazal:* "The word 'Bereishis' should be interpreted to mean 'It is for the sake of 'reishis (the choicest)' that G-d created existence, which is the *Torah* itself that is referred to as 'reishis.' The word 'Bereishis' also alludes to the Jewish people who are referred to and classified as 'reishis'..." The objective of the creation of existence is to be the setting for the *Torah* to be fulfilled. Thus, every aspect of existence is intended to facilitate the fulfillment of *Torah*. In addition, G-d also created existence for the sake of the Jewish people because they are the only people who have relevance to the spirituality of the *Torah*. G-d created existence to function within the context of free choice. Man was given the choice within the context of the *Torah* to do good or evil. Seemingly, he

Jewish people are referred to as "reishis" because they were the only nation who accepted the *Torah* at Sinai.

*Midrash:* Before G-d offered the *Torah* to the Jewish people, He offered it to every nation; however, they rejected it. In contrast, when it was offered to the Jewish people they accepted it unequivocally because it was the will of G-d. Why did they accept the *Torah* while the nations of the world rejected it?

*Torah in Haazinu:* "When the Supreme One gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of man. He set the borders of the peoples according to the number of the Children of Israel." This is referring to the generation of the Dispersion that occurred as a result of the Tower of Babel. G-d dispersed seventy root families to be established as the seventy nations of the world. It is interesting to note that the *Torah* tells us that when *Yaakov* descended to Egypt, he did so with seventy members of his family. The *Torah* refers to them as "seventy souls."

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*: There is a correlation between the seventy root nations and the seventy souls that went with *Yaakov* to Egypt.

*Chazal*: Each one of the seventy root nations has an archangel that is responsible to watch over it. (As we find when the Jewish people left Egypt at the time of the exodus, the *Torah* states “Egypt followed after them...” The word “followed” is written in the singular rather than the plural.

*Rashi* citing *Chazal*: “It was the archangel of Egypt that was traveling after the Jewish people.”)

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*: “Each one of the seventy nations has its own archangel. There is no one archangel that oversees all seventy nations... In existence there is always a representation of good and a counter balance that is a representation of evil. The Jewish people are the representation of good while the seventy nations of the world are the representation of evil.

“Initially all the souls that were created emanated from two trees (in the spiritual sense). The good tree was the equivalent of *Adam*, who was completely good and pure. All the souls that were meant to emanate from him would have been good and pure. The evil force, which is the root of all evil, represented the evil tree.

“When *Adam* chose to eat from the Tree of Knowledge he intermingled within himself the evil that was represented by that tree. As a result of his action, the souls that emanated from him are no longer pure souls. All the generations that followed had a similar level of impurity. However, after many generations the good tree was re-established through *Yaakov*, our Patriarch.

“*Zohar* (and the *Gemara* in Tractate *Bava Metzia*): ‘The radiance of *Yaakov* was a semblance of the radiance of *Adam*.’ The good tree has seventy branches. It is because of this that seventy souls went down to Egypt with *Yaakov*. When G-d established the seventy root nations, He did so to correspond to the seventy good souls that emanated from *Yaakov*. These seventy souls are referred to as seventy holy branches.”

*Yaakov*, our Patriarch was the equivalent of the original father of mankind, pre-sin. He encompassed all the pure souls that were destined to come into existence. Thus, giving them relevance to the holiness of *Torah* and to

fulfill the objective of Creation. G-d had initially created the world for *Adam* to produce the pure souls that would fulfill His Will. Tragically, because he had transgressed the Word of G-d he disqualified himself and was no longer able to address his role as G-d’s servant.

It was not until *Yaakov*, our Patriarch came into being that this role was reinstated. Thus the objective of Creation could be fulfilled through *Yaakov*’s progeny. He is referred to as the most perfect of the Patriarchs. Since *Torah* in its essence is truth in the most absolute sense and good, as G-d says, “I am giving you a good commodity (*lekech tov*)...” The only people who have relevance to this level of good is the Jewish people, whose essence is good. Thus, the nations of the world, who represent the counterbalance of the Jewish people, have no relevance to the *Torah* itself.

## The Hand Of G-d in Existence

*Midrash (Yalkut)* at the beginning of *Bereishis*: “*Rebbe Akiva* says, There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet that encompass the entire *Torah*. They are etched with a writing implement made of fire on the awesome crown of G-d. When G-d was about to create the world, each of the 22 letters of the alphabet came before Him and said, ‘Please use the spirituality which lies within me to create existence.’”

*Midrash*: The first letter to come before G-d was the letter ‘*tuf*’ (which is the final letter of the Hebrew alphabet). The letter *tuf* said to G-d, ‘Master of the Universe, if it be Your Will, create the world through me because it is stated, ‘*Torah tziva lanu Moshe* – the *Torah* was commanded to us by *Moshe*.’ Therefore, since the word ‘*Torah*’ begins with the letter ‘*tuf*’ and the *Torah* is the purpose of creation, the world should be created with the spirituality of the letter ‘*tuf*.’

G-d responded, ‘No, because the letter ‘*tuf*’ will be written in red upon the foreheads of those who perished (including the devoutly righteous) at the time of the destruction of the Holy Temple, which indicated that they were marked for death. Thus, it was through the letter ‘*tuf*’ that tragedy came upon the Jewish people and many perished. Therefore, the world will not be created with the letter ‘*tuf*.’ Subsequently, every letter of the alphabet came before G-d to be the vehicle for Creation and they were rejected.

However, when the letter 'bais' (which is the second letter of the alphabet) came before Him and said, 'If it be Your Will to create the world through me because every day the Jewish people say, 'Blessed is G-d forever, Amen and Amen.' G-d said, 'Yes, I will create the world through you. Blessed is the one who comes in the Name of G-d.' He thus chose it as the letter to bring creation into existence. As it is stated, "Bereishis bara Elokim..."

*Reb Chaim of Volozin in Nefesh HaChaim: "Baruch ata Hashem"* is an acknowledgement and a recognition that all blessing emanates from G-d and He is the source of all that exists. As initially existence only came into being through G-d's Willing it to be, so too does the continuation of existence come through G-d Willing it to be.

We say in the morning prayers: "He renews through His Goodness every day continuously the act of Creation." Creation is an ongoing process. This is the understanding of "Blessed is G-d forever, Amen and Amen." Therefore, we can understand why G-d chose to create existence through the spirituality that is contained within the letter "bais."

*Gemara* in Tractate *Berachos* presents a seeming contradiction between two statements of King *David* in *Psalms*. King *David* writes, "The world in its entirety belongs to G-d" (which includes the terrestrial level). In another verse, King *David* states, "The heaven is G-d's domain and the earth was given to mankind." This indicates that the terrestrial plane was meant to belong to man. The *Gemara* reconciles the two verses in *Psalms* by explaining that the first verse, "the world in its entirety belongs to G-d" is before the recitation of a blessing while the second verse "The land was given to mankind" is referring to a context after one had recited the blessing.

After one acknowledges that G-d is the Master of the Universe, in each particular context, then one has permission to partake of the world as if it is his own. The ultimate objective of creation is to understand and acknowledge that everything exists only because G-d wills it to exist. There is nothing happenstance or random in the world, but rather, it is all continuously Willed for its purpose by G-d.

*Ramban* in his commentary on *Parshas Bo*: Nature itself in its essence is no different than a revealed

miracle. Just as G-d willed that the Sea should split, G-d Wills on a continuous basis every aspect of nature. Thus nature is a "concealed miracle." It is only through the study of the *Torah* that the Jew has the ability to hone his spiritual senses to be able to see G-d's Hand and imprint in every aspect of existence. As it states, "Blessed is G-d forever, Amen and Amen."

## **Existence is an Expression of G-d's Unity**

*Torah*: At the conclusion of the first day of creation, "And there was evening and there was morning, day one (*yom echad*)." After the second day of creation the *Torah* states, "And there was evening and there was morning, a second day (*yom sheini*)."

*Rashi* citing *Chazal*: "According to the order of counting of the days of creation, if the second day is referred to as "*yom sheini* – second day" and the third day is referred to as "*yom shlishi* – third day" and so on, the first day of creation should have been referred to as "*yom rishon* – first day." However the *Torah* refers to the first day of creation as "*yom echad* – day one."

*Rashi* citing the *Midrash*: On the first day of creation, G-d was the only spiritual entity in existence. The angels were only created on the second day. Thus, the *Torah* refers to the first day of creation as "*yom echad* - day one" rather than "*yom rishon* – first day" to indicate that G-d was the only One in existence.

*Maharal* of Prague *z'tl*: Until the angels were created there was no question pertaining to the "unity/ oneness" of G-d. It was only after the creation of the various echelons of angels (each one with a distinct character), that the unity of G-d became less clear.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Chagigah*: Regarding the *chayos ha'kodesh*, a classification of angel, that it takes 500 years to traverse the length of the thigh of this spiritual being. This is only an indication of the enormity and incomprehensibility of angels.

*Midrash*: When *Adam* was created, he radiated with such a degree of holiness that the angels confused his radiance with that of G-d. Thus anything that has a semblance to G-d's holiness causes the perception of reality to be slightly blurred– namely the indisputable oneness of G-d.

*Ramchal z'tl*: The *mitzvah* of “*yichud* – declaring the Oneness of G-d” through the recitation the *Shema* (once in the morning and evening) is something more than a declaration of monotheism. The *mitzvah* of “*yichud Hashem*” is to believe that everything in existence is synonymous with G-d. Every aspect of creation exists only because G-d Wills it to be. Everything is an expression of His energy and thus there is nothing separate from Him. This is the *mitzvah* of “*yichud Hashem*.”

On the first day of creation, there was no other spiritual being in existence other than G-d. Thus, when the *Torah* states “day one” it literally means that the day is synonymous with G-d Himself. Thus, the identification of the first day as “*yom echad* – day one” rather than “*yom rishon* - first day” is an indication that it is not simply part of a sequence of “second, third, fourth, etc;” but rather the *Torah* is communicating to us that the first day of creation was indisputably an expression of the unity of G-d.

Every day in the *Amidah* (silent prayer) we say, “*Hashem* sustains life with kindness...” G-d does not only provide sustenance for every creature in existence, He provides every aspect of life at every moment to all existence. G-d Wills every nuance of existence from the subatomic level to the grand function of the universe.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Chullin*: “One does not stub his toe in this existence without it being decreed by G-d.” The stubbing of one’s toe and every aspect of experiencing that pain are all expressions of G-d. This is the meaning of the unity of G-d.

## Putting Things Into Perspective

*Torah*: “*Bereishis bara Elokim* – In the beginning G-d created ...”

*Rashi* citing *Chazal*: The *Torah* refers to G-d with the appellation of “*Elokim*” to connote that existence was brought about through the Attribute of Justice. In contrast the appellation “*Hashem* (YKVK)” connotes G-d’s Attribute of Mercy.

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*: What the *Torah* is telling us is that in essence the Attribute of Justice represents goodness and kindness (*tov v’chesed*). Bringing about the creation of the world was itself an act of kindness

and goodness – providing unlimited opportunity for mankind. Before the sin of *Adam*, existence was untainted and pure. It was a setting in which man could have advanced himself to a level of perfection within moments. However, because of the sin of *Adam* that same accomplishment will take 6000 years, as explained by *Ramchal*.

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*: “This is the meaning of the verse ‘*Hashem hu haElokim – Hashem* (YKVK) is *Elokim*.’ Meaning, that although *Elokim* connotes the Attribute of Justice, it is in essence one in the same with goodness and kindness. There is no distinction between the two appellations – *Hashem* and *Elokim*. All of the events that have relevance to existence are meant to present mankind with the ultimate opportunity and provide kindness to him.”

For example, if one is in need to have a gangrenous limb removed in order for him to live, one may perceive it as the ultimate act of cruelty because it severely limits and handicaps the individual. However, in its essence it is the ultimate act of mercy because it is only through this procedure that the individual will be able to live. The Attribute of Justice is exacting in meting out punishment. When one transgresses, he is deserving of retribution. However, the pain and suffering that one experiences is only meant to spiritually rehabilitate him. This is the manner in which the Attribute of Justice is in essence an act of Mercy.

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*: “The blessing that *Yitzchak* had given to his son *Yaakov* states, ‘And may *Elokim* give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fatness of the earth...’ The ultimate blessing which *Yitzchak* had given emanates from *Elokim*. It is the Attribute of Justice (*Elokim*) that gives blessing gratis. Despite the fact there was no one before existence to merit its creation, G-d created the world through the Attribute of Justice.

“The Attribute of Justice manifests itself in severe punishment only to assist the individual. However at the end of time there will be a level of clarity that all will know that G-d is One and His Name is One. Meaning, *Hashem* (YKVK)/ the Attribute of Mercy is in fact one with *Elokim* (Attribute of Justice).” In order to perceive the Attribute of Justice in the same manner as the Attribute of Mercy one needs to have a special level of clarity.

## Speech, the Catalyst for Spirituality

*Mishna* in Tractate *Berachos*: “Just as one must bless (G-d) for the good, he must also bless G-d for the bad.” When one experiences tragedies in life, he must understand that these tragedies emanate from the same source as bounty and blessing – which is G-d Himself, Who is all Good. One must not mistakenly believe that tragedy comes upon him from a negative/severe source. If one had the sufficient level of clarity, he would praise G-d during times of difficulty no less than the praise he would give during times of good fortune. This is in fact the law as it is stated in the Code of Jewish Law.

*Torah*: At the conclusion of the first day of creation, “And there was evening and there was morning, day one (*yom echad*).” After the second day of creation the *Torah* states, “And there was evening and there was morning, a second day (*yom sheini*).”

*Midrash*: “According to the order of counting the first day of creation should have been referred to as “the first day (*yom rishon*)” However the *Torah* chose the term “*yom echad* – day one.” The *Midrash* answers that nothing existed on the first day of creation other than G-d Himself. On the second day of creation the angels were created.

*Maharal* of Prague: The creation of the angels because of their enormous spiritual dimension and magnitude, detracted from the obviousness of G-d’s unity. Before the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, the *Midrash* tells us that when *Adam* was created, he radiated with such intensity and holiness that the angels had mistakenly believed that this radiance was that of G-d Himself. Similarly, because of the dimension of holiness of the angels themselves, it interfered with the true perception of G-d’s Oneness.

However, at the end of time this will not be the case, as the verse states, “And G-d will be King over all existence– G-d will be One and His Name will be One.” Despite the degree of the present ambiguity of reality, at the end of time all mankind will be endowed with a level of clarity to be able to recognize and fully appreciate the unity of G-d in every aspect of creation. Although the angels of enormous spiritual dimension will exist, it will not detract from His perceived unity. Therefore the level of clarity at the end of time will be even greater than that which existed at the time of the second day of Creation.

*Torah*: Regarding the creation of *Adam*, “And Hashem G-d formed the man, dust from the ground, and He blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living being (*nefesh chaya*).”

*Rashi*: Although the *Torah* also refers to the domesticated and undomesticated animal as ‘*nefesh chaya* (living beings)’; however, the human being is the ultimate of living species because he possesses intelligence and has the ability to speak.

*Ramban* citing *Targum Unkolus*: The words “*nefesh chaya*” can be interpreted as “he (man) became a speaking species. It is with this unique soul that man will have the ability to comprehend and speak.” If the *Torah* uses the same words “living species (*nefesh chaya*)” regarding the creation of man as it does regarding the creation of land animals, what is the basis for the interpretation of “living species,” when stated regarding man, to mean that he became a species with the power of speech?

*Torah*: “*Bereishis bara Elokim* – In the beginning G-d created ...”

*Chazal*: The opening words of the *Torah* mean that for the sake of *Torah*, which is “*reishis* (first/choicest)” G-d created heaven and earth. Meaning, that all existence only came into being for the specific purpose for the fulfillment of *Torah*. Another interpretation of *Chazal* for the opening words of the *Torah* is that G-d created the world for the sake of the Jewish people who are referred to as “*reishis* (chosen). In essence, the world was created only for the fulfillment of the *Torah*; however, because the Jewish people are the only ones qualified to receive it, it is the equivalent of the world being created for them. If any other nation would have been qualified to receive the *Torah*, the world would have been created also on their behalf.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Eruvin*: One of the students of *Reb Meir* was studying *Torah* without articulating its words. He only meditated upon it. *Bruryah*, the wife of *Reb Meir* strongly criticized this student for not enunciating the *Torah* that he was studying. She had said to him, “You are not accomplishing anything in the manner in which you are studying.” She based her criticism

on the verse that states, “*Torah* is life for those who come upon it (*I’motzeihem*).” *Bruryah* explained to him that the verse is stating, “*Torah* brings life only to the one who verbally expresses it (*meshe motzi b’peh*).” It is only when one articulates the *Torah* that he is studying that it spiritualizes him and brings about life.

Since the world was created only to be the setting for the fulfillment of *Torah* (in all its aspects), the ultimate purpose of creation is for the spiritualization of man and all existence. Spirituality, at the most complete level, can only be achieved through the articulation of *Torah* when it is being studied and extolling G-d. Consequently, the human species that was created for that purpose is not complete and fully functional unless it was endowed with the power of speech.

The expression “living being (*nefesh chaya*)” when it applies to the animal means that it was created with a life source that enabled it to be complete within its own context as an animal. Similarly, the words “*nefesh chaya*” when applied to the human being means that he was endowed with a life source that enables him to be complete in his mission, which is to glorify G-d.

As the prophet states: “For My (G-d) glory I have created it (the world).” Although the nations of the world have no relevance to the spirituality that is generated through the articulation of the *Torah*; nevertheless, they were endowed with intelligence and the ability to speak only to sing G-d’s praises. As it states in Isaiah that at the end of time, “Every tongue should swear...” G-d will be glorified and extolled by all mankind.



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