

## Bereishis – Keith Goldstein (*Choson Bereishis*)

Parshas Bereishis – 6 Oct 2018 – 27 Tishri 5779

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The Vilna Gaon links the first פסוק of בראשית with the first פסוק of each of the other four books of the תורה to find a common theme. He quotes the Midrash in which Rabbi Yitzhak referring to the third verse of the Torah by reference to the words in Tehilim which translate as "the opening of your words will give light". He takes this as an indication that the first verse of each book of the Torah has a connection to the Menorah. The first verse of בראשית has seven words corresponding to the seven branches of the Menorah. The first verse of שמות has eleven words corresponding to the eleven buttons of the Menorah. The first verse of ויקרא has nine words corresponding to the nine flowers of the Menorah. The first verse of במדבר has seventeen words corresponding (with the kollel) to the height of the Menorah, eighteen טפחים. The first verse of דברים has twenty-two words corresponding to the twenty-two goblets of the Menorah.

Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov in his famous work בני יששכר applies the fourth verse of the Torah link a different five, namely the five רבי יוחנן בן זכאי brought in the Mishnah in Avos in their respective replies to the exhortation of their Rebbe to go out and see which is the good path to which a person should attach himself. He questions, first of all, the meaning of the exhortation in that the obvious answer would be to keep the Torah and mitzvos which are referred to in the Torah as being את החיים ואת הטוב. He then goes on to explore on what basis the various Rabbis gave the answers which they did and in what source their Rebbe expected them to find the answers.

His explanation is that the intention of the Rebbe and of his pupils was to look for a particular attribute to be adopted by reference to the first time that the word טוב is mentioned in the Torah, based upon a Gemara which states that it is a good sign for a person if he sees the letter ט in a dream as the first time that letter appears in the Torah is in the verse וירא אלקים את האור כי טוב. Rabbi Eliezer answered "a good eye" because in the verse it says that Hashem saw that it was good and of course a person sees with his eye. Rabbi Yehoshua's answer was a good friend; he bases this on the words immediately preceding the verse mentioned which were that there was darkness on the face of the deep. Rashi explains that initially, although we cannot fully understand it, the light created and the dark, already in existence, functioned together, at the same time without any obstruction or competition, which is friendship. Rabbi Yossi's answer was a good neighbour because immediately after creating the light it states that Hashem divided light and darkness to operate at different times, respectively day and night. The demarcation between the two renders them neighbours, each with their own border, rather than friends. Rabbi Shimon's answer was to learn that one must anticipate what is going to be, רואה את הנוול, He gave this answer because, as Rashi brings, Hashem saw that the original light created was too holy to be utilised by the wicked and stored it away for use in messianic times. The answer of Rabbi Elazar was a good heart לב טוב. Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech asks where did he find this hinted at in the verse mentioned? He asks further, how this answer could be said to incorporate all of the other answers given, as was explained by their Rebbe. His explanation is that he did not find "heart" in the verse as such but the word טוב comes after the first 32 words of the Torah, 32 being the gematria, i.e. numerical value, of the word לב. It follows that all of the words and verses used by his colleagues were incorporated in his answer, which is of a more general nature.

Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech explains also that 32 is a reference to the Kabbalistic foundation of there being 32 paths of Wisdom and he explains in the same vein with reference to לג בעומר, being the 33<sup>rd</sup> day, the secrets of the Torah were published to the world by Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, prior to his death on that day. It is on that account that there is such a diversity between the anniversary of the death of Moshe Rabeinu, which is treated with anguish and solemnity whereas on the anniversary of the death of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai we celebrate. Our Rabbis state that upon the death of Moshe Rabeinu numerous halakhos were forgotten whereas, in contrast, upon the death of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai the great light of the mysteries of the Torah was allowed to shine.

עקיבא יחיאל גאלדשטיין חתן בראשית תשע"ט

לעולי נשמת אבי מורי ר' אברהם יצחק בן מיכאל אליהו ואמי מורתי מרת שרה ראכיל בת חיים ע"ה