

V'Zos Habracha/Bereishis

Ibn Ezra on “V'zos Habracha” (this is the Bracha) states that this is like the prophetic Bracha, Yakov Avinu gave to his sons before he passed away (Parshas Vayechi Bereishis 49:1). Ramban in his commentary echoes a similar explanation linking the Brachos of Yaakov to those that Moshe gave to the tribes. In fact, some of the wording is directly linked to the words used by Yaakov.

Back when we explain Yakov's Brachos, and the prophecy within them, it is because Yakov was imbuing the power into his sons to remain on the path whose destiny is to bring Mashiach. Moshe in turn continues with the blessings, instilling within the much larger nation the power to remain on the path of Torah, and a destiny that ultimately serves Hashem to bring Mashiach.

As it is famously known, we don't ever end the Torah- we roll right into the beginning. The end and the beginning seem to be eons apart in terms of time and place, yet they remain connected, and we are once again reminded that the world was created for the path to bring Mashiach.

The Haftora that is read on Simchas Torah is from the beginning of Yehoshua- where the legacy of Yehoshua begins after being granted the mantel of leadership from his teacher Moshe. The entry point into the Land of Israel and the beginning of the new era leading up to the Beis Hamikdash is part of the journey to Mashiach. We are at the point in history well after the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash- which seems like a distant memory, and a bygone world that is disconnected from us. Yet because of the Brachos of the forefathers, we remain as a

nation, still serving Hashem for the purpose of ultimately welcoming Mashiach.

Just as the end of Devarim and the end of Moshe's journey on the physical earth quickly is reborn with the reading of Bereishis. There is no time to break from the sequence and cycle in Torah as we right away restart the Torah. Famously, many commentaries such as Ibn Ezra explain the first word of the Torah, Ramban and Rashi offer the explanation about the Torah beginning with creation regarding our faith- in that we must believe that Hashem created everything and everything for a purpose. In our shiur on Thursday night, I offered the following explanation regarding the whole vast universe being created. One may ask why the universe needs to be so big, just to serve Hashem on this lonely planet, floating somewhere in the vast emptiness. My father had offered an explanation in a lecture on science and Torah he delivered many years ago, that the universe is a balanced pendulum, with the Earth (as far as our relative observations go) is at the center, and all the planets and galaxies are part of the balancing act to keep our natural order, that was created by Hashem in line. As far as we understand natural sciences, for example Newton's third law states that for every action there is an equal opposite reaction, not every action can we observe the equal and opposite reaction. Therefore, if this law is to be true, every cosmic and atomic motion has some equal and balanced reaction even a universe away theoretically. Therefore, for the entire of our purpose to exist as we do in this universe, the grand balancing of the universe needs to exist around us. I added another explanation. We are told in the Mishna (4:5) Sanhedrin that “B'shvili Nivra Haolam” (for me the world was created). Elsewhere (Bereishis 18:27) we are told “Anochi Afar V'Eifer” (I am nothing but dust

and ashes¹). We are told to balance these two world views. When we are acting in any capacity we are at the center of that act. Especially if that act benefits us, that is the only thing that matters. In that moment, even our tiny existence has merit and matter. But in the grand cosmic reality, we are nothing, especially when contemplating just how big the universe is. The thought is overbearing and can be depressing. To serve Hashem, we ought to properly balance the two adages, as they both are true, and both co-exist. On one hand, we are always at the center of our own universe, on the other hand we are cosmically worthless. The universe has to be so vast in order to “put us in our place” that is actually impact our ego enough that we can quell our self-centeredness to be balanced and productive, yet we can recognize at any given moment that the entire purpose of all existence is for us in that moment. Which if unchecked can lead to unproductive behaviors. Both truisms on their own can lead to unproductive behavior, both in balance can lead to an Eved Hashem, who knows that the Torah is true². How can we contemplate “Hashkifa M’meon Kadshecha” if we can’t see Hashem’s greatness in the context of how big a universe He created. In this universe with all the natural laws and order that we observe we have the power to be servants of Hashem using the blueprint of Torah as our guide. We aren’t lost in the vastness; we are given purpose and tasks for a fulfilling life.

Baal Haturim offers a few explanations as to why the Torah doesn’t start with an Aleph-

¹ Rashi explains Avraham’s statement regarding how Avraham could have been destroyed by Nimrod

² As we say in Brish Shmei when we take the Torah out of the Aron- “I do not at any time put my trust in man, nor do I place my reliance on an angel, but only on the God of Heaven Who is the true God, whose Torah is truth, whose prophets are true, and who performs

something we talked about In the Shiur as well:

- 1) Beis is the letter for Bracha, whereas Aleph is the first letter of Arira (curse)
- 2) There were 2 worlds created in the beginning, this world, and the world to come.
- 3) There are 2 torahs- Oral and Written (there are multiple more explanations he offers).
- 4) Furthermore, Baal Haturim says, Bereishis Bara numerically equals “On Rosh Hashana the world was created” (and he offers another numerical value explanation).

His explanations are also consistent with the idea of why Gemara starts on page 2. As no one can completely learn the whole Torah- even if they convince themselves they know a lot. The Torah is iterative, adaptable, and relevant to our lives.

The past 2 years there was a basic theme to the Divrei Torah, year 1 was general on the parsha (usually using Rashi), year 2 was focused on connecting the parsha to the Haftora (using Rashi and Radak). This year’s theme is to focus on something from Aliya 1 and 2. Following years, I hope to focus on content from other Aliyos. This way I can get in depth exposure to all parts of the Parsha. Additionally, at the recommendation from my wife and R’Aron, I will try to focus on 1 Pirush a week to draw on.

Good Shabbos

numerous deeds of goodness and truth. I put my trust in Him, and I utter praises to His holy and glorious Name. May it be Your will to open my heart to the Torah, and to fulfill the desires of my heart and the hearts of all your people of Israel for good, for life, and for peace.” (From <https://rsa.fau.edu/brich-shmei>).