

Rabbi's Article II

Robbers?!

On the very first verse of the entire Torah Rashi quotes the question and answer of our sages (-Bereishis Rabba 1:2.

Yalkut Shemoni, Bo 12:2):

"Said Rabbi Yitzchok, 'The Torah should not have begun except from (-Exodus 12:2), 'This month is to you,' which is the first commandment that the Israelites were commanded, (for the main purpose of the Torah is its commandments).

"Now for what reason did He open with 'In the beginning?' Because of (-Psalms 111:6) 'The strength of His works He related to His people, to give them the inheritance of the nations.' For if the nations of the world should say to Israel, 'You are robbers, for you conquered by force the lands of the seven nations [of Canaan], they will reply, 'The entire earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it (which we learn from the story of the Creation, "In the beginning...") and gave it to whomever He deemed proper. When He wished, He gave it to them, and when He wished, He took it away from them and gave it to us."

From Rashi's meticulous¹ wording, "It was not necessary to begin... for what reason did He open with..." it is understood that Rashi sees the question not so much as why the Torah wrote the portions of from, "In the beginning," until that of, "This month," in as the question being, "Why did the Torah open with," when seeming the Torah should have, "Begin with," the, "the first commandment that the Israelites were commanded," "This month shall be to you the head of the months; to you it shall be the first of the months of the year." Meaning, that the answer to, "You are robbers..." is specifically from this that the Torah opens with the story of Genesis. Thus, the question, why would it not have sufficed if, "The strength of His works He related to His people," would have come after the, "the first commandment"?

So too, if from the perspective of the Torah, "The Torah should not have begun except from," the why would the Torah changed from (i) "Except from, 'This month is to you,'" or from (ii) entirely not writing the story of Genesis, just in order to answer an accusation of, "the nations of the world"? More so, in order to have the, "They will reply," to the, "the nations of the world," it would have sufficed to have this passed on from generation to generation through the Oral Law. And we actually find it so (-Sanhedrin 91a), "When the people of Afrikiya came to judgment with the Jewish people before (the emperor,) Alexander of Macedon, they said to him: The land of Canaan is ours, as it is written (-Numbers 34:2), '(This is the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance,) the land of Canaan according to its borders.' And (the people of Afrikiya said, referring to themselves,) Canaan is the forefather of these people. Geviha ben Pesisa said to the Sages, 'Give me permission and I will go and deliberate with them...,' And on another occasion, the descendants of Ishmael and the descendants of Keturah came to judgment with the Jewish people before Alexander of Macedon. They said, 'The land of Canaan is both ours and yours, as it is written (=Genesis 25:12), 'And these are the generations of Ishmael, son of Abraham, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maidservant, bore unto Abraham,' and it is written (=Genesis 25:19), 'And these are the generations of Isaac, son of Abraham,' (therefore, the land should be divided between Abraham's heirs). Geviha ben Pesisa said to the Sages: Give me permission and I will go and deliberate with them..." And Geviha ben Pesisa's answer was one not one written expressly in a verse!

Therefore, we must say that the, "open with 'In the beginning,'" was not just for the, "the nations of the world," but that it is important also for Israel themselves in their Torah. Thus, Rabbi Yitzchok brings the verse, "The strength of His works He related to His people," that Israel know that by their conquering the Seven Nations they are not "robbers."

The Explanation: All of this will be understood through the mystical understanding of Rabbi Yitzchok's teaching, as explained (-Ohr HaTorah, Bo, pg. 262) by Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, known as the Tzemach Tzedek (-[Link](#)). Spiritually speaking, "conquering the lands of the Seven Nations," speaks of Israel's "conquering" the entire world through their service to G-d. Meaning, when a Jew takes a piece of this world and uses it, "For the sake of Heaven," he is thus, conquering and redeeming it from being of, "the lands of the nations," of the realm of the, "mundane" and transforming it into, service article of holiness, object of holiness, holiness, and even Holy of Holiness. Thus, the nations are demanding. "You are robbers!" for these mundane objects belong to them, as our Sages teach (-Seder Eliyahu Zuta, chapter 19), "While Jacob and Esau were still in their mother's womb Jacob said to Esau, 'Esau, my brother, we are two brothers to one father, and before us there are two worlds, this world and the World to Come. This world has eating, drinking, to do business, marriage to a woman, and giving birth to children, however, in the World to Come, there aren't all of these traits. And if you wish, you take this world, and I will take the World to Come' ...At that moment, Esau took his portion in this world, and Jacob took his portion in the World to Come." Therefore, the nations are demanding that Israel's service of "conquering," which is, "Broadening the boundaries of holiness," is "robbing"!

And to this, the answer is, "In the beginning G-d created..." and therefore (-Chronicles I 29:14), "From You is everything," and, "Gave it to whomever He deemed proper. When He wished --due to the sin with the Tree of Knowledge --, He gave it to them," that before Israel's service with it, it belongs to the mundane. However, this was only in order that, "and when He wished, He took it away from them and gave it to us," wanting us to take it from the mundane, and to return it to the, "boundaries of holiness," as it was before the sin.

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1. Different than that of some Midrashim: "The Torah did not have to write... for what reason did it write from, 'In the beginning'...."

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This then is the meaning of, "The Torah should not have begun except from... the first commandment that the Israelites were commanded," being that (i) G-d's Torah is higher than G-d's, "Works of Creation," and (ii) so too, the service of Torah and Mitzvot is higher² than the service of, "Works of Creation," the service of "conquering". As we see this practically, within the person doing the service. When the Jew is occupied with Torah-study or Mitzva-observance, his is immersed in holiness, above worldly matters, while when he is occupied with his own permissible occupation, even when he is doing so, "For the sake of heaven," and in order to, "Know Him," nevertheless, he is immersed in, "his (own) doing," and "his (own) ways," attached to his personal desires.

However, with this, the question of, "And for what reason does it open with, 'In the beginning,'" becomes all the stronger! Yes, the Torah needs to tell us of the Service of Conquering the 'Nations'," however, with the Service of Torah and Mitzvot, being the higher service, "The Torah should not have begun except from... the first commandment that the Israelites were commanded"?!

The explanation to this is, that albeit the Service of Torah and Mitzvot is a higher level than the Service of Conquering, nevertheless, the ultimate purpose of creation is that (-Tanya, chapter 36, according to Tanchuma, Naso 16), "The Holy One, blessed be He, desired to have an abode in the lower realms," which means, "There is none lower than it (in terms of concealment of His light)." And this is fulfilled more in one's own permissible mundane ("there is none lower than it") Service of Conquering, than even in the Service of Torah and Mitzvot (Realm of Holiness). Thus, this is the reason why the Torah Begins, for the Jewish People, with the "Works of Creation," letting us know that this Service, albeit the lower level of Service, is the priority Service, fulfilling G-d's "desire"!

Deeper Yet: The issue here is still not so "smooth," being that we explained the reason for the Torah's, "beginning" with, "In the beginning," is because only then are the, "nations of the world," answered concerning their demands of, "You are robbers!," and now we are saying that it is to teach us the priority of the Service of conquering the mundane, even over the higher Service of Torah and Mitzvot?!

In the Service of Conquering, and, "Broadening the Boundaries of Holiness," there are two categories:

(i) The realm of the Permissible Mundane, of the Husk of (somewhat transparency to the) Light, in which there is the reachable Spark of G-d, and we use this realm for our, "All your doings for the sake of Heaven," and, "In all your ways know him," and needless to say, for Torah and Mitzvot.

(ii) The realm of the Other Side and Three Husks of Impurity, of the Husk of (absolute) Opaqueness, in which there is no goodness at all. Nevertheless, even within this realm there is a Spark of G-d, for ultimately everything must receive life from Holiness. Only that, in this realm, the Spark of G-d is utterly hidden within them. Hence, in general, this realm is of the forbidden, and cannot be "conquered" into Holiness. Nevertheless, even this realm is, in cases of an exception to the rule, "conquered into holiness," through the higher Teshuvah (Repentance; Return) performed with Love (rather than with fear), in which (-Yoma 86b), "Great is repentance, as one's intentional sins are counted for him as merits, as it is stated (Ezekiel 33:19), 'And when the wicked turns from his wickedness, and does that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby (meaning by "his wickedness," which has now turned into, "lawful and right").'"

The nations' primary demand of, "You are robbers" is concerning the latter realm! For concerning the realm of the Other Side they seemingly are in the right, being that a Jew who behaves appropriately never deals with this realm, for the Torah directs us, "Turn away from evil," rather than to elevate evil. Therefore, the Torah needs to "Begin" with the, "Works of Creation," for were it to start with, "the first commandment that the Israelites were commanded," this would then mean that the "conquering" of, "Great is repentance, as one's intentional sins are counted for him as merits," would categorically be, "robbing" from the nations.

In other words, on the one-hand, the potential, and the legitimacy, of transforming "intentional sins," into "merits" cannot come from the Torah, but only from G-d Himself, who, "From You is all," even the , Other Side, hence, through Teshuvah, returning to G-d Himself, the Essence Connection between the Jew and G-d, can be "conquered" and made Holy. However, on the other-hand, being that, (-Proverbs 6:23), "And Torah is Light," thus, everything, even that which is Above and Beyond Torah, such as Teshuvah, must be brought to us through the Torah, and hence, this needs to be (i) written in the Torah, and (ii) the Torah must begin with this. More Specifically, for the Conquering of the Permissible, it is enough to be just be written (anywhere) in the Torah, for Torah allows this Service, while for Conquering the Other Side, the Torah (which in itself does not allow for this) needs to begin with this, before the Laws of Torah are set to forbid it.

This is the deeper mystical meaning to the statement of Rabbi Yitzchok, "For what reason did He open with 'In the beginning?' Because of 'The strength of His works He related to His people, to give them the inheritance of the nations'"': "To His people --to the Children of Israel-- He related --is drawn-- the strength --(and Spark) of G-d that there is within-- (all) of His works. Being that (-Zohar, Vol III, Acharei 73a), "For Israel and G-d are all one,"

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2. For through the service of, "Conquering the world of the domain and transforming it, and thus, broadening the boundaries of holiness," one draws the, "Garments of the King," while through the service of, "Torah-study and Mitzvot-observance," one draws the, "Crown of the King".

3. Thus, our sages teach us (-Pesikta DeRav Kahana, Portion Shuva), "(-Psalms 25:8), "G-d is good and upright; therefore, He leads sinners on the road.' ...They asked the Torah what the punishment is for a sinner?' She said to them, 'He will bring an Guilt Offering --which is only for an unintentional sin-- and it will atone for him.' They asked G-d, 'the sinner what is his punishment?' He said to them, 'He will do penance and it will atone for him.' This is what the verse states, 'G-d is good and upright....'"

even more than, "*Torah and G-d is one,*" for (-Bereishit Rabba 1:4), "*Israel precedes the Torah,*" Therefore, Israel was given the strength of G-d ("*The strength of His works He related to His people*"), above and beyond Torah, to do *teshuvah*, which transforms intentional sins into merits.

However, just like the *Service of Mankind* must be in an orderly fashion, so too, his *Service of Teshuvah*. Thus, first one's *Teshuvah* (from sin) is of the mindset that he must detach himself from evil, and thus, "*Conquering*" evil feels like "*robbing*". Then comes the higher *Teshuvah* of (-Ecclesiastics 12:7), "*And the spirit returns to G-d, Who gave it,*" in which it is transparent that, "*From You is all,*" and the only reason for this realm descending into being, "*Land of Seven Nations,*" is for our *Service Conquering for G-d*, and hence, it is not, "*robbing*". Even more so, through this it is revealed that (Maimonides, Laws of Teshuvah 7:4), "*At the place where Returnees stand, even the Completely Righteous can't stand,*" and that (-Zohar Vol III, 153b), "*Moshiach is coming to bring 'Teshuvah' to the righteous.*"