

Torah Focus

יום המישי, כ"ה באדר, תש"ע

KIDDUSH HACHODESH

WEEKLY READING

SHEMOT 11:1-12:28

YECHAZEL 45:18-46:15

MISHLE 7:1-27

COL 2:16-23

1 COR 5:6-8

STUDY GUIDE #16

for it is said: In the day that the L-rd G-d made earth and heaven. Beth Hillel said to Beth Shammai: According to your view, a man builds the upper storey [first] and afterwards builds the house! For it is said: It is he that buildeth His upper chambers in the heaven, and hath founded His vault upon the earth. (Amos 9:6) Said Beth Shammai to Beth Hillel: According to your view, a man makes the footstool [first], and afterwards he makes the throne! For it is said: Thus saith the L-rd, The Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. (Yeshayahu 61:1) But the Sages say: Both were created at the same time.

WHAT'S TROUBLING RASHI?

Why was Rashi was troubled with the opening of the Chumash, "Bereshit Bara Elohim"?

Rashi was troubled with this text because he knew that the Chumash was a halachic book. As a result Rashi had to resolve the problem of why HaShem began the text with "Bereshit bara."

The point being made is that Rashi, as do almost all the Sages see the Torah as a Halachic document.

WHO'S ON FIRST?

CHAGIGAH 12A

Our Rabbis taught: Beth Shammai say: Heaven was created first and afterwards the earth was created, for it is said: In the beginning G-d created the heaven and the earth. Beth Hillel say: Earth was created first and afterwards heaven,

In the beginning, etc. Bereshit bara]. This verse should be interpreted according to the Midrash, and it is in this way that our rabbis apply it to the Torah as having existed "before His works of old,"¹ or to Israel, called "the first-fruits of His increase."² But if one wishes to explain these words in their natural meaning, it is necessary to observe the following method. In the beginning of the creation of the heaven and the earth, when the earth was confusion and chaos, God said: "Let there be light." This verse does not set forth the order of the creation. If it did, the word בראשונה would have been necessary, whereas the word ראשית is always in the construct, as in Jer. xvii. 1, Gen. x. 10, Deut. xviii. 4; " likewise ברא must here be taken as an infinitive ברא: the same construction occurs in Hosea i. 2.

WHY DOES THE TORAH START WITH BERESHIT?

The argument between Hillel and Shammai tell us that the word "Bereshit" can NOT mean the first thing that G-d created was the Heavens and earth.

Nor can we determine an order of creation from this verse. Nevertheless, our present Torah Seder establishes an order. That order is that the mundane came before the spiritual. Now the BIG question is WHY?

THIS THE BEGINNING

Shemot 12:1-2

Why is this the BEGINNING?

What is so special about the beginning and how does this relate Bereshit 1:1 to Pesach?

How does the Tosefta to Pesachim reveal the answer to this problem?

PESAHIM (MISHNAH)

1:1 On the night preceding the fourteenth [of Nisan] they seek out leaven by the light of a candle. Any location into which [people] do not [ordinarily] bring leaven does not require examination. And why did they say, "Two rows in a wine vault [must be searched out]"? [This designates] a place into which they bring leaven. The House of Shammai say, "Two rows over the entire surface of [the rack of jars in] the wine vault." And the House of Hillel say, "The two outermost rows which are uppermost."

1:2 They do not scruple that a weasel might have dragged [leaven] from house to house and place to place. For if so, [they will have to scruple that the weasel has dragged leaven] from courtyard to courtyard and from town to town, [so] there is no end to the matter.

NOTES:

PISHA (TOSEFTA)

1:1 *On the night preceding the fourteen [of Nisan] they seek out leaven by the light of a candle* [M. Pes. 1:1]. They do not seek out [leaven] by the light of the sun or the light of the noon, but only by the light of a candle, for examination with the light of a candle is far more thorough. Even though there is no clear proof for the proposition, there is at least an indication of it: *At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps* (Zephaniah 1:12). And it says, *The spirit of man is the lamp of the L-rd, searching all his Innermost parts* (Prov. 20:27).

1:2 *The House of Shammai say, "Two rows over the entire surface [of the rack of jars in] the wine-vault* [M. Pes. 1:1] "the outermost row, which faces the door, and the uppermost row, "Which faces the beams [are to be examined]. "But that which is below it or further in than it does not require examination." And the House of Hillel say, "The outermost row which is the uppermost. "which faces the door and the beams, "[and] that which is below it [require examination]. "But that which is further in than it does not require examination."