

חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

Beit Yisrael

RUZHIN · BERESHIT, BEIT YISRAEL (RUZHIN)

The world was created for the sake of the two things called "reishit" — Torah and Yisrael — and this very act involved Hashem's tzimtzum (self-contraction), as it were, clothing Himself within these to bring forth and sustain all existence, a pattern of anavah (humility) in which true greatness lowers itself for the sake of the lesser. From this a person learns to recognize his own lowliness before Hashem, the source of all his life-force, and to know that one who strives to draw close is met with Divine help, for Hashem continually contracts Himself, as it were, to bestow that life-force upon him. AI SUMMARY

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Rashi explains: for the sake of Yisrael, who are called "reishit" (first/beginning), and for the sake of the Torah, which is called "reishit darko" (the beginning of His way). I would say: it is for the sake of the Torah and for the sake of Yisrael, who are called "reishit," that the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world.

It is taught that there are two "reishit"s, and the Targum renders it as "bechochmata" (with wisdom), as it is written, "The reishit of wisdom is the fear of Hashem." This means that there is chochmah ila'ah (supernal wisdom) and chochmah tata'ah (lower wisdom). From above to below it is called anavah (humility), as it is written, "Beikev anavah yirat Hashem" (the consequence of humility is fear of Hashem); and from below to above it is called yirat Hashem (fear of Hashem).

For anavah exists only in one who is greater than his fellow and yet lowers himself and likens himself to his fellow — this is called anavah. But one who is actually equal to his fellow and likens himself to him — this is not anavah. Therefore it is written of Moshe that he was "anav mikol ha'adam" (more humble than all men), for he was greater than all men, and yet he likened himself to every single person — this is called anavah.

Also, as Rashi writes elsewhere: "In the place where you find His greatness, there you find His humility (anavah)." For He created all the worlds and gives life to everything in this world, and He, blessed be He, for the sake of the Torah, which is called "reishit," and for the sake of Yisrael, who are called "reishit," created all the worlds. That is to say, He, as it were, clothed and contracted (tzimtzum) Himself within the Torah, and through it created the world, and gave life-force to every person and to the world — this is called anavah. And this is the meaning of "Bereshit bara Elokim" — Elokim in gematria (numerical value) equals "hateva" (nature). That is, through these two "reishit"s mentioned, He, as it were, contracted Himself and created the entire world.

So too must a person fear Hashem — that is, to see his own lowliness and to understand that all his life-force comes from Hashem, who gave it to him so that he might serve Him with this life-force, and to fear Him, blessed be He, as it is written, "Lift your eyes on high and see who created these." And this is the meaning of the two "reishit"s mentioned — the two forms of chochmah (wisdom) mentioned, for the sake of which Hashem, blessed be He, created the world. A person must prepare his heart to serve Hashem, and to know that Hashem, blessed be He, will help him, as it is said, "Whoever comes to purify himself is helped" — that is, Hashem, blessed be He, contracts Himself, as it were, in order to bestow

upon him. And this is "Bereshit bara Elokim" — that is, that Hashem, blessed be He, contracts Himself to bestow life-force upon all.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5)