

חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

Chiddushei HaRim

GER · CHIDDUSHEI HARIM ON TORAH, BERESHIT

The Torah opens with Creation not merely to defend Israel's claim to the Land against the charge of "robbers," but to establish that all existence belongs to Hashem and He grants the Land to whomever He wills; thus Israel's possession of Eretz Yisrael is not an independent right but a Divine gift contingent on their attachment to Hashem, as shown by the mitzvot of Shemittah and Yovel, whose violation leads to exile. AI SUMMARY

Rashi explained: Rabbi Yitzchak said, "There was no need [to begin the Torah] except from 'This month is for you' (Hachodesh hazeh), for this is the first mitzvah [commanded] to Israel... but rather, [He began with Creation] so as to make known to them the power of His deeds... so that [the nations] should not say, 'You are robbers,' [who seized the lands of] the seven nations."

The Ramban, of blessed memory, wondered at this question — since the entire matter of faith depends on belief in the [creation of the world as a] new creation (chiddush) — and at the answer, which seems weak, that for this reason [the Torah] would write forty-two [generations/genealogies, i.e., the long account from Creation].

However, in truth, the words of our Sages, may their memory be blessed, are as clear as the noon sun: the Torah was given to Israel by virtue of the fact that they are "the portion of Hashem, His people" (chelek Hashem amo); but by virtue of the fact that He created the world, all created beings are equal. Therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, opened with "I am [the One] who took you out of the land of Egypt" — for it is specifically in this capacity that He is called "the G-d of Israel," He Who changes the nature of His world for their sake, and they cling, above nature, to Hashem.

Indeed, the mitzvah of Shabbat alone would have sufficed, as it is written explicitly, "Remember... for in six days... the heavens and the earth" — and Israel testifies concerning the Holy One, blessed be He,

that He created the world. If so, this matter is as clear to them as if they saw it with their own eyes, as it is written, "witness, saw, knew..." And "This month is for you" alone would have sufficed, [to teach] that time is in their domain — Israel, who sanctify the set times (dekadshinhu l'zmanim) — and it illuminates for them the renewal (hischadshut), that the Holy One, blessed be He, renews the work of Creation every day, and this newness is above [the cycle of] the sun. If so, the concept of chiddush (renewal/new creation) is automatically clear to them.

Rather, "the power of His deeds" refers to the order of Creation, [explaining] "so that they should not say, 'robbers,'" meaning: how is it possible that Israel are the people of Hashem and His portion? After all, every nation has its own designated place and land from the time of the Dispersion (haflagah) onward, yet Israel have no place except through seizure — and it is written, "there is no injustice; He is righteous and upright" (ein avel, tzaddik v'yashar), implying that all must testify to His righteousness. Therefore [Scripture] told of "the power of His deeds" — that this is how He arranged it: that there should be tohu and vohu (formlessness and void)... as a preparation for there to be light. Likewise He separated between the waters so that there would be dry land; and so the entire order of Creation was a preparation for the sixth day, the creation of Adam, and afterward for Shabbat.

So too, this place — the Land of Israel — [first belonged] to Canaan and the other nations, and from this it later came to belong to Israel, once they would complete [their formation] into His people and His inheritance, as it is written, "He set the borders... according to the number of the children of Israel." On the contrary — Hashem wanted that they should take it from them against their will, to show that everything still belongs to Him, and that He gives to whomever He wishes, as is proper in His eyes, as our Sages, may their memory be blessed, said.

This was also the reason for the plundering of Egypt, "and you shall empty out [Egypt]" — to demonstrate through Israel that no created being had yet gone out from His domain, blessed be His

Name, as it is written, "The earth is the L-rd's..." "the world and..." For this reason, [the land] belonged to Israel only when they knew this, as it is written, "The land is Mine; you are sojourners... with Me." This is what is written in the Sifra, which is the Torat Kohanim: "When it is Mine, it is yours" — see there.

The Shemittah (Sabbatical year) and the Yovel (Jubilee) indicate this; and when they violated [these commandments], they were exiled — for the Land of Israel is our place only when we are attached to Hashem; the Land of Israel is still a gift from Hashem, and then He sustains us. In this matter lay the beginning of the giving [of mitzvot], to fulfill the commandments that point to the above.

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