בס״ד

Ranon Ginsberg

Parshat Bereishit

כח׳ בתשרי ה׳תשפ״ז

Firsts

This past week I was learning *Peninei Halachah: Laws of Prayer* with my chavruta Eytan and we reached “Chapter 6: Waking Up in the Morning”. The chapter opened by quoting the opening of Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 1:1, “One should gather his strength like a lion to rise in the morning to serve his Creator and to awaken the dawn.” Rav Melamed says on this that the way a person wakes up affects how he functions for the rest of the day. A person who knows his purpose has a reason to get up. The lion is a good example because it represents someone who understands his own worth and faces whatever is in his way with courage.

This is the very first line in all of Shulchan Aruch. I don’t think that’s an accident. Before you are able to apply any of the halachot taught in the Shulchan Aruch you have to wake up for the Creator. If you don’t wake up with the intention to face your day with courage like a lion, it’s hard to do any of the other teachings with full kavanah.

This past week I also started doing Shnayim Mikra V’echad Targum. In the very first Rashi in the Torah, Rabbi Yitzchak asks why Hashem started the Torah with creation and not the first commandment, *Hachodesh hazeh lachem*? His answer, quoting Tehillim, is that “the power of his acts He told to His people in order to give them the estate of the nations.” So if the nations of the world would call us bandits for conquering the land of the 7 nations of Canaan, we can answer: the whole world belongs to Hashem. He created it, and He gave it to whomever He saw fit by His will. When He wanted, He gave it to them, and when He wanted, He took it from them and gave it to us.

This is a very important message to start off the entire Torah. From what I understand Rashi is saying that the Torah wants us to start with confidence about Eretz Yisrael, the core of

Judaism. Our claim to this land comes from the Creator, so we don't need the approval of the other nations of the world. We don't need to try and appease them.

These 2 "firsts" have something in common. The Torah is a book of mitzvot and a guide to life, but it doesn't open with a mitzvah. The Shulchan Aruch is a book of halacha, but it opens with the way we should wake up. Both begin with the Creator before any details. The Shulchan Aruch says to rise to serve the Creator, and Rashi says our claim comes from the Creator. In both, our strength comes from knowing whose we are. The lion isn't strong only because he is a lion, but because he knows who he is.

This Shabbat we begin the Torah again, and every morning is like a small Bereishit, a chance to start fresh. So next time the alarm goes off in the morning, before you think about what you have to do, start with who you are doing it for. Then rise like a lion.

Shabbat Shalom!