



A Sermon in the Rabbi's Room

Parshas Beresheis

Leilui Neshmas Meira Chaya Nechama Bracha A"H

Bat David Mordechai V'Zelda Shaindel Sheychu

Aside from being a Torah scholar, my father Rabbi Yisrael Grossman was involved in many of the public issues of the day.

Despite his young age, he was close to many of the leading rabbis of his generation and was trusted by them as a public leader and activist fighting for Torah.

Father was once involved in an incident in which a newspaper wrote a scathing article about Rabbi Yitzchok Zev Halevi Soloveitchik, the Rabbi of Brisk.

The Ultra-Orthodox community was up in arms and planned a mass rally to protest the public show of disrespect to this prominent rabbi. However, the Brisker Rav opposed the public outcry and called for its end.

However, the rally was already planned. At the set time, the site of the event was packed, and father was slated to address the crowd first.

After my father, Rabbi Shalom Shvadron spoke to the rally, but as he was speaking, the Brisker Rav's son called on him and my father to arrive at the Brisker Rav's office immediately. We were perplexed by the snap invitation.

The first verse in our weekly parsha says: "In the beginning of G-d's creation of the heavens and the earth."

Rashi commentates that "this verse calls for a midrashic interpretation, as our Rabbis stated 'God created the world for the sake of the Torah, which is called 'the beginning of His way' and for the sake of Israel, who are called 'the first of His grain.'"

The Torah is the beginning, not only in its name, but also in its essence, as our Sages have taught us that the Torah

preceded the world and that the world was created according to its plan.

In the Midrash, the Torah and Israel are equated, both are called a beginning. One line, G-d, connects the two.



The Jews were chosen by G-d only because of the Torah, as recounted in the Midrash which tells how G-d tried to offer the Torah to all the nations, but only the Jews accepted it unconditionally. The Jews' uniqueness is derived from the Torah. The Torah, which is a beginning, makes Israel a beginning as well.

Therefore, our Sages underscored the significance of respecting Torah scholars, who represent the Torah in the world.

The world has no existence without the Torah and those who observe its commandments, the Torah scholars for whom the world exists.

My father and Rabbi Shalom entered the Brisker Rav's office, and he asked them to repeat, word for word, what they said at the rally.

Father was embarrassed, as he did not wish to sing the Rav's praise in front of him, but the Rav insisted, and so he repeated his words in support of the Rav again.

When he concluded, the Brisker Rav shook his head in agreement, and my father took the gesture as a positive response and he calmed himself.

Father later said that the Brisker Rav approved of his quoting of a Midrash which said that the greatest hater of Israel is he who hates the Sages, as we have no right to exist without them.