

Neurology & Pain Management

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"In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the earth" [Genesis 1:1]

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In our approach to sacred texts we begin with the beginning! How does one begin at the beginning? Our earliest recollections as individuals can never be exactly located in time. I believe the Midrashic imagination meditating on that first verse of the bible also wishes to sow some doubt by posing interesting questions. Besides any polemical issues and other cultural triggers that have been posited by scholars I wish to add a meditation on that famous commentator RASHI¹ who makes use of Midrash for his commentary.

Rashi quotes the statement of Rabbi Yitzchak, that the Torah should have begun from "*HaChodesh hazeh lachem* – this month shall be for you" [Exodus 12:1], which was the first *mitzvah* commanded to the Jewish People. Why did it begin with "*Genesis*"? *Because of the verse, "The power of His works He declared to His People, to give them the inheritance of the nations" [Psalms 111:6]. If the nations of the world say, "You are thieves, for you've conquered the land of the seven nations," they [the Jewish People] can answer, "The entire world belongs to Hashem, He created it and gave it to whomever He wanted. He wanted to give it to them [the nations], and then He took it away from them and gave it to us."*²

בראשית (ביפ"ת כתב שכ"ז הוא מהתנחומא' רק פסוק כח מעשיו וגו',

לקחו רש"י מהבראשית רבה ע"ש' אך בילקוט פסוק החודש' הביא בשם התנחומא כמו שהוא כאן' עי,

בשה"ר פ, הביאני) אמר רבי יצחק' לא היה צריך להתחיל א את התורה אלא מהחדש הזה לכם' שהיא

מצוה ראשונה שנצטוו ב ישראל (כי עיקר התורה אינה אלא למצותיה' והגם שנמצאו בס, בראשית ג"כ

קצת מצות כמו מילה וגיד הנשה' היה יכול לכתוב בהדי שאר המצות) ומה טעם פתח ג בבראשית'

משום כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו לתת להם נחלת גוים (תהלים קיא' ו.) שאם יאמרו אומות העולם לישראל'

ליסטים אתם' ד שכבשתם ארצות שבעה גוים' הם אומרים להם' כל הארץ של הקב"ה היא' הוא בראה

¹ Rabbi **Shlomo Yitzhaqi**, better known by the acronym **Rashi**, (February 22, 1040 – July 13, 1105), was a rabbi from France, famed as the author of the first comprehensive commentaries on the Talmud, Torah and Tanakh (Hebrew Bible).

² 1. Rashi's commentary to the verse: "In the beginning of God's creation of the heavens and the earth." (Gen 1:1) :

In the beginning Said Rabbi Isaac: It was not necessary to begin the Torah except from "This month is to you," (Exodus 12:2) which is the first commandment that the Israelites were commanded, (for the main purpose of the Torah is its commandments,) [and although several commandments are found in Genesis, e.g., circumcision and the prohibition of eating the thigh sinew, they could have been included together with the other commandments] sic. Now for what reason did He commence with "In the beginning?" Because of [the verse] "The strength of His works He related to His people, to give them the inheritance of the nations" (Ps. 111:6). For if the nations of the world should say to Israel, "You are robbers, for you conquered by force the lands of the seven nations [of Canaan]," they will reply, "The entire earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it (this we learn from the story of the Creation) and gave it to whomever He deemed proper When He wished, He gave it to them, and when He wished, He took it away from them and gave it to us.

(נשמע מהודעת הבריאה) ונתנה לאשר ישר בעיניו' (כנשמע מספורי אדם הראשון ומבול והפלגה וסדום)

ומלחמת אברהם עם המלאכים ומפלת מצרים. וירושת הארץ היא משכר המצות וחשובה כמצו, ועיין מזה

באריכות ברא"ם ויפ"ת) ברצונו נתנה להם' וברצונו נטלה מהם ונתנה לנו:

I always wondered about this Rashi! What kind of Midrash to quote! after all it is the very first verse in the Bible, so let's celebrate it and work it! Instead he cites the famous Midrash of Rabbi Yitzchak (his namesake!) that the Torah *should* have begun with Exodus 12:2! In some editions the words *shehi mitzvah rishona* "for it is the first of the commandments" are in parenthesis. These words are not in the Midrash and their absence lends a whole different complexion to the Midrash once omitted. It seems as if their presence merely suggests that the Torah be viewed as a rule book so why not begin with the rules, the first being Exodus 12:1 and on!

What if this parenthetical remark had been piously inserted by a copyist and the true quote from the Midrash Tanchuma left intact without editorial insertion. The Midrash then suggests that Rabbi Yitzchak questioned as to why the Torah did not begin with Exodus 12:2. It will be up to us to reread the Midrash and attempt to extricate his reasoning. In doing so we might understand this most enigmatic quotes of Rashi!

If we take a closer look at that verse in Exodus and more importantly Rashi's commentary on it, we find a totally different perspective³ casting a very different light on the first verse of the Bible! Quoting Rashi:

(ב) החדש הזה. הראהו לבנה בחדושה (שמו"ר טו'

כת). ואמר לו' כשהירח מתחדש יהיה לך ר"ח. ואין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו' על חדש ניסן אמר לו' זה

יהיה ראש לסדר מנין החדשים' שיהא אייר קרוי שני' סיון שלישי (מכילתא שם): הזה. נתקשה משה על

מולד הלבנה' באיזו שיעור תראה ותהיה ראויה לקדש' ס והראה לו באצבע את הלבנה ברקיע' ואמר לו

כזה ראה וקדש. וכיצד הראהו והלא לא היה מדבר עמו אלא ביום' שנאמר ויהי ביום דבר ה, (לעיל ז'

כת). ביום צוותו (ויקרא ז' לח). מן היום אשר צוה ה, והלאה (במדבר טו' כג). אלא סמוך לשקיעת

החמה נאמרה לו פרשה זו' והראהו עם חשכה:

"God showed Moses the moon in its renewal and said to him "when the moon renews itself it will be the beginning of the month for you."⁴

On the word *this* (in the phrase *this month*, which might seem redundant, was needed because) Rashi comments:

Moses was perplexed about the precise determination of the new moon, as to what size it needed to be before it could be sanctified, so God showed him with a finger the moon in the sky and (pointing to it directly) said: "see it is like this, to sanctify it".

The seemingly redundant word *this* is made to good use! Referring to the actual pointing with a finger the way a human being might point something in the sky to another! (We shall avoid discussion of the obvious anthropomorphic embarrassments

³ Citing the Midrash Mekhilta

⁴ Although the term Rosh Chodesh is translated as New Moon technically the Torah definition refers to the re-appearance of the new moon in its crescent shape immediately after the period of invisibility.

which I treated in chapter 1 of my thesis.⁵ Indeed that word was also used midrashically for the same purpose at the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15:2) “*This* is My God and I will glorify Him” Rashi cites the Midrash (Exodus Rabba 23:15) “He revealed Himself to them in His glory and they would point to Him with a finger”⁶

But now Rashi questions as to how God could have revealed Himself at the only time possible to point out the moon, at night. For God only reveals Himself in broad daylight:

“How could He have shown him (the moon at night) for indeed He did not communicate with (Moses) except by day as it says “and it was on the *day* that Hashem spoke”⁷, “on the *day* of His commanding”⁸ from the *day* that Hashem commanded and onward”⁹

Rashi quotes the Mekhilta here in his questioning God’s revealing the shape and size of the new moon, which seems to require a night sky.

In response he cites the Midrash in which God revealed to Moses the moon “near to sunset”

“Rather it was close to sunset, that this passage was told to him and he showed (the reappearing shape of the moon) with (the approach of) darkness”.

If we make use of this midrashic selection in Exodus as the intent of Rabbi Yitzchak to shed light on Genesis 1:1, we might get at a deeper understanding as to his original question, why the Bible did not begin with this verse. The Midrash clearly sees this verse as one of instruction followed by deep perplexing difficulty on the part of Moses. Despite being commanded with the first national commandment regarding the exodus from Egypt and its commemoration by the sanctification of the new Moon; the calendric cycle by which the nation would henceforth determine all its dates and sacred rites, Moses remains perplexed!

This state of doubt is followed by an anthropomorphism in which God indexes the moon directly to Moses thereby seemingly removing doubt. However the Midrash then posits the very impossibility of such an interaction because the moon by its nature only come out at night and God’s communication with man only occurs by day! Again we are plunged into radical doubt! Did God really show Moses the shape of the new Moon or not!

So the Midrash tries to resolve the issue with a grey area called twilight; that radical time of inbetweenness and uncertainty, where back in the creation story, we are told all the misfits of creation were made such as Balaam’s ass etc! In this time zone of neither day nor night God was able to show Moses the shape of the moon. Finally the words *im chasheicha* literally “with night” or the approach of darkness add to the somber scene. With the approaching darkness the twilight is almost over, the dusk is taken over by the darkness of night, and it is precisely in proximity to this night that God is able to point out the exact shape and size of the sliver of the new moon.

This Rashi points to a more complex view of the original question than the mere issue of where and when the list of commandments appeared and why the Torah should not have started with them therein Exodus rather than in Genesis! The Torah looked upon this novel way begs the question as to what its true nature is and I doubt that Rashi saw the Torah as merely a rule book of Mitzvot! Why not start where the rules begin, why all this fluff and history, cosmology and story after story of Patriarchal family squabbling!

⁵ See; my *Imaging/Imagining the Divine in Rabbinic Literature*; Brandeis PhD Thesis 2000.

⁶ See also Exodus 13:8

⁷ Exodus 6:28

⁸ Leviticus 7:38

⁹ Numbers 15:23

Surely Rashi's citing of Rabbi Yitzchak is closer to this Midrash where God and Man meet in the twilight of dusk "near to darkness".

I wanted to suggest that Rashi wished to point us to this delicate narrative whereby Moses' perplexity was answered by God Himself pointing out with His own finger the resolution. "Close to darkness" was to be the very medium by which God would somehow be forced to "bend His rules" of interaction. For the first time He would communicate "close to the darkness" (note how similar the words darkness is to the darkness of the first verses of genesis!). Moses needed guidance in the darkness and twilight spaces of life and God comes down to show him the path even in the "close to darkness". This is the subtlety of the spiritual path, those dark nights of the soul where there is a lack of clarity need guidance more than the light sunlit areas.

Maybe this is what Rashi meant...why the need to begin with cosmology and the grand creative acts of God, rather begin with man's perplexity despite all the sunlight! Begin the Torah with man's dark nights; show him how to live with the twilight the sunset and the dark spaces of the soul!

Rabbi Yitzchak may be allowed his own voice now. I would speculate that his question focuses on the inner purpose of our sacred texts. If our purpose is the actions and works, the spiritual discipline that allows us access to the divine then possibly the Torah, our sacred text, may well have been able to start from the first Mitzvah, representing the beginning of the path through inner work. In the dialectic of *pnimi and makif*¹⁰ one could add that Mitzvot, the action rituals allow one access to the Divine *makif* or transcendent whereas study and Torah learning gives one access to the *pnimi* and Rabbi Yitzchak wishes us the former access. Whereas the cyclical nature of the month and moon requires faith, that the moon will return to its former glory (like the faith in the return of Israel and the messiah) the issue of rabbi Yitzchak is what to privilege. For him *emunah* this faith is represented better by the Exodus text and *is prior to any theoretical explanation of the origins of our people*. Faith comes prior to ratzio, the rational understanding of faith.

In choosing the Exodus chapter Rabbi Yitzchak is also choosing this particular Mitzvah of the Paschal Lamb that ritual that commemorates our liberation and the Exodus from Egypt. This is the first communal commandment although there have been others in genesis already commanded. The word *hachodesh* meaning the month, also implies *chiddush* something new, as in the new moon, or a newness or breakthrough in spirituality. Maybe Rabbi Yitzchak is suggesting the Torah demands constant inner work to find the newness in it so that that should have been made a priority in the sacred order of texts, rather than the "history" of the world as outlined in Genesis, for that is "old hat!"

The particularity of the Israelite experience is intimately connected to the moon, not only in the lunar cycle of calendric calculation, but also in the apparent subjugation of the people in the four exiles well documented in Midrash. The moon characterizes this aspect of "no light of its own" both in Israel's relation to the occupying powers and master kingdoms, but also in its relations to the sun which in various texts is signified by God, who gives all the light and we, characterized by the Shechina have no light of our own, but merely reflect the light of the sun. We are so connected to the archetype of the moon as it waxes and wanes, and as we as Jacob/Israel see saw in relationship to power and Esau/Edom/Rome and Christianity represented by the sun. Rabbi Yitzchak maybe alluding to the primal importance of this passage over and above others that speak of cosmology and history of the outer world. For the Torah as a sacred text, the notion of Israel as exemplified by the moon may well be more important, in the need to be aware of our task in relation to both God as well as the current political power, in order to survive both spiritually as well as physically.

¹⁰ See my essay on *Igulim and Yosher*, Circles and Lines June 16th 2007

Lastly Rabbi Yitzchak maybe suggesting that today, access to God may only be possible via the lowest rung of the ten sephirot, those archetypal levels of godliness manifest in the world. The lowest rung is called *malchut*, represented by the moon. The famous Midrash states that the moon began as equal to the sun but was then diminished in size for complaining to God that there cannot be to governing luminaries in the sky. Jewish midrashic theology has pinned much that is flawed in this world that is not the fault of mankind on the “lessening of the moon” an apparently unjust act that God eventually “admits and repents” by none other than the very lamb brought as an offering on the New Moon!. Maybe Rabbi Yitzchak is suggesting that this new moon and its offering should be given privilege by being placed at the beginning of Genesis precisely because man needs to understand first and foremost that God is in the center of the world and how it works, and all its flaws. The sun represents the visual acuity that allows man to look out and make deductions as to how the world works in history astronomy biology and human relations. The moon represents that lack of knowledge the lack of awareness and that which remains hidden from man’s grasp. The downside of the sun’s acuity is to afford man the possibility to “see” inappropriate objects of desire and philosophical speculation, whereas the path of the moon is only thought faith. Rabbi Yitzchak after all maybe telling us that the Torah requires the path of faith and the moon as a prerequisite for entering the orchard of Torah.

To this Rashi answers with the verse from Psalms:

כַּח מַעֲשָׂיו, הִגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ-- לְתַתּ לָהֶם, נִחַלַת גּוֹיִם.

"The power of His works He declared to His People, to give them the inheritance of the nations"

Psalms 111:6

Read in light of the previous Midrash we might be able to read the verse from Psalm in a different key:

The word power in Hebrew is *koach* the numerical value of which is 28. The power alone is declared to the Jewish people as some sort of secret gift. The Hebrew word for wisdom is *chochma* which can be rearranged as *koach mah*. Koach mah means the power of mah or “what”! I believe the power given to people from the beginning of Genesis is that very power of asking “what”! What is out there, what is my life about and what is the meaning behind all our suffering. This license to ask “what!” is given to us from the beginning of genesis. This is the very question Moses asked when perplexed. What is the shape of the moon to be when we sanctify it? What is the meaning of our dark exile? What will be the end of suffering? How do we live with those dark spaces and sunsets? For this we need the book of genesis. For genesis is more than rules and commandments, more than history cosmology and narrative. It is myth. Myth is defined by those stories by which we craft ourselves. The book of genesis and its four life cycles of Adam Abraham Jacob and Joseph help us in our own struggles to see the “what” in all of life. Their struggles to find meaning continuity and a sense of the epic mission to which they were called resonate throughout the bible and help us in our own search for meaning.

It is thus quite fitting for Rabbi Yitzchak to ask the same question “what”! What is this all about this book of genesis, why not start where Moses begins to question God and need answers to his perplexion. Surely that would have been a more fitting place to begin. No answers Rabbi Yitzchak, the Psalm points us in the direction asking the question “what”. The response is the very book of Genesis.

More importantly this verse taken from Psalm 111:6 is no accident. Rashi quotes it as a response to Rabbi Yitzchak:

כַּח מַעֲשָׂיו, הַגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ-- לְתַתּ לָהֶם, נַחֲלַת גּוֹיִם.

111:6 He hath declared to His people the power (כֹּחַ) of His works, in giving them the heritage of the nations. The numerical value of the word power (כֹּחַ) is 28.

There are 28 letters in the first sentence of the book of the Genesis, here in Hebrew:

בְּרָאִישִׁית, בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים, אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ

Here in Latin, for the beauty of the language:

In Principio creavit Deus caelum et terram - Liber Genesis 1, 1

The number 28 is a very significant number. Since each Hebrew letter has a numerical value words can be collated to the sum total of their individual letters.¹¹

Using the numerical value for the word for Love in Hebrew (Ahava,) adds to 13:
13=1+5+2+5=ה+ב+ה+א, 8=1+5+2=ב+ה+א, 6=1+5=ה+א, 1=א

So : 13+8+6+1=28 : there is a direct link between Love and the Genesis, via the number 28.

In addition, the word for Power in Hebrew is Koah' (כֹּחַ), the Gematria analysis gives this result :

8=ח, 20=כ

28 = +8 20 = ח + כ = כח

So there is a link between the Love ,the Genesis, and the Force, via the number 28, and with the understanding of the Gematria we can say that :

God made the world with Love and His Creation shows the level of His Power.

As is written: כַּח מַעֲשָׂיו הַגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ לְתַתּ לָהֶם נַחֲלַת גּוֹיִם (תהלים קיא ו.)

In Latin : *Virtutem operum suorum adnuntiabit populo suo, ut det illis heriditatem gentium -*

Psalmi luxta 110,6

I want to suggest that the quotation of Psalm 111:6 was meant for an audience of readers who knew the Psalter by heart and were thus able to freely continue the psalm until its cadence and climax in verse 10:

¹¹ א (aleph) = 1 , 2 = ב (bet), 3 = ג (gimel), 4 = ד (dalet),

5 = ה (hey), 6 = ו (vav), 7 = ז (zain) ,

8 = ח (h'et), 9 = ט (tet), 10 = י (yod), 20 = כ (kaf), 30 = (lamed)

י ראשית חכמה, יראת יהוה--
 שכל טוב, לכל-עשיהם;
 תהלתו, עמדת לעד. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do thereafter; His praise endures for ever.

Note the word בראשית is the very word for the first word for the bible! The parallelism is too obvious to ignore. Assuming the learned readership the Midrash is pointing us to the Psalm 111 to connect the inner workings of the psalm with Genesis. But let us first understand the deeper literary significance of this psalm to get at the connection intended by the Midrash.

The translation of Psalm 111 offered below is by John Hobbins¹² and is sensitive to the biblical poetics and style.¹³

Psalm 111:10 is the pivot of the larger composition. It concludes the preceding even as it introduces the following. Its unique function is marked by its unique prosodic shape, 4:(3:3). 'His acclaim' in 111:10 may be understood in two different ways. God's acclaim of those who fear him might be meant. This is the *lectio difficilior*. Or the fear of God as acclaim of God by human beings might be meant. The former possibility accords with the apparent parallelism 'high regard' / 'his acclaim.' The sense of human acclaim of God accords with the use of the expression elsewhere. On either construal, the expression appears to form an *inclusio* with 'I will praise you' of 111:1.¹⁴ I place the Machon-Mamre translation before the Hobbins to show his sensitivity to the poetry of the text:

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- א הללו-יהוה: **1** Hallelujah.
 אודה יהוה, בכל-לבב; בסוד ישרים ועדה. I will give thanks unto the LORD with my whole heart, in the council of the upright, and in the congregation.
- ב גדלים, מעשי יהוה; דרושים, לכל-חפציהם. **2** The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have delight therein.
- ג הוד-והדר פעלו; וצדקתו, עמדת לעד. **3** His work is glory and majesty; and His righteousness endures for ever.
- ד זכר עשה, לנפלאותיו; חנון ורחום יהוה. **4** He hath made a memorial for His wonderful works; the LORD is gracious and full of compassion.
- ה טרף, נתן ליראיו; יזכר לעולם בריתו. **5** He hath given food unto them that fear Him; He will ever be mindful of His covenant.
- ו כח מעשיו, הגיד לעמו-- לתת להם, נחלת גוים. **6 He hath declared to His people the power of His works, in giving them the heritage of the nations.**

¹² A pupil of Menahem Mansoor

¹³ His goal has been to furnish a global approximation of the poetry and prosody of the Hebrew text, even if the results are necessarily piecemeal. The rich texture of the original simply cannot be mapped onto a translation in another language except in fits and starts. He sometimes retains, in imitation of the Hebrew, examples of chiasm, inversion, and ellipsis which perforce result in a less idiomatic rendering. For more see : <http://www.ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com/>

¹⁴ Symbols he uses are as follows :

A strophe made up of three lines

1:(1:1) in structure

concludes a strophe; a sub stanza; a stanza; a section

2:(2:2) A line consisting of three versets, each of which contains two stress units, the last two of which form a pair

- 7 The works of His hands are truth and justice;
all His precepts are sure.
- 8 They are established for ever and ever, they
are done in truth and uprightness.
- 9 He hath sent redemption unto His people; He
hath commanded His covenant for ever;
Holy and awful is His name.
- 10 **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of
wisdom; a good understanding have all they
that do thereafter.**
- ז מַעֲשֵׂי יָדָיו, אֱמֶת וּמִשְׁפָּט; נֶאֱמָנִים, כָּל-פְּקוּדָיו.
- ח קְמוּכִים לְעַד לְעוֹלָם; עֲשׂוּיִם, בְּאֱמֶת וַיֶּשֶׁר.
- ט פְּדוּת, שְׁלַח לְעַמּוֹ-- צְוָה-לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ;
קְדוֹשׁ וְנֹרָא שְׁמוֹ.
- י רֵאשִׁית חֲכָמָה, יִרְאֵת יְהוָה-- שְׂכָל טוֹב, לְכָל-
עֲשִׂיהֶם;
תְּהִלָּתוֹ, עֹמֶדֶת לְעַד.

Psalm 111

1 I_will_praise Yahweh with_a_whole_heart in_the_council and_assembly of_the_true
3:3
2 _the_deeds of_Yahweh are_magnificent sought_after by_all who_delight_in_them 3:3
3 His_work is_splendid and_majestic his_beneficence lasts forever
he's_won renown by_his_wonders (3:3):3
5 Yahweh is_good and_kind he_gives spoils to_those_who_fear_him
he_will_remember his_covenant for_all_time (3:3):3

6 He showed his people the potency of his deeds bestowing on them the heritage of nations

7 the_deeds of_his_hands are_sure and_just (4:4):4
8 All his_orders are_sure well-founded forever and_ever
performed in_surety and_truth (3:3):3
9 He_sent redemption to_his_people ordained his_covenant for_all_time
holy and awesome is_his_name (3:3):3

10 The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom high regard belongs to all who practice them

his_acclaim lasts forever (4:3):3

Psalm 112

1 Happy the_one who_fears Yahweh who_greatly delights in_his_commands 4:3
2 _his_progeny will_be mighty in_the_land a_blessed generation of_the_true 4:3
3 Wealth and_riches are_in_his_house his_beneficence lasts forever 3:3
4 he_shines in_the_darkness, a_light to_the_true he_is_good, kind, and_beneficent
4:3
5 It_is_well with_the_one who_lends generously who_conducts his_affairs with_equity
4:3
6 _for_all_time he_shall_not be_shaken remembered for_all_time is_a_benefactor 3:4
7 Upon_hearing of_evil he_will_not be_afraid his_heart is_firm, trustful in_Yahweh 4:4
8 his_heart is_steady, he_will_not fear till_at_last he_looks_down on_his_foes 4:3
9 Spending_freely he_gives to_the_poor his_beneficence lasts_forever
his_horn shall_be_exalted in_honor (3:3):3
10 The_malefactor looks_on and_is_vexed he_gnashes his_teeth and_melts_away
the_desire of_malefactors shall_come_to_nothing (3:3):3

I would like to suggest that verse 10 parallels Genesis 1:1 and speaks of beginnings. Psalm 112 uses words such as light darkness and good all of which allows us to read the Midrash as relating this Psalm to creation in ways which seem to suggest that the beginning of the world and creation is to be paralleled by a symmetrical beginning in the human spiritual path, that of the fear of God.

If I am correct then the Midrashic response to Rabbi Yitzchak may well be that the fear of God even precedes the commandments and their fulfillment.

Fear is also translated as awe. Where Hobbins denotes acclaim we may also substitute the term awe. The awe inspiration evoked by our world and nature, the creation and the view from Apollo that first time we all saw this blue white planet as a living thing, or the starry skies at night all these imbue one with such a sense of awe and acclaim. I believe that the Midrash is demanding such awe as a prerequisite for the spiritually demanding journey to be taken in the path of Torah.

We have come full circle in this first Midrashic meditation on the book of beginnings and its relative value in the spiritual path a person needs to undertake. Its concern has been the relative weight attached to performance-ritual-rite based starting point versus narrative-myth-awe inspiring study of sacred texts. The use of the Psalms texts adds

weight to the latter and the need to begin where the Bible begins after all. But no having attempted to persuade in true didactic–dialectic fashion, the way the Midrash will continue to in its beautiful rhetorical method, of the contrary. In the end we are being asked to hold the tension between works and faith always balancing the two in a delicate dance that will need adjusting in the course of time, whether by sectarian means (Paul, Karaites etc.) or within the traditional fold (Hassidism, Mussar movement, The circle of Safed mystics etc.), this tension will remain throughout the majestic history of those concerned in coming closer to God and their experience of the Sacred Text we call the Bible.