**Parashat Bereshit**

We are all so familiar with the opening of the Torah we often fail to consider the alternatives. Rashi famously asks: “Shouldn’t the Torah begin with missvot, not stories”? To rephrase the question in a different way—what exactly does Hashem want us to learn from the opening of the Torah? Could God have nothing better to inform us about than [[1]](#footnote-0)תוהו ובוהו ורוח אלקים מרחפת על פני המים?

The assumption that the Torah was written to be comprehended by human minds is expressed by Hazal in the famous phrase: דברה תורה כלשון בני אדם[[2]](#footnote-1). The opening paragraph establishes the setting of the entire Torah. We must therefore assume that Hashem has a point He is trying to convey beyond a physical reality prior to creation.

The phrase רוח אלקים appears in Tanach most often associated with prophecy. God is spelling out his intent in creating the world. God has no ability to connect and communicate prior to the seven days of creation. His word is just floating upon the waters. The message will only be received once there are creations worthy of receiving his word.

The Torah’s opening statement sets the tone. God wants His voice to be heard. He created humanity to discover His messages and enact them upon the beautiful land He created. May we all merit to find the message of Hashem, and instill it in our hearts forever!

1. Bereshit 1:2. Translated loosely as the Earth was astoundingly vacant and a Divine spirit drifted over the waters. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Berachot 31B. Translated loosely as God wrote the Torah in a human voice. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)