

## Potomac Torah Study Center

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**NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning more than 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his untimely death.**

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**Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from [www.PotomacTorah.org](http://www.PotomacTorah.org). Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives.**

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Another short week (two days off for Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah), so I am adapting and expanding on my message from 5782 – otherwise I could not meet my deadline to post my Devrei Torah.

Those of us who grew up in the years following World War II could understand (looking back) why many Jewish adults of that period turned away from traditional Judaism. The Nazis murdered six million of our people, often with the help of the people among whom our fellow Jews had lived for many generations. America closed its doors to most of the Jews fleeing the Nazis, and Jews who lived in our country faced strict quotas to be accepted into top schools and professional programs, let alone into social clubs. Where was God, and why did He permit such evil? Many Jews who survived the Holocaust turned away from our religion.

When I attended college, my professors demonstrated that one could not prove the existence of God, and this demonstration was consistent with a feeling that a caring God could not have permitted the horrors of the Nazi period in what had previously been the most advanced country in the world in many fields, such as music, art, and literature.

Advances in science in recent decades have nearly exploded the “proof” that one cannot prove the existence of God. Rabbi David Fohrman has summarized much of the relevant new scientific evidence in his video, “Finding God in Science.” Consider the “big bang” theory of the creation of the universe. Cosmologists have diagnosed the “flatness problem.” If the subatomic particles from a big bang sped away too fast, gravity would not bring them together. If the particles moved too slowly, gravity would have stopped their acceleration. The estimated margin of error in speed is 1 in 10 to the 54<sup>th</sup> power. Next, the “smoothness problem” evaluates the conditions necessary for the particles to create clouds. If the particles were too large, the hydrogen clouds would be so large that they would collapse into black holes. If the particles were too smooth, gravity would not have brought them into clouds. British mathematician Roger Penrose estimated the margin for error at 1 in 10 to the 10,123rd power! Gravity, electromagnetism, nuclear weak force, and nuclear strong force all needed to be in precise balance for a big bang to have been able to create a universe. It would be a huge stretch of the imagination for all these conditions, each of minute probability, to take place simultaneously to create a universe – even before the conditions required for such a universe to create life. It becomes much easier to believe that an intelligent force, which we call God, created our world. Suppose, however, that one accepts the big bang as an explanation for the origin of our universe. Who created the elements necessary for a big bang to occur? Avraham asked himself this question thousands of years ago and realized that there had to be an intelligent being to start the line of history.

How are we to interpret some of the stories in our parsha? How did the snake communicate with Chava? Did the snake actually talk, or did it communicate with her through some non-verbal method? How did the snake move around before God made it slither on its belly? Are we to interpret this story as actually happening, or is it an allegory? Rabbi Fohrman suggests an answer from Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle, a mathematical proof from quantum physics. Heisenberg proved that subatomic particles have the property that one cannot determine both the speed and position at the same time. He asks whether at the beginning, early in creation, all the properties of humans, snakes, and other animals were determined. This line of reasoning provides another suggestion for interpreting our parsha. Are the stories factual, allegorical, or neither – that is, might they reflect a world in transition, not yet completely formed?

Miracles in nature extend beyond creation. Rabbi Marc Angel last year posted two articles on miracles of the human body. Dr. Morris A. Shamah, an ophthalmologist, discusses the incredible miracle of the human eye. Dr. Evan Fisher, a leading nephrologist (and my son), discusses the miracle of the human kidney in connection with the bracha Asher Yatzar (said after using the bathroom) and Rashi's discussion connecting the bracha to Midrash. Again, thoughtful scientists looking at miracles in life find a path to Orthodox Judaism. [These postings are in the first part of my archives for Bereishis 5782 at PotomacTorah.org.]

When I was young and had recently completed college and graduate school, I asked my beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, how one answers those who claim that it is impossible to prove the existence of God. Where can one find a proof or belief? Rabbi Cahan told me to look around at the perfection in nature and beauty in the world. How could these wonders have arisen by chance rather than from some supreme intelligent mind? His response half a century ago started my awakening, and scientific advances since then have demonstrated that the likelihood of our world having been created by chance is so remote that it is beyond belief. I wonder what university philosophy professors are teaching today about the existence of God. I know that I would not be teaching what I learned when I was in college!

As we read through the Torah, our task is to interpret each parsha to discern what message God is presenting to us. The Torah is not merely history. A history book would not present 2000 years of history in eleven brief chapters while devoting three parashot (in Bemidbar) to a single week and an entire sefer to Moshe's final five weeks on earth. The Torah is nevuah (prophecy), a message from God. What message does God want us to learn from what we read each week? Watch for situations or unusual words that return later in the Torah, because these textual hints open up layers of messages. For example, after Adam and Chava eat from God's special tree, they hide from God's presence. God asks Adam, "Ayeka" – where are you? This word returns at the beginning of Sefer Devarim as "Eicha" – Moshe's expression of woe, the theme of Tisha B'Av, the day of numerous tragedies in Jewish history. When we try to hide from God, in turn God hides His face and His protection from us. Fortunately, God always keeps His promises to our Patriarchs, and He keeps open a path to teshuvah and ultimate redemption. Can science provide a path to human redemption? Can a history book provide a message that God is always open to forgive and receive us? The Torah demonstrates repeatedly that we have a caring, loving God who wants a personal relationship with all of us. This message is absent from the philosophy courses that I studied in college when my professor, who later was the first candidate for President of the United States for the Libertarian party, proved that one could never prove the existence of God. Science, history, or nevuah – decide for yourself which path to truth is most convincing and which provides the best path to directing human life.

P.S. When God created the world, He declared that each day was "tov," or good. By the end of our parsha, God realized that man had developed great wickedness and that his heart and thoughts were evil. I acknowledge evil in our world by reprinting an article about anti-Semitism at the University of California law school (see below).

Shabbat Shalom,

Alan & Hannah

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**Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at [www.alephbeta.org](http://www.alephbeta.org). Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.**

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**Please daven for a Refuah Shlema for Yehoshua Mayer HaLevi ben Nechama Zelda, Yonatan Ophir ben Ilana, Leib Dovid ben Eitel, Asher Shlomo ben Ettie, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Sharon bat Sarah, Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers.** Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom,  
Hannah & Alan

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## Dvar Torah: Bereishis: Proof that G-d Exists

by Rabbi Label Lam © 1996

*"In the beginning, G-d Created the Heavens and the earth." [1:1]*

Right? Wrong! "In the beginning of G-d's Creation of Heaven and earth; the earth was in an unformed state (Tohu Vavohu)..." See Rashi.

In a recent discussion on the Internet, this change of language led to quite a bit of confusion. Someone asked essentially the following question: since according to Rashi the account of Creation begins after the earth was already "Tohu Vavohu," does this mean that Rashi believed that G-d did not create "Tohu Vavohu?"

Of course not ("Heaven forbid!"). From Rashi, the Ramban [Nachmanides], and Ibn Ezra, we see that only the Torah – quite deliberately – does not provide a full chronological history of the very beginning of Creation. The Sifsei Chachamim explains [note Kaf] that the Torah "wishes to explain only what came into existence following the creation of Heaven and Earth..." But Heaven and Earth were created, even from null to "Tohu Vavohu" – the Greek idea of matter existing before G-d created it is simply never entertained.

This leads us to a larger issue. In our classes, we study works by many traditional scholars, and deliver Divrei Torah on the parsha using a variety of traditional sources. Behind the diverse opinions and outlooks, it becomes obvious that these scholars share a common thread of underlying beliefs. The truth is that traditional Jewish philosophy has a strikingly clear set of parameters, an awareness of which can help those who want to study further on their own.

While it is true that the Talmud is filled with one debate after another, it is also true that the debates only occur within these firm guidelines. The concept of a G-d who created the universe from scratch is part of that core. The Ramban says: "Isn't there a great need to begin with Creation? Because this is the root of our beliefs, and one who does not believe this, and believes that the universe existed for all eternity, denies the fundamentals and has no Torah... but the answer is that the work of Creation involves deep concepts which cannot be understood from the verses..." Thus he explains why the Medrash asserts that the Torah could have really started later on (save for certain other reasons, see there), says something perfectly in accordance with modern science ("There was a Big Bang. We don't know why or how."), and also underlines this fundamental concept. The Rambam [Maimonides] begins his Mishnah Torah, his compendium of Jewish law, by saying that "The foundation of all foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know that there exists a 'First Being,' and He brings into existence all that exists [lit. all that is found]; and all that exists, from heaven to earth and all in between, does not exist except through the steadfastness of He who makes it exist." [Mada 1:1] He offers much the same words as the first of his 13 Fundamental principles of Jewish belief, as detailed in his commentary to Mishnah Sanhedrin Chapter 10.

Against the backdrop of such definite statements, it is almost inconceivable that any traditional scholar (such as Rashi) could argue against Creation Ex Nihilo!

The scholars of the Talmud and beyond certainly knew that alternative philosophies existed – one merely need read of the encounters with Greeks and Romans, the Moreh Nevuchim, and the Kuzari. Certainly, a system designed to promote asking the most penetrating, challenging, and thoughtful questions cannot simply set up blinders to prevent thinking about fundamental issues. Nonetheless, none of these encounters and debates made their way into the Halachic literature (save into the laws of idolatry!) because at the end of the day, these perspectives are totally foreign to that which our tradition claims to have acquired at Mt. Sinai.

To take the most obvious example: is it possible for a Talmudic scholar, who questions everything, to fail to examine the very existence of G-d? No. Several years ago, I heard a leading sage in Jerusalem require a group of students to examine the existence of G-d in their own minds until they came up with no fewer than five satisfactory proofs that G-d exists. And yet, of course, this is hardly a subject of debate – the Rabbis clearly felt that they had the proofs.

For anyone interested in a serious study of these underlying concepts, I would recommend the Rambam's 13 principles. They are available in print (translated and explained in several languages), on the Internet, and – we hope to provide

them shortly on our site, with explanations and elaboration as necessary. We hope that a description of these “parameters of Jewish tradition” will help readers to better understand traditional perspectives and sources.

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/lifeline-5757-bereishis/>

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## The "Image of God": Thoughts for Parashat Bereishith

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel \*

The Torah makes a startling statement about God's creation of Adam/Humankind: “So God created Humankind in His own image [tselem Elo-him], in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them” (Bereishith 1:27). Sages have devoted much thought to this verse. What exactly does the Torah mean by the phrase tselem Elo-him, image of God? We are too sophisticated to take the phrase literally i.e. that human beings are created in the physical form of God — a Being who has no physical features. Among the most widely held views, “image” refers to intellect, free will or creativity.

I suggest that the phrase refers to the human potential for spirituality. From the very inception of humanity, God instilled within us a desire to transcend ourselves, to aspire to an infinite reality beyond our immediate reach.

Evolutionary biologist Edward O. Wilson, in his book *On Human Nature*, presents evidence that a religious sensibility existed in human beings from the earliest times. All human societies -- from hunter gatherers to moderns and post-moderns — display a predilection to spiritual belief. This spiritual sense is intrinsic to humanity.

Every human being has this capacity, but each of us develops and nurtures it differently. The seed of Godliness within us provides the potential for optimal human spiritual growth. Some are able to rise to great heights...to prophecy itself. Others negate and profane their tselem Elo-him by clinging to false ideologies or immoral behaviors.

Dean Hamer, in his book *The God Gene*, argues that our spiritual sense is actually implanted in us genetically. “It is our genetic makeup that helps to determine how spiritual we are. We do not know God; we feel him.” This would fit in well with our notion of tselem Elo-him. We all have an innate spiritual disposition, albeit of different levels, and can choose to develop this disposition or suppress it.

Religiosity and spirituality are not the same thing. Religions attempt to create frameworks that foster spirituality. Religions provide rites and ceremonials that are intended to stimulate our spiritual sense. But it is possible to observe the various rites and ceremonials and be oblivious to the spirituality these things are meant to inspire. Ideally, our religious lives should be in sync with our spiritual aspirations.

In 1931, Benjamin Nathan Cardozo gave the commencement address at the Jewish Institute of Religion. He referred to the astronomer Tycho Brahe, who devoted long years to mark and register the stars, when people mocked him for this seemingly useless endeavor. Cardozo remarked: “The submergence of self in the pursuit of an ideal, the readiness to spend oneself without measure, prodigally, almost ecstatically, for something intuitively apprehended as great and noble, spend oneself one knows not why — some of us like to believe that is what religion means.”

If we add “God” to Justice Cardozo’s statement, we will have a beautiful understanding of spirituality...and religion at its best. Something within us yearns for transcendence, truth, wholeness, unity. When we feel the presence of God, we not only transcend ourselves...we plumb the depths within ourselves.

The quality of spirituality — the tselem Elo-him within us -- is God’s gift to us; how we use or abuse this gift defines who we are as human beings.

\* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

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<https://www.jewishideas.org/article/image-god-thoughts-parashat-bereishith>

**NOTE: The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals offers a High Holiday and Sukkot reader free to download at**  
<https://www.jewishideas.org/article/holiday-reader-institute-jewish-ideas-and-ideals>

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## **Torah and Evolution: Thoughts for Parashat Bereishith**

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel \*

I recently received an email communication from an Orthodox Jewish organization stating in unequivocal terms that “Orthodox Judaism rejects the theory of evolution.” In certain Orthodox circles, it is posited as a matter of faith that “true” Judaism does not and cannot accept evolution. God created the universe; God created Adam and Eve. This is clear from the first chapter of Bereishith, and there is nothing more to say on the subject. Any other position is heresy.

Actually, there is much more to say on the subject. I believe that it is religiously incorrect to state that “Orthodox Judaism rejects the theory of evolution.” This is not only an invalid statement from an intellectual point of view, it is also invalid from an Orthodox religious point of view. The statement reflects obscurantism, not faith.

The first chapter of Bereishith presents a lofty, beautiful and poetic account of creation. It does not present a scientific account of creation. It does not describe how God created things, only that He did indeed create the world.

It has been pointed out that the six “days” of creation are not 24-hour days as we know them today; the sun wasn’t created until day four! Rather, the Torah poetically speaks of six periods of time — each of which could have been billions of years long — in which the universe came into being. Current scientific calculations place the “big bang” at a bit over 13 billion years ago. These calculations are not based on idle speculation but on carefully studied cosmic phenomena. Religious Jews, along with all thinking people, should feel comfortable embracing the findings of science. There is no contradiction at all between Torah and the “big bang” calculations.

The theory of evolution, which has a strong body of scientific support, posits that life emerged gradually, over the course of many millions of years. Simple life forms gradually evolved into more complex life forms. Human beings ultimately emerged from a long process of evolution. The Torah neither affirms nor denies the theory of evolution. It makes clear, though, that God created the world; things did not develop randomly. God could have created things in an instant; or He could have created things by a process of evolution spanning millions of years. When the Torah states that God created Adam from the dust of the earth, this could mean that God created Adam via a process of evolution spanning a vast period of time — beginning with the simplest cells found in the dust and ultimately developing into thinking human beings. The Torah simply does not provide us with scientific details about the formation of human beings.

Since the weight of scientific information indicates a gradual development of life, we can embrace this information without religious qualms or conflicts. The Torah tells us that God created the world; scientists have been trying to figure out the process of the creation. Thus, the theory of evolution poses no threat whatever to our religious tradition. Rather, it fills in scientific information that was not discussed in the Torah.

Our conflict is not with the theory of evolution per se. Our conflict is with those who claim that evolution happened entirely on its own, without any Divine impetus. Religious Jews may properly accept the findings of science, but must always make clear that it was God who fashioned the universe, who set things in motion, and who indeed created the scientific phenomena upon which the scientists are drawing their conclusions.

During the middle ages, a conflict raged between science and religion on the question of the nature of matter. Science, as represented by Aristotle, argued for the eternity of matter. Religious tradition, based on the first chapter of Bereishith, argued for a created universe. Maimonides, in his Guide of the Perplexed 2:25, maintained the traditional religious view of God as creator. He argued that it is philosophically impossible to prove the eternity of matter. On the other hand, since it is philosophically plausible to posit God as creator of matter, we can safely rely on religious tradition to teach us that which science/philosophy cannot teach.

Yet, Maimonides points out that if indeed it could be demonstrated that matter is eternal, then we would necessarily accept scientific truth. Since God is the Author of both Torah and Science, it is impossible for the two to be in conflict. If science could prove the eternity of matter, then the Torah would need to be re-interpreted accordingly. "Know that our shunning the affirmation of the eternity of the world is not due to a text figuring in the Torah according to which the world has been produced in time. For the texts indicating that the world has been produced in time are not more numerous than those indicating that the deity is a body. Nor are the gates of figurative interpretation shut in our faces or impossible of access to us regarding the subject of the creation of the world in time. For we could interpret them as figurative, as we have done when denying His corporeality."

Maimonides' methodology is of profound significance. Religious texts do not and cannot conflict with demonstrated scientific truths. If the texts seem to conflict with scientific truth, then the texts need to be re-interpreted.

People are welcome to accept or reject the theory of evolution, as they think best after they have actually studied the scientific data carefully. But regardless of their personal opinion, they are not entitled to say that "Orthodox Judaism rejects the theory of evolution." If the theory of evolution is scientifically valid, then religious Jews — along with all thinking people — should necessarily accept it — with the proviso that the process of evolution itself was God's means for creating life.

\* Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

<https://www.jewishideas.org/torah-and-evolution-thoughts-parashat-bereishith>

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## **Bireishis – Be a Good Guest**

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine \*

Creation. The very word bespeaks excitement of blessing and renewal. The Torah describes the story of creation: How Hashem created the world in six days. The Torah then proceeds to discuss the first mitzva of the 613, "Piru Urivu" to create children: Through the efforts of mankind, the miracle of birth can occur. These two themes — the creation of the world, and the mitzva to create children — are related.

The Talmud declares, "The world was not created for nothing; it was created to be populated." The Talmud's perspective is that Hashem is like a generous homeowner, and we are guests in His mansion. Imagine a generous couple where the woman prepares an extravagant banquet for hundreds of people and tells her regular guests, "Please invite others, so that my handiwork should truly be enjoyed." Similarly, Hashem created a world with generosity, and He wants His generosity to be enjoyed by many. He commands us, His guests, to create more people. This is how we go about inviting more guests to enjoy the blessing that He created.

During the course of history there were times when well-known thinkers were worried about overpopulating the world. They could not imagine how planet earth could produce enough food for humanity. Interestingly, as the need for food grew, Hashem blessed mankind with mechanical and scientific wisdom so that we would produce food more efficiently and meet the needs of humanity. The directive to have children is Hashem's invite to us to invite more guests to His world and to experience, in our own personal way, the ongoing miracle of creation.

In life there are two ways to approach the future and the unknown. One way is to be scared, constrained, and overprotective. The other way is to be trusting of Hashem's blessing, generous, and optimistic. The mitzva to have children calls upon us to approach the future generously, with trust and optimism. Will an extra mouth to feed mean that we will all have less? Or will we all experience joy and Hashem's benevolence when we accept His invite to become partners in the creation of a new human being? This question can justifiably be asked by the human being. Hashem calls upon us to be good guests. He calls upon us to step out of natural selfishness and caution and make our best effort to create benefit for others.

Avraham and Sara were two people who saw this world as Hashem's mansion. In his quest to discover Hashem, Avraham took note of the majesty of creation and -- comparing the world to a building -- he asked, "Who is the master of the mansion?" With a similar attitude Avraham and Sara would invite guests to their hostel and feed them generously. When it came time to pay, Avraham would tell the guests that if they thanked G-d, they need not pay for the food. In doing

so, Avraham introduced to the world an awareness that we are guests in Hashem's world. One of our primary purposes in this world is to appreciate Hashem's blessings upon us and make the effort to share those blessings with others.

In contrast, Cham, the son of Noach, fell into the trap of fear, constrained thinking, and selfishness. Following the Flood, Cham took an opportunity and castrated his father so that Noach would not have more children. Cham's logic was that if there would be more children, Noach's three sons would have to split the world into additional shares, giving each of them less.

This idea is not limited to having children and to hospitality. The Talmud tells us that Iyov, a great and righteous man, would benefit everyone who did business with him. "Whoever did business with Iyov was blessed." Even as Iyov sought good business opportunities, he did so with an awareness that the people that did business with him should get a good deal too.

We too have the opportunity to see the world not as a win-lose dynamic, but rather as an ever-expanding expression of Hashem's generous hospitality, whether in our attitude towards children, hospitality, or simply the way we interact with others in our daily affairs. Creation is ongoing. Hashem invites us to be a part of it.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos!

Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of more than 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are [www.care-mediation.com](http://www.care-mediation.com) and [www.teach613.org](http://www.teach613.org); his email is [RMRhine@gmail.com](mailto:RMRhine@gmail.com). For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.

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### **Parshas Bereishis** by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer \*

Bereishis is perhaps the most cryptic and difficult parsha to comprehend in any meaningful way. Beginning with the repeated overview and outline of the creation it requires careful study of the commentaries and our traditions to glean any lessons even on a basic level.

One area that is particularly perplexing is the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. From a simple reading of the Chumash it would seem that Adam and Chava were created without this knowledge. What was the human being without the knowledge of good and evil? We were created to choose between good and evil, to use our free will to elevate G-d's world and bring G-dliness into the world. How could we possibly achieve that goal if we do not know the difference between good and evil? What's more, why would G-d forbid us from attaining that knowledge? Who would keep the Torah, if human beings would not know the difference between good and evil? What purpose would this initial creation of mankind have served?

Rabbeinu Bechaye (Bereishis 3:5) explains that the knowledge we are referring to is the understanding of the difference between living life for G-dliness versus living for passions and desires. It is the understanding that when one lives for desires and passions, those desires and passions have the ability to sway us and lead us astray. This was the knowledge that they lacked, because they had never experienced it.

Adam and Chava certainly knew the difference between good and evil. They were purely intellectual beings, with a depth of clarity and understanding of G-dliness and all that is good and just. What they lacked was this knowledge of just how different good and evil are. As purely intellectual beings, their lives and all of their decisions were focused only on G-dliness. Even their passions and desires were seen and used only as tools to serve G-d. They had never experienced or even considered passions and desires as a purpose unto themselves. Never having lived for passion – even for a moment of their existence – they did not understand how the passions and desires can sway one's mind and lead one astray.

It was for this reason that G-d forbade them to eat from the tree. So long as they did not eat from the tree, evil remained only an external concept, but not something that would ever be a part of their own lives. Once they ate from the tree, their perspective would drastically and devastatingly change. They would now see passions and desires as an end, as well as

a means. The challenge to choose good over evil would be much more difficult. They would understand through painful personal experience just how different good and evil are. They would see the difference between a moment of G-dliness and a moment of passion. They would know of the dangerous power of passion and desire to cloud one's judgement and lead one astray.

Rabbeinu Bachye notes (ibid. 3:6) that this devastating force of passions and desires can apply even when the passions and desires are being used for good. The Torah tells us that Chava was swayed to eat from the tree because it was "good to eat, and tempting for the eyes and desirous for becoming wise". Chava's desire for the Tree of Knowledge was as a means to become wise. She desired a greater knowledge and understanding of G-d's world and of the great privilege of serving G-d and the beauty of G-dliness. Yet, that very desire led her to violate G-d's will and choose passion over G-dliness. Even healthy and proper passions can lead one astray and bring about devastating consequences.

Now that the tree was eaten from, we have those passions and desires to reckon with. We know only too well, the difference between a path of goodness and a path of evil and how far off course the path of evil can go. As we begin learning the Torah again, we need to remember that even passion for good can lead one astray. We must always think and rethink before we act. No matter how just our cause may be.

\* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, 5909 Bradley Blvd., Bethesda, MD 20814. Rabbi Singer's Devar Torah arrived too late for my deadline, so I am reprinting an earlier Dvar Torah from his archives.

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## The Book of Life: Introduction to Bereshit

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia \*

The Torah is the Book of Life. It starts with the stories of creation and the lives of the patriarchs and not with the legal codes or the description of the tabernacle, because those cannot be fully understood without the introduction of Genesis. Genesis in particular is about the human condition, about emotions, desires, jealousy, sibling rivalry, failed and successful parenting. It is a book of communication and education, highlighting human weaknesses and telling us cautionary tales about empires, cities and individuals. By understanding the human drama which unfolds in Genesis, we acquire the essential tools which will enable us to decipher the message of the rest of the Torah and to define our personal and collective purpose in life.

As a Book of Life, the Torah guides our mundane lives as well as sets course for the whole universe, and it should be able to do so at all times under constantly changing circumstances and in the face of ever-growing scientific knowledge. As in real life, the narrative of Genesis is imperfect. There are flaws and sin and hatred and failure, but we learn from them as much as we learn from our successes, if not more. Each generation, reading and revisiting the Biblical text, was able to find in it guidance and solace as well as an echo to its unsolved problems, fears, and complaints. The book of Genesis, dubbed by Nachmanides the Book of Individuals, sets the stage for our understanding of human nature at the individual, communal, and global level. In that sense Genesis is both the book of communication and the book of civilization.

### The Book of Communication

The world as we know it would not have been made possible without communication. The physical world relies on communication between particles, the biological world relies on the communication of genes and cells, and animals communicate at different level of sophistication, using sound, movement, and body language. Humans are set apart from the rest of the animal kingdom because of their ability to develop systems of communication which convey complicated ideas and transfer knowledge from one person to another without a physical encounter. The importance of communication and language is a central theme in Genesis, starting with the creation of the world through speech.

In the first chapter, the Creator is described as accomplishing His task through utterances without engaging in any physical activity. In the second chapter, God forms man out of a lump of clay and blows into his nostrils the spirit of life. This spirit, which transforms man from an animal into a human being, is translated in Targum Onkelos <sup>1</sup> as talking spirit. This translation could have been based on the observation of the author that humans are distinguished by the power of

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<sup>1</sup> Aramaic translation of the Torah, written in third century Israel, probably based on an earlier prototype.

speech, but it is immediately supported in the narrative as we see that one of man's first tasks is naming the animals and birds. Naming a newborn or a place was considered important and complex in biblical times, and as those who were struggling with naming their child, their book or their product can attest, it is still a daunting task.

By asking Adam to name the animals and birds, God brings to light not only Adam's intellectual abilities but also his inherent image of God, because the creativity needed to invent and use is the essential character trait of the Creator. It is also interesting to note that the Hebrew terms for male and female – זכר ונקבה, both carry meanings which relate to the use of language and communication. זכר – male, is derived from the same root as "remember," while נקבה – female, comes from a verb which means to specify, to call something by its real name, as in those people who were specified by names (Numbers 1:17). It is hard to determine which part of the etymological equation came first, the genders or the linguistic qualities, and some might argue that they are reversely represented as women tend to remember better than men, who in turn are usually more specific than women, but be as it may, the relationship is built into the language.

The book of Genesis goes on to present miscommunication between Cain and Abel, which leads to the first murder. It introduces one of Cain's descendants, Yuval, who is charged with maintaining tradition and passing on knowledge by means of music and song. It describes the creation of different languages, which I hope to show was a blessing and not a punishment. Genesis also teaches by example the concepts of marital harmony, good parenting, and the art of apology, not always as a success story, and it shows the way people can use words to manipulate the decisions of others. All these things are critical to our success in conducting our life in the right path, and as such are part and parcel of the legal codex, only they could not have been written in a legal format. Imagine the Ten Commandments with phrases such as: "thou shall bear in mind that men and women communicate differently" or "thou shall have an open dialog with your spouse regarding your children or it will end in disaster." As we shall later see in the analysis of the first commentary of Rashi, there were those who thought that the Torah is strictly a book of laws written in the clear-cut legal style, and therefore drew from Genesis only general historical lessons regarding the status of the Chosen People. My hope is that as we continue reading the narrative through the lenses of language and communication, we will be able to appreciate and internalize the ageless lessons Genesis teaches us about the human condition.

### **The Book of Civilization**

Genesis also tells us the story of human civilization and personal development. The creation narrative of the first chapter provides a glimpse into the mindset of ancient humans and the way they perceived nature. The Garden of Eden narrative is a description of the process of coming of age and the realization of independence and free will, and it turns into a story of the decline of humanity and rejection of morality. The rebellion of Adam and his wife results in breaking an arbitrary prohibition, which seems to harm no one. Cain, their firstborn, commits a terrible crime of passion, and his descendant Lemekh announces that the powerful are allowed to commit premeditated murder. This deterioration of the individual transgression leads to attempts at creating a stable society: the antediluvian oligarchy where injustice was written into the constitution, the extreme communism of the builders of the Tower of Babel, and the extreme capitalism of Sodom. In between these story lines, the Torah manages to illustrate the importance of different professions and the tension between them through the characters of Cain and Abel, Lemekh and his children, and Yaakov and Esau. All these fascinating elements are waiting for us in Genesis, and I hope this introduction will serve as an invitation to return to an in-depth study of Bereshit again and again.

Shabbat Shalom.

\* Torah VeAhava (now SephardicU.com). Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan (Potomac, MD) and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school). **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria: <https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets>**

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### **Breishit: The Patria in our Patriarchs**

By Dvir Cahana \*

In the opaque smoke of battered trust and unrelinquished uncertainty through the void of the pandemic, the upcoming 2022 midterm election serves as a momentary relief, suspending us outside of our worn pessimism. The ability to have a

say in future outcomes seems like such a scarce resource these days and restores us with a sense of empowerment. Each election is the continuation of a chain of 4-year-cycles that commenced hundreds of years ago. From George Washington, to John Adams, all the way to today, a country's prosperity hinges on the dogma and charisma of the leadership from those at the helm, but the sum parts of each of these administrations only ever tell the history of the United States of America, and not George-Washingtonia or John-Adamsland. The name that the country carries is the name of the country itself. However, it is not unfounded to focus on the world given to us, and set the starting point of time from the moment our souls tapped into humanities consciousness.

It is the very real tendency, baked into the condition of sentient beings, to safeguard personal well-being and strategize the expansion of our own individual names. This preoccupation can provide us with the gumption to favor instantly gratifying solutions without feeling inhibited by their long-term ramifications on one hand and the gall to erase history, traumas and all, and start anew perpetually, on the other. This mindset forces us to walk on unstable ground, and if we are willing to erase the past today, what does that say about our chances of being remembered when the world turns along with the tables? This is a precarious disposition, limiting our vistas and diminishing the work of our torch-lenders. However, neglecting this mindset positions the danger on the other end of the spectrum to wedge through. Allowing history to be our only sense of self in our orienteering creates a folly of running on autopilot in a world that has since changed and evolved a hundred times over. The hyper-reverence of what once was may derive from a lustful nostalgia, or a sense of deferring humility, but every four years we sit on the fulcrum of demolition and fine tuning reconstruction with the unique gift of recalibration.

In being so rapid to sign on to Sic laden contracts and "I" oriented deals, we run the risk of our primordial ideals contracting sicknesses.

In the story of our own biographies, we take for granted the importance of self-glorification. The aspiration of finding fortitude in one's own name is a violently selfish desire and it rides on a tenuous willingness to embrace disproportionate power dynamics. The satiety of this corporeal quench doesn't carry long lasting impact beyond the unitary lifeforms themselves. Cecile Rhoades certainly made a NAME for himself, but was it worth it to leave the earth behind him devastated at the cost of his propped up name? What we see in the beginning of Bereshit are a succession of individuals who were on a quest to find themselves. The book opens the conversation of inheritance and chosenness and forces us, as readers, to see the perspective of a single generation mapped onto the global landscape of ancestral heritage and human/universal history as a whole. At the center of these life tales we see their life works come to a head when the interplay of their inherited identities waltz with their names, and the centrality of the search for a name being entwined with their legacy presents itself in the motivations for what they end up doing. Preceding this week's parsha we see the lineage of Abraham going backwards 10 generations all the way back to Noah. And we see the lineage of Noah proceeding the 10 generations going back to Adam haRishon. We can point to the start of humanity with Adam, but we can also start with Noah, because in the great flood, there was but one survivor. So in our election metaphor, we can see Noah's generation, but Noah actually is the reunification that goes back to Adam because Adam had three children: Kain, Hevel and Seth and the two families of Seth and Kain remained distinct. Kain was cursed to be the patriarch of a destinationless cul-de-sac. From his loins would emerge nothing but a dead lineage and Kain himself was doomed to be a wanderer with nowhere to go. This was the case until someone from Seth's family tree threw out a Kisby Ring and bridged the ridge that had partitioned these two families. That lifeguard was Noah.

Seth and Kain's offsprings paralleled each other for many generations. There is an eeriness to how both of these families reflected one another, with a similar moral implication as that seen in Jordan Peele's horror movie "Us." Seth's "shadow family" was really not that much different than Kain's. Going one generation from the bottom we have a set of Lemech's, going up we see Methusaleh and Methushael, Mehuyahel and Mehuval, we have Yared and Yirad, and a pair of Enoch's. These mirroring genealogies get harder to look at the further away from center they get. The midrash teaches us that the final generation on Kain's lineage were the inventors of war and idol worship, stand-ins for the basis of all evils in biblical parlance. The self-destructiveness of the flood generation made doom and gloom an inevitability. The capillary action-esque cooperation found in the generation of the Tower of Babel is a step-up from the individualistic attitude of the every-human-for-themself philosophy of the flood generation. The generation of the Tower believed in collective prosperity, and valued the ideal of building a tight knit community in which every individual would be able to prosper together. However, their motivations are still rooted in senseless self-aggrandizing for the sake of engraving the lasting memory of THEIR generation. When rationalizing why they wanted to build a tower they say the shockingly telling phrase, "Let us make a NAME for ourselves." We have graduated from the second dimension to the third, but without an eye

towards the fourth dimension of time. They were then entrapped in a feedback loop predestined to being no more than a vacuous, self-serving civilization.

So indeed, Noah breaks the cycle and bridges the gap when he reaches out his arm to the “shadow family” on the other side and marries Na’ama. Na’ama’s name and story echoes that of Naomi from the book of Ruth. A woman whose dead legacy is extended and from that moment of Jubilee counting 10 generations ahead we can follow the bloodline down to King David the first dynastic Monarch of the Jewish people.

And so we restart at Noah; the same way that we restarted with Adam haRishon with a second chance and that same engagement of extending a dead lineage is the same activity that we see at the beginning of Abraham’s journey, 10 generations later, when he marries Sarai. When Abraham is confronted by Avimelech inquiring why he said that she was his sister, Abraham said that she was indeed his sister, and Rashi teaches us that Jessica, the daughter of his deceased brother, is in fact Sarai. Both Sarai and Jessica are synonyms meaning princess, and both Jessica and her sister Milcha, wife of Abraham’s other brother Nachor and also the other child of Haran, share the same gematria. So Abraham’s marriage with Sarai symbolizes a reconstitution of his family. Furthermore, Abraham brings Lot, his deceased brother’s third child, with him. In doing so, Abraham does not allow the brokenness to last without addressing it, even for one generation. This mission of reincarnating a dead lineage has greater depth when we consider the names of Na’ama’s siblings. Her half-brothers Yuval and Yaval are grammatical variants of the name of their deceased ancestor Hevel, murdered by his brother Kain, and her brother Kain-Tuval carries the name of both Kain and a variation on the name Hevel, and so that generation was bringing their family history back to the forefront and reconciling the sin of their ancestor in their own lifetime. In saying we need to do teshuva and we need to return. That is the legacy that they continued. The legacy that goes backwards are the “names” — in each of these individual’s “names” we can retrieve their own life’s mission and their own life’s task. That is the work that is done, it’s not their own names that they seek to proliferate and expand upon, but it is the names that they inherited from their past. But not only can we see that it is the names of their past, we see a great importance and we see a through-line that traverses the entire book of Bereishit with the importance of these names, of the lineage that gets passed down, the lineage that we follow through Avraham and reaches its arm out all the way to this year’s 2022 mid-term election.

Shabbat Shalom.

\* Born in Goteborg, Sweden, Dvir Cahana grew up in Canada. He taught for a decade at the Satmar Yeshivat Toras Moishe, founded the Moishe House in Montreal, and started The Amen Institute, where artists and rabbis come together to inspire and create sermons and art work. He is a rabbinical student at Yeshivat Chovevi Torah and a graduate student at the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

<https://library.yctorah.org/2022/10/sukkah-as-tabernacle/>

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### **Shavuon Bereishit**

By Rabbi Moshe Rube \*

Within the first two weeks of landing in New Zealand, I stepped outside my apartment on Vincent Street and saw something I had never seen before.

Someone spraying graffiti.

It was early in the morning, and he was finishing up whatever he was painting on the side of the building on 117 Vincent, when he looked over and saw me staring at him. He quickly finished up and started running down the street.

I wanted to run after him and shout, "Wait don't run! Let's have coffee. What's burdening you so deeply that society won't let you express except through painting on a wall? What exists in the underbelly of New Zealand society that we are blind to?"

I didn't do that. But I did go see what he wrote. On the side of 117 Vincent Street, there in big pink fresh-painted letters was the word, "BLOSSUM" (which I assume is another spelling for "blossom").

So now throughout this whole year, I will be thinking about blossoms. What could he have meant? Did he mean that we should admire the beauty of blossoms? Did he mean to draw our attention to the Third day of Creation that we read about this week where the earth blossomed from nothingness? Did God make the world like a carpenter makes a bed, or did He just sow the seeds and let it blossom on its own like planting vegetables? Throughout the whole holiday season, were we trying to fashion our year and plan out every detail or did we just sow as many experiential seeds as we can and see what blossoms? Was this man hinting to the eternal tightrope we walk between what we can control and what we cannot?

Or maybe he just likes flowers.

But for me, after the rabbinic tax season that are the holidays, I think it will be nice to stop and smell the flowers or smell the blossoms. As the more usual routines of life begin to set in, let's not get totally lost in them. We can still notice the blossoms around us or our metaphorical blossoms of experience that we had during the holidays. Both can nourish us throughout the year.

And if I see this guy again, I'll try to convince him to be a scholar-in-residence at AHC. Maybe the "BLOSSUM" mystery will then be solved.

Shabbat Shalom!

\* Rabbi Rube recently moved from Alabama to Auckland, NZ, where he is Senior Rabbi of Auckland Hebrew Congregation.

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### **Anti-Semitism: A focus on Evil:**

#### **The Anti-Semitic Cancer at UC Berkeley Law \***

By Thomas D. Elias

When cancer appears in almost any person, virtually no one puts up with it for long even if it affects "only" 9 percent of their body. Almost everyone acts quickly to cut it out or stop it in its tracks. Why? Because cancers often metastasize and spread.

So why, when almost all college and university officials would agree that open discrimination in their schools and colleges amounts to academic cancer, does the UC Berkeley School of Law put up with an obvious case? And why don't campus officials even mention the UC Regents' ban on anti-Semitism at all their campuses?

While they deny being anti-Semitic, some Berkeley Law student groups have essentially set themselves up as "Jew-free" zones, as one newspaper termed it. If they singled out anyone but Jews, their actions would be denounced roundly by liberals and progressives as threats to free speech, discipline to follow.

Not that anti-Semitism is new to UC campuses, especially Berkeley, where 10 years ago, Palestinian students set up roadblocks near the landmark Sather Gate, stopping and harassing anyone they thought might be a Jew. Those students went unpunished.

So far, nine law student groups now have bylaws banning speakers who support Israel or Zionism, the concept that Jews are entitled to sovereignty in their historic homeland. Under the last four presidents, the United States government has defined this as anti-Semitism.

Among others, the groups include Women of Berkeley Law, Asian Pacific American Law Students, Law Students of African Descent and the Queer Caucus.

Berkeley Law Dean Erwin Chemerinsky, a self-described "progressive Zionist," wrote after the group actions were exposed that he would be excluded under the rule, along with 90 percent of the school's Jewish students.

This rule was suggested by the Law Students for Justice in Palestine. Ironically, while Palestinians enjoy self-government in Gaza and the West Bank areas adjacent to Israel, they bring little justice, with killing and torture commonplace for persons who oppose dictatorial regimes there.

Chemerinsky says “only a handful of student groups (nine) out of over 100 at Berkeley Law did this.”

Chemerinsky, previously the founding dean of the UC Irvine Law School, noted that the groups “have free speech rights, including to express messages that I and others might find offensive.”

In the context of polls showing the vast majority of American Jews (81 percent in one recent survey), believe it's important to care about Israel, Chemerinsky wrote that “excluding speakers on the basis of their viewpoint is inconsistent with our commitment to free speech.”

But he's done nothing about it. That's also what other California public universities do about on-campus anti-Semitism: very little or nothing. When Palestinian students disrupted speeches by Israelis at the Irvine campus, they were not expelled. When student governments like UCLA's tried to keep Jewish elected student officials from voting in their meetings strictly because they are Jews, no one was thrown out, even though those actions caused some Jewish students to transfer or hide their identities for fear of physical attacks.

So far, Chemerinsky has not even chastised the groups which adopted the no-Zionists policy, instead writing that no group has yet acted on it. Berkeley Chancellor Carol Christ, called the groups' new rule “regrettable,” but wrote that “there is no legal basis for sanctioning, defunding or deregistering” those clubs. Does this mean the Regents who employ her adopted an illegal rule against anti-Semitism?

Would Chemerinsky or Christ be so passive if these were far-right anti-Semites like the Oath Keepers or Proud Boys? Do leftist anti-Semites get a pass?

There is little doubt the student groups are now part of the new anti-Semitic movement that substitutes the term “anti-Zionist” for “anti-Semitic” when they push hatred of Jews.

That same movement this month papered parts of San Marino and Pasadena on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur with flagrantly false and anti-Jewish flyers.

It's no wonder some Jewish students on UC campuses feel compelled to hide a major part of their identity. Which ought to lead the regents who nominally run UC to put some teeth in their anti-Semitism ban. For history repeatedly shows that when authorities leave anti-Semites unchecked, they often turn violent or murderous.

<http://www.californiafocus.net/> (November 1, 2022).

\* [Ed. Note: Anti-Semitism is a manifestation of pure evil. A review of early chapters of Sefer Bereishis demonstrates that evil existed almost from the beginning of humans. For this reason, this reminder of evil in our times fits in with this and any subsequent parsha.]

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### Rav Kook Torah Breishit: Letters of Creation

The Midrash tells the story of how God chose which letter would be the first letter in the Torah. Before the world was created, the letters of the alphabet presented themselves before God. The letter Aleph announced: “I should be used to create the world, since I am the first letter in the alphabet.”

But God replied, “No, I will create the world with the letter Bet, because it is the first letter of the word Brachah (blessing). If only My world will be for a blessing!”

Thus, the account of the world's creation begins with the letter Bet — Breishit. The Aleph, as the first letter in the alphabet,

was given a different honor: it was selected to begin the Ten Commandments, in the word Anochi.

This is a nice story, but what does it matter which letters start Genesis and the Ten Commandments?

## Two Types of Light

The creation of light is the source of a major textual difficulty in the Torah's account of Creation. God created light on the first day, but the sun and the stars were only formed on the fourth day.

So what kind of light was created on Day One?

According to the Sages, the light of the first day was no ordinary light. It was a very elevated light — so elevated that God decided that it was too pure for this world. He secreted this special light away, saved for the righteous in the future. And where did God conceal it? In the Torah.

The Torah, the Sages taught, preceded the world and its physical limitations. The pristine light of the first day also belongs to this initial stage of creation, transcending all limitations of time and place.

Unlike the elevated light of the first day, regular light is produced by the heavenly bodies that were created on the fourth day. Our awareness of the passing of time, of days and seasons and years, comes from the world's movement and rotation. The sun and the stars, God announced, "will be for signs and festivals, days and years" (Gen.1:14). Our concept of time belongs to the limits of the created universe; it is the product of movement and change, a result of the world's temporal nature.

The second type of light corresponds to a lower holiness that penetrates and fills the world. In the terminology of the Kabbalists, the higher, transcendent light "surrounds all the worlds," while the lower, immanent light descends and "penetrates all of the created worlds."

Now we may understand why the Midrash states that God created the universe with the letter Bet. Bet, the second letter, indicates that our world is based on two forms of infinite light: an elevated, timeless light, and a lower light subject to the limitations of time and place. These two forms of light are the blessing that God bestowed to the world.

## Sanctifying the Sabbath

This dual holiness is apparent in the seventh day of creation. "The heavens and the earth and all of their components were finished, and He rested on the seventh day" (Gen. 2:1-2). The holiness of the Sabbath is set and eternal. It is independent of our actions. And yet, we are commanded to sanctify it: "Remember the Sabbath day to make it holy" (Ex. 20:8). How can we sanctify that which is already holy?

The essential holiness of the Sabbath is eternal, transcending time; but it has the power to sanctify time. By reciting kiddush, we give the Sabbath an additional holiness — the lower, time-bound holiness. Therefore it is written that the Jewish people are blessed with a neshamah yeterah, an extra soul, on the Sabbath. The first neshamah is the regular soul of the rest of the week, the soul that rules over the body. This soul is bound by the framework of time, just as the body that it governs is temporal and impermanent. On the Sabbath, however, an additional neshamah is revealed: a soul that transcends time, the soul of Israel that is rooted in the highest spiritual realms.

Our recitation of kiddush on Shabbat commemorates two historic events: Creation of the world, and the Exodus. Creation is the aspect of holiness that transcends time, a holiness that is still only potential. The Exodus is the aspect of holiness within time, a holiness that was realized.

## Bet and Aleph

Thus the Bet of Breishit is a double blessing: potential holiness and realized holiness; timeless light and time-bound light.

And what about the Aleph? The Torah's revelation at Sinai came to repair the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge. "I created the evil impulse and I created the Torah as a remedy for it" (Kiddushin 30). The Torah reveals the transcendent

light of the first day of Creation, the light of timeless holiness. Therefore the first letter of the Ten Commandments, the beginning of the Torah's revelation, is an Aleph — “Anochi Hashem Elokecha,” “I am the Eternal your God.”

Like the Aleph, representing the number one, the Torah contains the infinite light of Day One, the boundless light that God saved for the righteous.

(Adapted from *Shemu'ot HaRe'iyah*, *Breishit*, pp. 6-9 (1931).)

<https://www.ravkooktorah.org/BREISHIT-70.htm>

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## **Taking Responsibility (5774, 5781)**

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z”l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.\*

If leadership is the solution, what is the problem? On this, the Torah could not be more specific. The problem is a failure of responsibility.

The early chapters of Genesis focus on two stories: the first is Adam and Eve; the second, Cain and Abel. Both are about a specific kind of failure. First Adam and Eve. As we know, they sin. Embarrassed and ashamed, they hide, only to discover that one cannot hide from God:

*The Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” Gen. 3:9-12*

Both insist that it was not their fault. Adam blames the woman. The woman blames the serpent. The result is paradise lost: they are both punished and exiled from the garden of Eden. Why? Because Adam and Eve deny personal responsibility. They say, in effect, “It wasn’t me.”

The second story is tragic. The first instance of sibling rivalry in the Torah leads to the first murder:

*While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” “I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The Lord said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.” Gen. 4:8-10*

Cain does not deny personal responsibility. He does not say, “It was not me,” or “It was not my fault.” He denies moral responsibility. In effect he asks why he should be concerned with the welfare of anyone but himself. Why should we not do what we want if we have the power to do it? In Plato’s Republic, Glaucon argues that justice is whatever is in the interest of the stronger party. Might makes right. If life is a Darwinian struggle to survive, why should we restrain ourselves for the sake of others if we are more powerful than they are? If there is no morality in nature, then I am responsible only to myself. That is the voice of Cain throughout the ages.

These two stories are not just stories. They are an account, at the beginning of the Torah’s narrative history of humankind, of a failure, first personal then moral, to take responsibility – and it is this for which leadership is the answer.

There is a fascinating phrase in the story of Moses’ early years. He grows up, goes out to his people, the Israelites, and sees them suffering, doing slave labour. He witnesses an Egyptian officer beating one of them. The text then says: “He looked this way and that and saw no one” (vayar ki ein ish Ex. 2:12, or more literally, ‘he saw that there was no man’).

It is difficult to read this literally. A building site is not a closed location. There must have been many people present. A mere two verses later we discover that there were Israelites who knew exactly what had happened. Therefore, the phrase

almost certainly means, "He looked this way and that and saw that there was no one else willing to intervene."

If this is so, then we have here the first instance of what came to be known as the "Genovese syndrome" or "the bystander effect,"[1] so-called after a case in which a woman was attacked in New York in the presence of a large number of people who all knew that she was being assaulted but failed to come to her rescue.

Social scientists have undertaken many experiments to try to determine what happens in situations like this. Some argue that the presence of other bystanders affects an individual's interpretation of what is happening. Since no one else is coming to the rescue, they conclude that what is happening is not an emergency.

Others, though, argue that the key factor is diffusion of responsibility. People assume that since there are many people present someone else will step forward and act. That seems to be the correct interpretation of what was happening in the case of Moses. No one else was prepared to come to the rescue. Who, in any case, was likely to do so? The Egyptians were slave-masters. Why should they bother to take a risk to save an Israelite? And the Israelites were slaves. How could they come to the aid of one of their fellows when, by doing so, they would put their own life at risk?

It took a Moses to act. But that is what makes a leader. A leader is one who takes responsibility. Leadership is born when we become active not passive, when we do not wait for someone else to act because perhaps there is no one else – at least not here, not now. When bad things happen, some avert their eyes. Some wait for others to act. Some blame others for failing to act. Some simply complain. But there are some people who say, "If something is wrong let me try to put it right." They are the leaders. They are the ones who make a difference in their lifetimes. They are the ones who make ours a better world.

Many of the great religions and civilisations are based on acceptance. If there is violence, suffering, poverty and pain in the world, they accept that this is simply the way of the world. Or, the will of God. Or, that it is the nature of nature itself. They shrug their shoulders, for all will be well in the World to Come.

Judaism was and remains the world's great religion of protest. The heroes of faith did not accept; they protested. They were willing to confront God Himself. Abraham said, "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" (Gen. 18:25). Moses said, "Why have You done evil to this people?" (Ex. 5:22). Jeremiah said, "Why are the wicked at ease?" (Jer. 12:1). That is how God wants us to respond. Judaism is God's call to human responsibility. The highest achievement is to become God's partner in the work of creation.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God called out "Where are you?" As Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the first Lubavitcher Rebbe, pointed out, this call was not directed only to the first humans.[2] It echoes in every generation. God gave us freedom, but with freedom comes responsibility. God teaches us what we ought to do but He does not do it for us. With rare exceptions, God does not intervene in history. He acts through us, not to us. His is the voice that tells us, as He told Cain, that we can resist the evil within us as well as the evil that surrounds us.

The responsible life is a life that responds. The Hebrew for responsibility, achrayut, comes from the word acher, meaning "other." Our great Other is God Himself, calling us to use the freedom He gave us, to make the world that is more like the world that ought to be. The great question, the question that the life we lead answers, is: which voice will we listen to? Will we heed the voice of desire, as in the case of Adam and Eve? Will we listen to the voice of anger, as in the case of Cain? Or will we follow the voice of God calling on us to make this a more just and gracious world?

#### **FOOTNOTES:**

1. For a discussion, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder\\_of\\_Kitty\\_Genovese](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_of_Kitty_Genovese).

2. Noted in Nissan Mindel, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, A Biography (New York: Kehot Publication Society, 1969).

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR BEREISHIT:**

1. Which stories from the Torah inspire you to act like a leader, and effect change?
2. Do you believe that only people who take personal responsibility should become leaders?

### 3. As God's partner in creating a better world, what will you protest?

\* Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar.

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/bereishit/taking-responsibility/>

## Why Did Eve Listen to the Snake?

By Yehuda Shurpin \* © Chabad 2022

Eve (Chavah in Hebrew) had just one commandment to keep: not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Yet she listened to the serpent, who told her to eat the forbidden fruit, and she then invited her husband, Adam, to do the same. It's a tragic tale that has left many wondering, why did she even listen to the snake?

Before answering this question, it's interesting to note that the Torah informs us that "the serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild beasts that G d had made . . ."<sup>1</sup> indicating that the snake used his cunning to entice Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Commentators explain that the arguments of the snake parallel the tactics our own evil inclination uses to entice us to sin. Through exploring the serpent's subterfuge, we'll also gain a better understanding of the workings of the evil inclination.

### Adding to G d's Word

The Talmud<sup>2</sup> points out that G d commanded Adam and Eve<sup>3</sup> not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Yet, Eve told the serpent<sup>4</sup> that G d had commanded them not to eat and not to touch the tree.

Although G d commanded Adam not to eat from the tree, Adam rationalized that by not touching the tree, they would be prevented from eating from it. So when he repeated the command to Eve, he added that G d said not to touch it.<sup>5</sup>

Hearing Eve's words, the serpent cunningly pushed her into the tree, showing her that nothing would happen if she touched the tree — ergo, nothing would happen if she ate from it.

This, the Talmud explains, teaches us that whoever adds to the Torah ends up subtracting from it. By erroneously attributing an added prohibition to G d, Eve ended up sinning and eating from the forbidden fruit.

### The Snake Ate First

Eve was told that when she would eat from the Tree of Knowledge, she would die. Rabbi Don Isaac Abarbanel says that the snake challenged this by demonstrating that he could eat from the tree without any repercussions,<sup>6</sup> which led Eve to speculate that the "real"<sup>7</sup> reason behind the commandment was, as the snake claimed, that "G d knows that as soon as you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like divine beings . . ."<sup>8</sup>

(Interestingly, according to this explanation, the snake didn't actually talk. Rather, it was through actions that intimated the message that is attributed to him in Scripture.)

### The Appeal of Forbidden Pleasure

Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar, known as the Ohr Hachaim,<sup>9</sup> explains that from the opening words of the serpent, we can glimpse some of the tactics he (and the evil inclination) used.

The snake opened by asking, "Did G d indeed say, 'You shall not eat of any of the trees of the garden?'"<sup>10</sup>

Now, what did he mean to say here? Surely, the serpent knew that all other trees were permitted. Rather, he was insinuating that all the fruit paled in comparison to the fruit of this tree, and as long as she did not taste its fruit it would be as if she never ate fruit of any tree at all.

Thus, the evil inclination works to simultaneously decrease one's desire for the permitted while increasing one's desire for the forbidden.

### **"All Is Forbidden"**

Alternatively, the snake was suggesting that all the other trees in the Garden were planted from branches of the Tree of Knowledge. As such, he reasoned, they should really be forbidden to eat as well.

This is another way the evil inclination entices people. It attempts to magnify and intensify the challenge of doing mitzvahs, and it then turns around and convinces the person that due to the "insurmountable obstacles," it is impossible to properly observe the mitzvahs.<sup>11</sup>

### **A Matter of Focus**

The Rebbe explains that the intent of the evil inclination is to cause a person to do the opposite of what G d wants. When the observance of a specific mitzvah takes on particular importance, the evil inclination makes an extra effort to prevent the person from doing that mitzvah. Thus, when Adam and Eve had but one mitzvah, the snake trained all of its power of enticement and seduction to get them to sin. In our own lives, when a specific mitzvah feels particularly difficult, that may be the very mitzvah we are meant to focus on.<sup>12</sup>

### **Knowing Better Than G d**

The Chassidic masters explain that Adam and Eve knew that their life in the Garden was meant to be an ongoing expansion of divine consciousness brought about by "cultivating and guarding."

By suggesting to Eve that perhaps all the fruits were forbidden, the snake was trying to subtly plant in Eve's mind the idea that perhaps G d meant to deprive them of the fullness of His creation and limit their ability to accomplish His ends. He was not letting them use every available means to make this world His home, in effect sabotaging their efforts. "If He has denied you this fruit, He may as well have denied you all fruit!" Thus, the snake convinced Eve that he knew better than G d Himself how to accomplish G d's ends.

This is another way the evil inclination usually works. It does not (initially, at least) attempt to convince us to sin, for we as humans are logical thinkers and would refuse. It instead convinces us that transgressing G d's express will is a shortcut to accomplishing G d's true purpose, and the supposedly sinful act is in fact meritorious.

Now that we know why Eve listened to the snake, we can better understand and be aware of the wily tricks of our own cunning snake, the evil inclination, and conquer it.

### **FOOTNOTES:**

1. Genesis 3:1.

2. Talmud, Sanhedrin 29a.

3. Genesis 2:17.

4. Genesis 3:3.

5. There is a debate among the commentaries whether it was Adam or Eve who added to G d's words; see commentaries on Genesis 3:3.

6. See Abarbanel on Genesis 3.

7. It should be noted that we are in fact meant to try to understand the reasons behind the mitzvahs. However, it is critical to keep in mind that ultimately we keep the mitzvahs because we were commanded to do so by G d, regardless of where our own finite speculations have led us.

8. Genesis 3:5.
9. Ohr Hachaim on Genesis 3:1.
10. Genesis 3:1.
11. See Ohr Hachaim on Genesis 3:1.
12. See Likkutei Sichot, vol. 3, p. 747.

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[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/5668673/jewish/Why-Did-Eve-Listen-to-the-Snake.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5668673/jewish/Why-Did-Eve-Listen-to-the-Snake.htm)

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### **Bereishit: The Light Will Break Through** by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky \*

*G-d said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.* Genesis 1:3

G-d seeks “partners” in His ongoing re-creation of the world. Thus, whenever we take upon ourselves to begin some project intended to promote holiness, goodness, and Divine consciousness in the world, we should remember that we are G-d’s emissaries in this endeavor, acting on His behalf.

This being the case, our own “act of creation” must take its cue from G-d’s creation of the world. Just as the initial state of reality seemed antithetical to Divine consciousness – void, chaotic, and dark – so will there be challenges and obstacles to our own creative projects.

Nonetheless, just as light broke through and illuminated the world on the first day of creation, paving the way for the rest of the creative process to unfold, so too, when we resolve to see our endeavors through to fruition, G-d will turn the tables, and light and order will displace chaos and darkness.

– from *Daily Wisdom #3*

Gut Shabbos,

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman  
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\* A Chasidic insight that Rabbi Wisnefsky selected for the parsha.

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#### Covenant and Conversation

**Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l**

#### The Genesis of Love

In The Lonely Man of Faith, Rabbi Soloveitchik drew our attention to the fact that there are two accounts of creation. The first is in Genesis 1, the second in Genesis 2-3, and they are significantly different.

In the first, God is called Elokim, in the second, Hashem Elokim. In the first, man and woman are created simultaneously: "male and female he created them." In the second, they are created sequentially: first man, then woman. In the first, humans are commanded to "fill the earth and subdue it." In the second, the first human is placed in the garden "to serve it and preserve it." In the first, humans are described as "in the image and likeness" of God. In the second, man is created from "the dust of the earth."

The explanation, says Rabbi Soloveitchik, is that the Torah is describing two aspects of our humanity that he calls respectively, Majestic man and Covenantal man. We are majestic masters of creation: that is the message of Genesis 1. But we also experience existential loneliness, we seek covenant and connection: that is the message of Genesis 2.

There is, though, another strange duality – a story told in two quite different ways – that has to do not with creation but with human relationships. There are two different accounts of the way the first man gives a name to the first woman. This is the first:

"This time – bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman' [ishah] for she was taken from man [ish]."

And this, many verses later, is the second: "And the man called his wife Eve [Chava] because she was the mother of all life."

The differences between these two accounts are highly consequential. In the first, the man names, not a person, but a class, a category. He uses not a name but a noun. The other person is, for him, simply "woman," a type, not an individual. In the second, he gives his wife a proper name. She has become, for him, a person in her own right.

In the first, he emphasises their similarities – she is "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." In the second, he emphasises the difference. She can give birth, he cannot. We can hear this in the very sound of the names. Ish and Ishah sound similar because they are similar. Adam and Chavah do not sound similar at all.

In the first, it is the woman who is portrayed as dependent: "she was taken from man." In the second, it is the other way around. Adam, from Adamah, represents mortality: "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground (ha-adamah) since from it you were taken." It is Chavah who redeems man from mortality by bringing new life into the world.

The consequences of the two acts of naming are completely different. After the first comes the sin of eating the forbidden fruit, and the punishment: exile from Eden. After the second, however, we read that God made for the couple, "garments of skin" (or with an ayin) and clothed them. This is a gesture of protection and love. In the school of Rabbi Meir, they read this phrase as "garments of light" (or with an aleph). God robed them with radiance.

Only after the man has given his wife a proper name do we find the Torah referring to God himself by His proper name alone, namely Hashem (in Genesis 4). Until then he has been described as either Elokim or Hashem Elokim – Elokim being the impersonal aspect of God: God as law, God as power, God as justice. In other words, our relationship to God parallels our relationship to one another. Only when we respect and recognise the uniqueness of another person are we capable of respecting and recognising the uniqueness of God Himself.

Now let us return to the two creation accounts, this time not looking at what they tell us about humanity (as in The Lonely Man of Faith), but simply at what they tell us about creation.

In Genesis 1, God creates things – chemical elements, stars, planets, lifeforms, biological species. In Genesis 2-3, he creates people. In the first chapter, He creates systems, in the second chapter He creates relationships. It is fundamental to the Torah's view of reality that these things belong to different worlds, distinct narratives, separate stories, alternative ways of seeing reality.

There are differences in tone as well. In the first, creation involves no effort on the part of God. He simply speaks. He says "Let there be," and there was. In the second, He is actively engaged. When it comes to the creation of the first human, He does not merely say, "Let us make man in our image according to our likeness." He performs the creation Himself, like sculptor fashioning an image out of clay: "Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into

his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."

In Genesis 1, God effortlessly summons the universe into being. In Genesis 2, He becomes a gardener: "Now the Lord God planted a garden ..." We wonder why on earth God, who has just created the entire universe, should become a gardener. The Torah gives us the answer, and it is very moving: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." God wanted to give man the dignity of work, of being a creator, not just a creation. And in case the man should such labour as undignified, God became a gardener Himself to show that this work too is divine, and in performing it, man becomes God's partner in the work of creation.

Then comes the extraordinarily poignant verse, "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" God feels for the existential isolation of the first man. There was no such moment in the previous chapter. There, God simply creates. Here, God empathises. He enters into the human mind. He feels what we feel. There is no such moment in any other ancient religious literature. What is radical about biblical monotheism is not just that there is only one God, not just that He is the source of all that exists, but that God is closer to us than we are to ourselves. God knew the loneliness of the first man before the first man knew it of himself.

That is what the second creation account is telling us. Creation of things is relatively easy, creation of relationships is hard. Look at the tender concern God shows for the first human beings in Genesis 2-3. He wants man to have the dignity of work. He wants man to know that work itself is divine. He gives man the capacity to name the animals. He cares when he senses the onset of loneliness. He creates the first woman. He waits, in exasperation, as the first human couple commit the first sin. Finally, when the man gives his wife a proper name, recognising for the first time that she is different from him and that she can do something he will never do, he clothes them both so that they will not go naked into the world. That is the God, not of creation (Elokim) but of love (Hashem).

That is what makes the dual account of the naming of the first woman so significant a

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parallel to the dual account of God's creation of the universe. We have to create relationship before we encounter the God of relationship. We have to make space for the otherness of the human other to be able to make space for the otherness of the divine other. We have to give love before we can receive love.

In Genesis 1, God creates the universe. Nothing vaster can be imagined, and we keep discovering that the universe is bigger than we thought. In 2016, a study based on three-dimensional modelling of images produced by the Hubble space telescope concluded that there were between 10 and 20 times as many galaxies as astronomers had previously thought. There are more than a hundred stars for every grain of sand on earth.

And yet, almost in the same breath as it speaks of the panoply of creation, the Torah tells us that God took time to breathe the breath of life into the first human, give him dignified work, enter his loneliness, make him a wife, and robe them both with garments of light when the time came for them to leave Eden and make their way in the world.

The Torah is telling us something very powerful. Never think of people as things. Never think of people as types: they are individuals. Never be content with creating systems: care also about relationships.

I believe that relationships are where our humanity is born and grows, flowers and flourishes. It is by loving people that we learn to love God and feel the fullness of His love for us.

#### **Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

Our nation, Israel, has just concluded a most intensive Festival period which encompasses a rollercoaster of religious emotions. We have moved from the intense soul searching of Rosh Hashanah to the heartfelt prayers for forgiveness of Yom Kippur. We have built and dwelt for seven days in a make-shift house reminiscent of the booths in the desert as well as of the "fallen sukkah of King David", the Holy Temple. We have punctuated our prayer for rain with joyous and sometimes even raucous dancing around the Torah, whose reading we conclude just at Festival end. After a full month of festivities, we are now entering our first post festival Sabbath, on which we shall read of the creation of the world.

Although these segments seem disparate, I truly believe that there is a conceptual scheme which connects them all. I also believe that many observant Jews miss the theological thread which magnificently unites this particular holiday period because the religious establishment does not sufficiently stress the real message which Judaism is trying to teach.

Despite the hundreds of years between them, two great theologians – Rav Yosef Albo (1380-1444), in his *Sefer Haikkarim* – "Book

of Essential Jewish Beliefs" and Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) in his "Star of Redemption" – insist that the fundamental principles of Jewish faith are outlined in the three special blessings of the Rosh Hashana Musaf Amidah. Conventional wisdom sees the High Holy Days as frightening days of judgment, but Rosh Hashana actually teaches us that a major function of the Jewish people in this world is to establish the Kingship of our God of love, morality and peace throughout the world. Indeed, the Hassidim – and especially Habad – refer to the night of Rosh Hashanah as the Night of the Coronation.

Yom Kippur is our Day of Forgiveness. In order for us to dedicate ourselves to the task of bringing the God of compassionate righteousness and justice to the world in the coming year, each of us must take to the task with renewed vigor. We can only muster the necessary energy if we have successfully emerged from our feelings of inadequacy resulting from improper conduct towards humanity and to God.

Yom Kippur is not only a day of forgiveness for Jews. Our reading of the Book of Jonah with God's command that the prophet bring the gentle Assyrians to repentance and the refrain which we iterate and reiterate during our fast, "for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Isaiah 56:7) demonstrate that God desires repentance and forgiveness for all of humanity.

The Mussaf Amidah on Yom Kippur describes in exquisite detail every moment of the Temple service for forgiveness; indeed, it transports us to the Holy Temple itself. Our sukkah represents the Holy Temple, or at least the model of the sanctuary in the desert after which it was crafted. The guests of the sukkah (ushpizin) are the great personalities of Biblical history, and the most fitting decorations for the sukkah are scenes from the Temple service (so magnificently reproduced by Machzor Hamikdash). It is not accidental that the depiction of the Temple service of the musaf amidah in the Yom Kippur service begins by invoking the creation of the world. The Temple should somehow serve as a magnet for all nations and the conduit through which they will accept the Kingship of God and a lifestyle reflecting His morality and love.

Please note the following amazing parallels when the Bible describes the building of a sanctuary; it uses the following words:

"Behold I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri the son of Hur from the tribe of Judah and I have filled him with the spirit of God: with Wisdom (Hakhmah), with Understanding (Tevunah) and with Knowledge (Daat)" (Exodus 31:2,3)

In the Book of Proverbs, which invokes God's creation of the world, a parallel verse is found

## **Likutei Divrei Torah**

"The Lord founded the earth with Wisdom (Hakhmah), fashioned the heavens with Understanding (Tevunah) and with Knowledge (Daat) pierced through the great deep and enabled the heavens to give forth dew." (Proverbs 3:19,20)

Apparently, the Bible is asking us to recreate the world with the Holy Temple from whence our religious teachings must be disseminated throughout humanity.

From this perspective, we understand why our rejoicing over the Torah takes place at the conclusion of this holiday season rather than during the Festival of Shavuot. Pesach and Shavuot are national festivals on which we celebrate the founding of our nation from the crucible of Egyptian slavery and our unique status as the chosen people resulting from the revelation at Sinai.

The Tishrei Festivals are universal in import, focusing on our responsibility to be a Light unto the Nations. This is why on Simchat Torah, we take the Bible Scrolls out into the street, into the public thoroughfare and dance with them before the entire world. From this perspective we can well understand why Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah moves seamlessly into the reading of Bereishit of the creation of the world.

#### **The Person in the Parsha** **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

##### **"If I Am I"**

There are many persons in this week's parshah. Chief among them, of course, are Adam and Eve, the very first persons on earth. But the names of quite a few others are listed. Some are obscure, like Kenan and Mahalalel. But two others are very well known, and for interesting reasons. I refer to Cain and Abel.

Regular readers of this column know that I rarely mention sources from the field of Jewish mysticism. Kabbalah is, in my opinion, a body of knowledge which is reserved for people who are especially learned and very pious. The current popularity of Kabbalah among people who lack proper "credentials" is something which I deem inappropriate. Nevertheless, I recognize that the field of Kabbalah bristles with amazing insights into theology, certainly, but also into the human psyche.

One of the insights which is especially meaningful to me is the assertion made in Kabbalistic literature that Cain and Abel represent two of humanity's archetypes. Cain and Abel each have very different souls, different neshamot. Some of us have Cain's soul, and others of us have Abel's soul. Do not mistake those with Cain's soul for the "bad guys," and those with Abel's soul for the "good guys." The distinction is much more subtle than that.

Here is how the distinction was explained to me by a very qualified student of Kabbalah,

Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, whose source was a Kabbalistic text known as Sha'ar HaGilgulim. Those of us with Abel's soul tend to be contemplative, compliant, and a bit perfectionist. Those of us with the soul of Cain tend to be active, assertive, and creative. In Cain's case, these traits went too far. His active and assertive tendencies led him to murder his brother. But his descendants used their talents in constructive ways, inventing musical instruments, agricultural tools, and, sadly, military weapons.

Abel, on the other hand, was murdered before he had any descendants, so we know nothing about what their contributions to human culture might have been. But what do we know about Abel himself that would help us understand the nature of his "soul?"

Here is what we know about Abel: He was the younger of the two, he was a keeper of sheep, and after "Cain brought an offering to the Lord from the fruit of the soil, Abel followed suit and brought the choicest of the firstlings of his flock" (Genesis 4:2-4). In the Hebrew original, the phrase which I translated as "followed suit" reads *veHevel heivi gam hu*, which translates literally as "and Abel, he too brought."

Cain initiated, Abel responded. This brief phrase tells the entire story about Abel's soul. He was a follower, not a leader. He was a "convergent" thinker and not a "divergent" thinker. Creativity was not his thing. Conformity was.

Several questions beg to be asked. Is conformity a fault or a virtue? Is creativity and originality to be valued over obedience and compliance? Are we, as religious Jews, not obligated to conform to the comprehensive set of standards of behavior? Does not excessive creativity clash with traditional values? Are we to find fault with Abel because he "followed suit," because "he too brought" a sacrifice to the Lord?

There is much in our Jewish faith that emphasizes the importance of obedience and admonishes us not to "stray after our hearts and eyes" into new and untested directions. There is no doubt about that.

But blind obedience comes with great spiritual risk. Blind obedience can lead to superficial religious behavior, behavior which is devoid of heartfelt emotion, of a sense of meaning and purpose, of mitzvot performed without proper kavanah, proper motives and proper intent.

One of my own spiritual heroes is the highly original and astoundingly creative nineteenth-century Hasidic sage, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk. He taught of the dangers of imitation and artificiality in the practice of religious faith. He was concerned about the developments he noted in the world of observant Jewry during his time. People

tended to dress the same, think the same, and act the same in their religious devotions.

He famously said, "If I am I because I am I, and if you are you because you are you, then I am I and you are you. But, if I am I because you are you, and you are you because I am I, then you are not you and I am not I."

For the Rabbi of Kotzk, there was something almost sinful in Abel's behavior. To offer a sacrifice because my brother is offering a sacrifice is an empty act, perhaps even a hypocritical act. One must do good deeds because one feels inwardly inspired to do so, and not because he or she feels compelled to emulate the good deeds of others.

I have often thought that the basis of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk's convictions was the observation made so frequently by the Sages of the Talmud. The Talmud contains many statements to the effect that each of us is different and unique. We were created with different facial features, with different fingerprints, with different emotional sensitivities, and with different intellectual capacities. These differences must find their expression in our religious behavior. I cannot be "I" if I am merely mimicking "you."

Here is one Talmudic passage which contains this theme. It is from the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Avodah Zarah 33: "A human produces a coin from one form, and all the coins are identically alike. But the King of Kings, the Holy One Blessed Be He, produces every coin in the form of the primeval Adam, and yet no man perfectly resembles his fellow."

What lesson can be learned from the fact that the Master of the Universe created us so different from each other? This must be the lesson: We must come to know the ways in which we are different from others, we must be thankful for our uniqueness, and we must find ways to serve the Almighty authentically and creatively, for only then will we be actualizing our unique purpose on earth.

There is a prayer we recite on Yom Kippur. It reads: "My Lord, before I was formed I was unworthy, and now that I have been formed it is as if I had not been formed." Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, in *Olat Re'iyah*, his commentary upon the liturgy, explains: "Each of us is born in one special moment in the course of millennia. Each of us is born into a specific set of circumstances. Before that moment, and in other circumstances, we were not yet worthy of being born. Now that I have been born at this time, and in this place, I have a divinely ordained unique function to perform. On Yom Kippur, we confess to the Almighty, in this prayer, that we have not lived up to the responsibilities of a person born at this specific moment and in this specific place."

As we begin this new year, let us look within ourselves and discover our own individuality.

## Likutei Divrei Torah

Let us channel it toward the will of our Creator.

This is one of the lessons of this week's weekly portion, Bereshit, "In the beginning."

### Rabbi Norman Lamm's Derashot Ledorot: A Commentary for the Ages

#### Reflections on the Divine Image

Parashat Bereshit teaches us one of the most fundamental concepts of our faith. It is something we speak of often, and that is perhaps why we frequently fail to appreciate its depth and the magnitude of its influence. The concept of man's creation *tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God, is one of the most sublime ideas that man possesses, and is decisive in the Jewish concept of man.

What does it mean when we say that man was created in the image of God? Varying interpretations have been offered, each reflecting the general ideological orientation of the interpreter.

The philosophers of Judaism, the fathers of our rationalist tradition, maintain that the image of God is expressed, in man, by his intellect.

Thus, Sa'adia Gaon and Maimonides maintain that *sekhel*, reason, which separates man from animal, is the element of uniqueness that is in essence a divine quality. The intellectual function is thus what characterizes man as *tzelem Elohim*.

However, the ethical tradition of Judaism does not agree with that interpretation. Thus, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, in his *Mesilat Yesharim*, does not accept reason as the essence of the divine image. A man can, by exercise of his intellect, know what is good – but fail to act upon it. Also, the restriction of *tzelem Elohim* to reason means that only geniuses can truly qualify as being created in the image of God. Hence, Luzzatto offers an alternative and perhaps more profound definition. The *tzelem Elohim* in which man was created is that of *ratzon* – the freedom of will. The fact that man has a choice – between good and evil, between right and wrong, between obedience and disobedience of God – is what expresses the image of God in which he was born. An animal has no freedom to act; a man does. That ethical freedom makes man unique in the creation.

But how does the freedom of the human will express itself? A man does not assert his freedom by merely saying "yes" to all that is presented to him. Each of us finds himself born into a society which is far from perfect. We are all born with a set of animal drives, instincts, and intuitions. If we merely nod our heads in assent to all those forces which seem more powerful than us, then we are merely being passive, plastic, and devoid of personality. We are then not being free, and we are not executing our divine right of choice. Freedom, the image of God, is expressed in the word "no." When we negate that which is

indecent, evil, ungodly; when we have the courage, the power, and the might to rise and announce with resolve that we shall not submit to the pressures to conform to that which is cheap, that which is evil, that which is indecent and immoral – then we are being free men and responding to the inner divine image in which we are created.

The late Rabbi Aaron Levine, the renowned Reszher Rav, interpreted, in this manner, the famous verse from Ecclesiastes (3:19) which we recite every morning as part of our preliminary prayers. Solomon tells us, “Umotar ha’adam min habehema ayin,” which is usually translated as, “And the preeminence of man over beast is naught.” Rabbi Levine, however, prefers to give the verse an interpretation other than the pessimistic, gloomy apparent meaning. He says: “And the preeminence of man over beast is – ayin, ‘no.’” What is it that gives man his distinction? What is it that makes man different from the rest of creation, superior to the rest of the natural world? It is his capacity to say ayin, his capacity to face the world and announce that he will not submit to it, that he will accept the challenge and respond “no”. An animal has no choice – no freedom – and therefore must say “yes” to his drives, to the world in which he lives. But a human being can say “no” to that which is unseemly and beneath his dignity. And when he says “no” to all that is ungodly, he is being Godly. He is showing that he was created in the image of God.

Adam and Eve had to learn this lesson, and their descendants forever after must learn from their failure. We are nowhere told in the Torah that the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was in any way different from the fruit of the other trees in the Garden of Eden. Yet when she was tempted by the serpent, Eve looked at the fruit, and in her mind’s eye its attractiveness grew out of all proportion to reality. It looked more luscious, it looked more juicy, it looked more appetizing. She even imagined that this was some kind of “intelligence food.” Her instinct bade her to do that which was in violation of the divine command. But counter to this she had the capacity, as a free agent created in God’s image, to say ayin, to say “no” to her instinct and her temptation. But she forfeited her opportunity. The first human couple did not know how to say “no.” This was the beginning of their downfall.

Abraham was a great Jew – the first Jew. Yet in our tradition he is not famous so much for saying “yes” as he is for saying “no.” Abraham was the great iconoclast. It was he who said “no” to the idolatries of his day, who said “no” to his father’s paganism, who was the one man pitted against the entire world, shouting “no!” to all the obscenities of his contemporary civilization.

Moses was a great teacher. He gave us 613 commandments. When you investigate the commandments, you find that only 248 are

positive – commanding us what to do. But 365 of them are negative – they say “no” to our wills and our wishes. For when we learn to say “no,” we are being free men and women under God. The famous Ten Commandments have only three positive laws; the other seven are negative. Indeed, it is only through these negatives that we can live and survive and thrive at all. Without “You shall not murder,” there can be no society. Without “You shall not steal,” there can be no normal conduct of commerce and business. Without “You shall not commit adultery,” there can be no normal family life. Without “You shall not covet,” the human personality must degenerate and man becomes nothing more than an animal, a beast.

“And the preeminence of man over beast is ayin” – it is this which gives man greater dignity and superiority over the animal – his power to say “no.” It is this freedom of the human personality taught by our Jewish tradition that we Jews must reassert once again in our own day.

The author Herman Wouk told me some time ago that a number of years earlier he was boarding a ship to go on a trip overseas. Several hours after he boarded, a cabin boy brought him a note from the apostate Jewish author Shalom Asch, asking Wouk to come to his cabin. There Asch complained to him and said, “I don’t understand you, Mr. Wouk. You are a young man – yet you are observant and Orthodox. When my generation of writers was young, we were rebels, we were dissenters. We rejected tradition, we rejected authority, we rejected the opinions of the past. What happened to you? Why do you conform so blandly?” Wouk gave the older man an answer that I believe is very important for all of us to know. He answered, “You are making a terrible mistake, Mr. Asch. You seem to forget that the world we live in is not a paradise of Jewishness. You seem to forget that the world we occupy has become corrupted, assimilated, emptied of all Jewish content. In a world of this sort, one does not have to be a rebel at all in order to ignore the high standards of Judaism. If you violate the Sabbath, if you eat like a pagan, if you submit to the cheap standards of morality of the society in which we live, then you are being a conformist; you are merely allowing your own animal instincts to get the better of you. Today, if I and some of my contemporaries are observing the Jewish tradition, then it is because we are the dissenters, the nein-sagers. For we are the ones who say ‘no’ to the desecration of the Sabbath, ‘no’ to the creeping assimilation that ridicules all of Judaism and threatens its very life, ‘no’ to all the forces that seek to degrade our people and diminish the uniqueness of Israel that is its dignity and its preeminence. You are the conformist.”

This is the kind of force, the kind of courage, the kind of conviction that has sustained us throughout the ages. It is that which has given us the power to say “no” to the threats of

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Haman, the cruelties of Chmielnicki, the genocide of Hitler, as well as the sugarcoated missionizing of more enlightened enemies of Judaism. We demonstrated the image of God when we exercised our freedom and said “no” to all this.

I am not suggesting that we ought to be destructively negative. It is, rather, that when we fully exercise our critical functions and faculties, then the good will come to the fore of itself. It is because I have confidence in the innate powers of the good that I suggest we concentrate on denying evil. “Depart from evil and do good” (Psalms 34:15). If you put all your energies into negating evil, then good will be done of its own accord.

It is this power to say “no” that we must exercise in our relations with our fellow Jews in the State of Israel. For, in addition to all our constructive efforts on behalf of the upbuilding of the land, we must also be able to call a halt to the creeping paganism that plagues it.

When we find that in our own Orthodox community in Israel certain things are done which serve only to desecrate the name of God, we must not be shy. We must rise and as one say “no” to all those forces which would compromise the sanctity of the Torah and the sanctity of the Holy Land.

In our own American Jewish community, we must, here too, be the critics. And when, to mention just a seemingly trivial matter, certain artists and entertainers who are Jewish, and who rely upon the community as such for acceptance of what they have to offer, elect to entertain on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, we must say “no.” We must realize that it is no longer the domain of one’s own conscience, when the matter is a public demonstration of contempt for American Jewry. “And the preeminence of man over beast is ayin” – we must not sheepishly go along with everything that “famous people” are willing to tell us. We must be men, we must be human beings, we must use the freedom that God gave us when He created us in His image, and learn when to say “no.”

I conclude with the statement by one of the greatest teachers of Judaism, a man who indeed showed, in his life, that he knew the value of “no.” It was Rabbi Akiba, the man who was able to stand up to the wrath and the might of the whole Roman Empire and say “no” to tyranny and to despotism, who taught us, “Beloved is man that he was created in the image of God” (Avot 3:18). Beloved indeed, and precious and unique and irreplaceable is man when he has the freedom of will that is granted to him by his Creator. And furthermore, “Hiba yeteira noda’at lo shenivra betzelem” – a special love was given to man by God, it is a special gift when man not only has that freedom but when he knows that he has that freedom – and therefore uses it to combat evil and to allow the great,

constructive forces of good, innate in himself, to come to the fore so as to make this a better world for all mankind. [Excerpted from Rabbi Norman Lamm's *Derashot Ledorot: A Commentary for the Ages — Genesis*, co-published by OU Press, Maggid Books, and YU Press; edited by Stuart W. Halpern]

### Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissacher Frand

#### The Sun Pioneers Gevurah: Hearing an Insult and Keeping Quiet

Towards the beginning of Sefer Bereshis, the Ribono shel Olam created the sun, the moon, and the stars. The pasuk says, “And G-d made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night; and the stars.” [Bereshis 1:16].

Rashi here alludes to a famous teaching of Chazal: At first the pasuk refers to the sun and moon as being “two great lights” and then suddenly they are referred to as the “greater light” and the “lesser light.” Rashi explains that the sun and the moon were created equal however the moon was reduced in size after complaining “it is impossible for two kings to both use a single crown.” The change was not only a change in the size of the moon – it was more than that. Today the moon only reflects the light of the sun. In the original act of Creation, the moon had its own independent light source. That is the full meaning of the shift in the pasukim from “two great lights” to “the great light and the smaller light.”

There is a very interesting Daas Zekeinim m’Baalei haTosfos. They note that while the moon was reduced in size, the sun remained the same size. Why was that? It was because it did not say anything. Even though the moon was impugning that the sun should be reduced in size, the sun did not say “Hey! Why should I be reduced in size? – You should be reduced in size!” The sun retained its size because “It heard the moon’s complaint and did not respond.”

The Gemara [Gittin 36b] praises those who “allow themselves to be shamed without shaming back, who hear themselves being insulted and do not respond.” The Gemara records: About them Scripture writes (at the end of Shiras Devorah): “And those who love Him go forth like the sun in its strength.” [Shoftim 5:31]. What is the connection between the sun going forth in its strength and those who do not answer back when they are shamed?

The Daas Zekeinim explains beautifully: This is exactly what the sun did at the time of Creation. The sun did not say anything! It was insulted and nevertheless did not respond. This is what Devorah was referring to when she wrote “and those who love Him go forth like the sun in its strength.”

This is the definition of Gevurah. The popular concept of Gevurah suggests being muscular.

Someone who works out on a regular basis is thought to be a Gibor. The concept of Gevurah in Chazal is epitomized by the Mishna “Who is the strong man (Gibor)? It is the one who conquers his evil inclination.” [Avot 4:1]

To be able to be in control of oneself and not always need to reflexively react to insults and put downs – requires true strength – “like the sun going forth in its strength”. Gevurah is the ability to overcome one’s natural instincts. The first manifestation of such Gevurah in the history of the world was the sun’s non-response to the impugned insult of the moon!

#### Why are School Teachers Like Stars?

The above cited pasuk [Bereshis 1:16] concludes with the words “v’es haKochamim” (and the stars). Rashi notes “Because He reduced the size of the moon, He made its hosts many, to conciliate it.” This is an amazing idea!

In the original Master Plan of Creation there was apparently only supposed to be a sun and a moon. But after reducing the size of the moon, the Ribono shel Olam decided to create stars to accompany the moon in the night sky. Rashi explains that this was a sort of conciliation prize to the moon, who suffered a reduction in size and the loss of its own source of light. To assuage the feelings of the moon, G-d created stars.

Now, how many stars are there? There are billions of stars! No one knows how many stars there are in the heavens. Consider the Milky Way! The number is astronomical! And what is the whole purpose of the stars? They are to make the moon feel better!

The Tolner Rebbe of Jerusalem made a beautiful observation: Anyone contemplating a career in Chinuch (Jewish education) should take note and remember this observation! The truth of the matter is that every parent is a Jewish educator.

The Gemara comments on the pasuk “The wise (maskilim) shall shine like the radiance of the firmament, and those who teach righteousness to the multitudes (matzdikei haRabim) will shine like the stars, forever and ever” [Daniel 12:3]: The term Maskilim refers to Judges (Dayanim) who render true judgement and to charity collectors.” The term matzdikei haRabim (who are compared to the stars) refers to teachers of school children (melamdei tinokos). [Bava Basra 8b]

Everyone who ever wrote any type of homiletic drush always gravitates to this enigmatic Gemara. Why are melamdei tinokos like Kochavim?

The classic interpretation is the following: The average person looks at a star and see it as a tiny little object, a mere spec in the heaven. Chazal say “No!” They are k’Kochavim l’Olam Vaad (like stars forever and ever).

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Someone might mistakenly consider a Rebbe, a school teacher, as insignificant. He might think “Eh! A second grade Rebbe. What else can he do?” Our sages tell us this is not the way we should view it. They look small but their function and accomplishments are eternal! That is the classic homiletic teaching associated with this pasuk.

The Tolner Rebbe interprets differently. Just as the purpose of the stars was to make the moon feel good – to serve as conciliation for its decrease in stature, so too, that is the purpose of a Rebbe! The tachlis of a Rebbe is to make a Talmid feel good about himself. “L’hafis da’ato” – the whole creation of the stars was to make the moon feel better. You may be smaller, you may not have your own source of light but you are something, you play a significant role in the heavenly order. That is what a Rebbe must always have in mind when working with his students. Make them feel worthwhile. This is what the pasuk means by the expression “Matzdikei haRabim (about which Chazal say ‘Elu melamdei tinokos’) k’Kochavim l’Olam va’ed.”

### Dvar Torah

#### Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Misrepresenting the word of God can lead to tragedy. We learn this from Parshat Bereishit. Everyone is familiar with the instruction given by Hashem to Adam and Eve not to eat the forbidden fruit. When the serpent approached Eve and tried to convince her to eat of the fruit, she said to the serpent,

“Amar Elokim,” - “God has said,” “lo tochlu mimenu velo tichlu bo.” - “You may not eat of it. You can’t even touch it.”

Rashi points out that Eve was actually wrong. Hashem had instructed them not to eat the fruit. But on no occasion did Hashem mention touching it. It was Eve who said to the serpent, “God said we’re not even allowed to touch it.” So the Midrash explains what then happened.

The serpent, knowing this, purposefully pushed Eve onto the tree, and nothing happened to her. The serpent said, “You see! God told you not to touch it and you’ve touched it and nothing has happened to you!” In this way the serpent was able to convince Eve that she should eat the fruit as well. But I have a question. Did Eve really do something which was wrong? Don’t we have a concept of ‘siyag laTorah’ - a fence around the Torah? So, for example, it is Torah law that we’re not allowed to purchase something on Shabbat. We have introduced muktza: we don’t even touch a coin on Shabbat to prevent us from then going on to do that which was wrong.

So Eve, therefore, said we shouldn’t even touch the tree in order that we won’t eat the fruit. However, there is a difference, because what did Eve say to the serpent? “Amar

Elokim" - God has said you cannot eat of this fruit, nor can you even touch it. She misrepresented the word of Hashem.

The Torah has been given to us to enrich our lives and it is our responsibility to safeguard the word of the Torah and in particular the word of Hashem. There is great value in 'chumras' - stringencies which we add. It's important for us to have a 'siyag laTorah' - a fence around the Torah. However, unlike Eve, who purposefully misrepresented the word of God, let us always be true and responsible ambassadors of what it is that Hashem Himself said.

#### **Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel Encyclopedia of Jewish Values\***

**Science & Judaism: Conflict or Harmony?**  
As we begin to read the Torah again this week, Parshat Beraishit describes the Creation of the world by God, and something in the back of the minds of each of us has this doubt about the "facts" as recoded in the Torah. Everyone who learned high school science knows that the age of the world is billions of years old, based on scientific evidence of U235 dating and carbon dating (the rate at which they decay). Every week, new scientific discoveries find remnants of animals hundreds of thousands or millions of years old. How does a believing Jew reconcile these "facts" with the Torah's "facts"? There are many other seeming contradictions between the Torah and science, such as the Theory of Darwin, but this chapter will delve more into the general question about Science and Judaism – how and if they can coexist. And, specifically, how do thinking Jews can believe the age of the earth is 5700+ year, given the scientific evidence?

**Knowledge In Judaism** - In Judaism, knowledge, intellect, and the use of the brain is part of man's role and challenge in the world. When man was first created "in the image of God," (**Genesis 1:27**) that image of God, according to Seforim (**Sefer ha-Or commentary to Genesis 1:27**) is man's ability to think -- his power of reasoning. Therefore, what makes man uniquely man, with the spark of the divine, and different from all creatures in the world, is his ability to think and use knowledge gained from those thoughts. Thus, all scientific investigation and any other endeavors where man uses his brain is very much part of Judaism, as man uses his "image of God" to be a scientist.

**Maimonides (Maimonides, Hilchot Yesodai HaTorah 1:1)** goes even further. He begins his book of Jewish law, *Mishne Torah*, by saying that it is man's duty to use his intellect to discover and try to understand the Creator. The very brain and mental faculties which are criticized by other religions as instruments of secularism and as anti-religious, must be used by the Jew in pursuit and the understanding of God. Maimonides continues in the next chapter (**Maimonides, Hilchot Yesodai HaTorah 2:2**) stating that through man's investigation and understanding of the physical world (normally

called science), he will come to a better understanding of God. Unlike the Christian world, which, by and large, saw science as the "enemy" for thousands of years, Judaism always encouraged science and scientific research.

#### **The Greatest Jewish Leaders Were Scientists**

- In order to become a member of the Sanhedrin, the high court of Judaism which ruled as the final judge of Jewish law, one of the qualities each one had to possess was secular wisdom (**Sanhedrin 17a**). Maimonides (**Maimonides, Hilchot Sanhedrin 2:1**) explains and amplifies this Talmudic statement by specifying what specific secular knowledge was needed: knowledge of mathematics, medicine, and astronomy, three fields which are considered today the essence of science. The great Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai, who saved Judaism by preserving the Yeshiva in Yavneh following the destruction of the Temple, also knew advanced mathematics and astronomy (**Bava Batra 134a**). The legendary Hillel was not only a great Torah scholar, but also understood the "languages" of the hills, mountains, and valleys, as well as the "language" of the animal (**Sofrim 16:9**), or, in today's terms, he was a scientist. The Midrash (**Shir Hashirim Rabba 1:7**) states that King Solomon not only knew Torah but also knew science, including aspects of what we call botany today. Given that all these Torah giants were also scientists, how could it ever be said that Judaism is in conflict with science?

#### **Judaism Cannot Be Opposed To Science**

Anything in the scientific realm proven to be a fact cannot possibly be in opposition to normative Jewish thought. One of the three pillars of the world is truth (**Avot 1:18**). The signature or seal of God Himself is truth (**Shabbat 55a**). Thus, anything proven true cannot possibly be in opposition to God or Judaism. In addition, Maimonides (**Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed II, 25**) writes that even were man to prove a fact which is contrary to Torah, this could not remain in conflict, since Judaism is truth. Therefore, says Maimonides, we would have to re-examine and re-interpret the Torah (possibly understanding the passage figuratively), so as not to violate what has been proven scientifically. But it cannot remain a conflict.

Another concept showing that Judaism cannot possibly conflict with science is that Judaism needs scientific knowledge in order to understand thousands of its Jewish laws. The laws of the New Moon, or the intricacies of the laws of *Klayim*, the prohibition of growing or breeding mixed species of plants in one field or animals, requires scientific knowledge. Thus, a person cannot be a learned, practicing Jew without a great deal of scientific knowledge, as it relates to Jewish law. There was even an organization called AOJS, American Orthodox Jewish Scientists, whose members used their scientific expertise to help benefit Jewish law and practice. The universities and hospitals in Israel are filled with observant, believing Jews,

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who use science in their everyday profession. There was even an Orthodox scientist who won the Nobel Prize. Clearly, science and Judaism coexist and even thrive together.

#### **What, then, is the Role of Science in Judaism?**

- To answer this question, i.e. "What is the role of science in Judaism?", we should look at two statements of Rabbi Elazar ben Chisima. In one statement, we can see that he was a scientist, as it says (**Horayot 10a**) that Rabbi Elazar ben Chisima knew how to measure the precise number of drops in the sea. On the other hand, it is this same individual, Rabbi Elazar the scientist, who says (**Avot 3:18**) that the essence of Torah concerns the minute laws about the sacrifices of birds and Jewish laws concerning the onset of menstruation, but the study of geometry and astronomy (i.e., science) are mere "desserts" of Judaism, i.e., of small consequence. What does this signify? Rabbi Elazar, who was himself a scientist, believed that the study of science was only a worthy pursuit to be used as a means to understand Judaism and God. Thus, while scientific study is important in Judaism, it is dwarfed in importance to the more spiritual aspects of life. The role of science is to explain the how and what of things in the world, while the role of religion is to explain why it happened, the ultimate cause. Thus, the two roles are complementary, and not in conflict.

**Determining What Is a Proven Fact** - Before investigation the age of the earth issue, it is important to first determine what is indeed considered a legitimate conflict between the Jewish and scientific view on each issue. As stated above (**Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed II, 25**), Maimonides said that any proven fact could not possibly conflict with Judaism. However, it is difficult to ascertain what indeed is a proven fact.

According to the rules of scientific inquiry, all "facts" are based only upon the information accumulated until this very moment. As soon as new information is uncovered, the "facts" change, thus making all scientific facts (and possible conflicts with Judaism) provisional. This change of facts has indeed occurred numerous times in the past in the scientific realm. For example, during the Middle Ages, as noted above, almost all scholars taught as "fact" that the sun revolved around the earth, based on the clearly visible evidence of the sun rising and setting each day. Only after Copernicus theorized the sun was the center of the solar system and the earth revolved around the sun, did the "facts" change.

Similarly, within the twentieth century itself, the "facts" about the age of the earth changed and have actually been revised numerous times. About seventy years ago, the earth was a billion years old. After some new discoveries of rock and moon exploration, the age was increased to two billion years. After further exploration in space and on earth, the number has now been revised to more than four billion years. Each

figure was a "fact," taught as such in schools, and printed as a fact in textbooks -- until new information emerged changing the facts. Based on this same scientific method, if science discovered tomorrow that their calculations of the rate of decay of the U235 element into U238 have been inaccurate all along, because of some newly discovered error, and that, in truth, the decay indicates rocks only a few thousand years old instead of billions of years, then, all of a sudden, the apparent conflict with Judaism would disappear, and the new "facts" would agree with Jewish tradition. Therefore, it is dangerous to acknowledge most science as absolute fact, and, consequently, point with certainty to any conflict with Judaism.

**Age of the Earth** - The concept of time is only feasible when it is a measure of movement between two things. Thus, the year, day and month are units of time measuring the earth's movement vis a vis the sun and the moon, respectively. Without other bodies, there cannot exist time as we know it. Since the Torah says that the sun (and the moon and stars) was created in Day Four of Creation (**Genesis 1:13-14**), how could there possibly have been a concept of "day", as we know it, prior to the sun's creation, especially since we measure the day by the earth's relationship to the sun? It cannot be done, says Maimonides (**Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed II, 30**). Since there is no 24-hour measure of a day prior to the sun's creation, how long were the first three days referred to in the Torah? They could each have been 24 minutes, 24 hours, or 24 million years. Thus, it is certainly possible that the earth is indeed billions of years old, but only 5700+ years old following the creation of the sun on Day Four.

Another possible resolution of the conflict revolves around the age of man when Adam and Eve were created. It is assumed by all that they were created as adults, and not as infants. We know that they had sexual relations on the first day of their creation (**Rashi, commentary on Genesis 4:1**). In fact, the Talmud specifically says that the world was created in an adult state (**Chullin 60a**). Thus, the animals were also created as grown-up animal, not in the state of infancy (this answers the age-old question which came first -- the chicken or the egg). If this is so, why should we then not assume as well that the earth itself was created in an adult state, i.e., with large trees and with rocks that were aged, as part of the world on day one. Since trees have rings measuring its years, a redwood on the first day of creation "looked" thousands of years old even though it was a day old. Similarly, there may have been rocks that were created already with the U238 decay far advanced, even though the rock was just a few minutes old. Therefore, the world might have been created looking billions of years old, while indeed it is only 5700+ years old.

A third explanation or resolution is built upon the Midrash (**Beraishit Rabbah 9:2**) that states that God created and destroyed many worlds

before He created this world as we know it. While we cannot possibly understand or explore here the theological implications why God did this, it is possible to believe, based on this source, that many of the "proofs" of the age of the world (including fossils) were remnants of other worlds previously destroyed, and that "our" world is indeed 5700+ years old.

Another axiom of scientific inquiry (mentioned above) is that the same laws governing nature today have remained constant. Therefore, we can measure the rate of decay and any other measurement back in time, since we assume that the rate has remained constant over billions of years. If we could demonstrate that natural law has somehow changed and has not always been constant, then all the "proofs" of science, as well as all its assumptions about the earth's age would no longer be valid. The Torah itself alludes to a change in natural law, long after man functioned in the world. Before the flood, the average age of each person was between 700-900 years, and human beings did not eat meat at all. The life span of people born after the Flood was 100-200 years, and people did eat meat. This attests to some type of change in the nature of the world and of man. In addition, the Torah first mentions that there were seasons of summer and winter, hot and cold, not after creation, but after the Flood (**Genesis 8:22**). Thus, it seems that before the Flood there were no seasons at all. The Seferorno (**Seferorno commentary to Genesis 8:22**) explains the reason and says that prior to the Flood there was no tilt of the axis of the sun (today we know that signifies the tilt of earth), which caused seasons to exist. Thus, prior to the Flood, says Seferorno, it was always springtime as there was no tilt. If this is true and the cataclysm of the Flood somehow caused the earth to tilt, then all the laws of nature as we know them would have been completely different before the Flood. Thus, it is certainly possible to believe that the rate of decay of U235 before and during the Flood was different than today's rate of decay. The flood itself may have sped up this rate of decay, and though the earth is 5700+ years old, after going through the Flood, it was aged greatly during the Flood, and it appears to be billions of years old.

All of these explanations do not prove anything conclusively. But these Jewish sources and ideas do allow us to understand and believe in both science and Judaism, without necessarily demonstrating conflict. As Einstein said, religion without science is lame, while science without religion is blind. The two should work together to benefit humankind.

\* **This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel "The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values" available from Urim and Amazon. For the full article or to review all the footnotes in the original, contact the author at [nachum@jewishdestiny.com](mailto:nachum@jewishdestiny.com)**

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## Likutei Divrei Torah

### Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

#### The Moral Imperative of "The Strength of His Works" - Rabbi Jeffrey Saks

Rashi opens his monumental commentary on the Torah with the midrashic observation of Rabbi Yitzhak, that the first 61 chapters of the Torah, until the beginning of halakhic material (in Exodus 12), are potentially superfluous. The reason we open with the tale of Creation is on account of the verse, "The strength of His works He related to His people, to give them the inheritance of the nations" (Psalms 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 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."

Most of us recall this most well-known comment of Rashi from our first encounter with Biblical commentary; many may have even learned it by heart – whether as a schoolchild or later in life. It is often marshalled as Zionism's ur-text – a candid and forceful declaration of the claims of the Jewish people to Eretz Yisrael.

In a shiur in 1988, very shortly after Yeshivat Hamivtar moved into its new home in the Efrat shopping center, Rabbi Brovender explored this Rashi through the prism of its prooftext in Psalm 111. I no longer remember his conclusion (he does not remember it either), but I turned to that mizmor in the hope that something in the effort to retrace his steps have either awoken latent memories or at least produced new insights.

If taken as a whole, the short, acrostic mizmor is a psalm of thanksgiving to God, whose actions are righteous and just, who provides for those that hold Him in awe and for His nation (including, v. 6, the land grant to Eretz Yisrael), followed by a declaration of the righteousness of His decrees, His eternal covenant with His nation, and a statement about Yirat Hashem. The psalm is delivered "be-sod yesharim ve-edah," in the council of the upright (v. 1). These upright, of course, are the people of Yisrael (whose name echoes the very word yashar), "who are upright in their deeds according to the instruction delivered to them by God" (Radak). Toward the psalm's conclusion we are informed that "The works of His hands are truth and justice; all His commandments are faithful. Steadfast forever, made in truth and uprightness (yashar)" (vv. 7-8). Apparently, the "strength of His hand," with which he removed the land from the possession of the seven nations, transferring it to us, is of course the very same "work of His hands" (of the following verse) defined by this key term, yashar, which if read back into its first appearance at the psalm's opening, points at a reinforcing interpretive circle. God's

commands are yesharim, and if we follow them we become upright as well, enabling us to join the exalted Sod Yesharim (council of the upright), through which we merit our ongoing possession of the land.

In fact, Midrash Tehillim (111:1) suggests the Sod Yesharim is formed through the deliverance of prophecy, the conduit through which the Divine word reaches the nation. This idea spins the interpretive wheel once more around its spoke: Prophecy is merited through the moral/intellectual perfection of the Navi, who in turn can instruct the people on upright ideals, which—if achieved—become the source of merit to Divine reward and the land of Israel itself.

It is impossible to consider the word “yashar,” especially in understanding the true rationale for Genesis, without reflecting on Netziv’s introduction to that book. (A text, it should be noted, which R. Brovender commands to our attention time and time again.) In considering why Genesis is nicknamed Sefer HaYashar Netziv observed that Bilaam referred to the Jewish nation as yesharim, not tzadkim or hasidim, and prayed that he would meet an end similar to theirs – “May my soul die the death of the upright and let my end be like his” (Numbers 23:10).

This is the praise of the Avot, the protagonists of Sefer HaYashar, who, aside from their rank as righteous and holy, and as maximizers of the love of God, were first and foremost characterized as yesharim. This is principally demonstrated by their moral behavior towards other nations, even the idolatrous, with whom they also acted out of love and fellow-feeling. (Netziv specifies the example of Avraham praying for Sodom.) It is for this reason that Genesis is called Sefer HaYashar, and if read back through Rashi (and his source in Psalm 111), it may tell us something about our claim to Eretz Yisrael.

Netziv points to the verses in Haazinu, “The deeds of the Mighty Rock are perfect, for all His ways are just; a faithful God, without injustice He is righteous and upright (yashar). Destruction is not His; it is His children’s defect you crooked and twisted generation.” (Deut. 32:4-5). He is yasher; to our detriment, we have often been “crooked and twisted” (ikesh u-ftaltol) – the very opposite image of the rectitude of upright yashrut. That, says Netziv, is the cause of exile. Our claim to Eretz Yisrael is a sign and direct function of “the strength of His works.” Our right to maintain that claim is the degree to which we can continue to count ourselves among the Sod Yesharim. Rashi’s opening comment is as much a moral call to us as it is a claim to the outside world.

## Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

### Rabbi Daniel Stein

#### The Blessing of Dependency

Many presume that the first sin of the creation story was when Adam and Chava defied the instructions of Hashem by eating from the eitz hadaas. However, according to Chazal, already on the fourth day of creation the moon was punished for being petty and petulant. The Gemara (Chullin 60b) infers from the inconsistent language of the pasuk “And Hashem made the two great lights, the great light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night” (Breishis 1:16), that when Hashem first created the sun and the moon, they were both “great” lights identical in size. Then, the moon complained before Hashem, “Master of the Universe, is it possible for two kings to serve with one crown? One of us must be subservient to the other.” Hashem therefore said to the moon: “If so, go and diminish yourself,” at which point the moon became the “lesser” of the two lights. But even before that, on the second day of creation, Rashi writes that Hashem commanded the trees to adopt the same flavor as the fruit they produced, becoming “fruit trees that bear fruit of its own kind” (Breishis 1:11). However, the trees rebelled and insisted on remaining inedible “trees that produce fruit” (Breishis 1:12).

Rav Moshe Shapiro (Mimamakim, Breishis Ma’amar 4) suggests that all three of these sins reflect the common desire to be independent. The trees pined for their own identity and flavor untethered and distinct from that of their fruit. The moon craved to be the source of its own light instead of merely reflecting the illumination of the sun. And Adam and Chava were tempted by the possibility of becoming gods themselves, “who know good and evil” (Breishis 3:5). While the ambition to be self-sufficient and autonomous is generally a good virtue as the pasuk states, “If you eat the toil of your hands, you are praiseworthy, and it is good for you” (Tehillim 128:2), with regards to our relationship with Hashem it is misguided. In this context, the greatest blessing is to be completely dependent and connected to Hashem. For this reason, despite the fact that the sun was more righteous than the moon the Jewish calendar revolves around the lunar cycle. Perhaps this signals that the mission of the Jewish people is not to aspire to become independent entities and beings, but to absorb and disseminate the light of Hashem.

In the aftermath of the sin of the eitz hadaas, the snake received the punishment, “you shall walk on your belly, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life” (Breishis 3:14). On the surface, the new predicament of the snake is a blessing for now he will have a continuous and endless supply of sustenance, as the Gemara (Yoma 75a) observes, “He cursed the serpent and what happened? When the serpent goes up to the roof its food is with it, and when it comes down its food is with it.” Indeed, the Gemara (Berachos 57a) adds that “if one sees a snake in a dream, it is a sign that his livelihood

## Likutei Divrei Torah

is accessible to him just as dust is readily accessible to a snake.” What then is the nature of the snake’s punishment? Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa (Matzmiach Yeshuos pg. 26a) explains that by providing the snake with a constant source of sustenance Hashem was effectively cutting ties with the snake. Moving forward, the snake would have no reason to interact with Hashem for he lacks and wants for nothing. On the other hand, in the wake of the sin of the eitz hadaas Hashem sought to create a more intense bond with Adam by “cursing” him that “with the sweat of his brow he shall eat bread” (Breishis 3:19). This was not intended to sever the connection with Adam but to strengthen it. The challenges of earning a living would make Adam acutely and continuously aware of Hashem’s involvement in his life and activities. In this sense, Adam’s fate was not really a curse but rather a blessing, the blessing of dependency on Hashem.

In Parshas Chukas, the Jewish people complained to Moshe about the inadequacies of the manna when they said, “There is no bread and no water, and we have come to loathe this miserable food” (Bamidbar 21:5). Hashem punished their ungrateful whining by attacking them with snakes as the pasuk states, “Hashem sent snakes against the people. They bit the people and many of them died” (Bamidbar 21:6). Rashi explains that they deserved to be bitten by snakes since by speaking negatively about the manna they were modeling the behavior of the snake who spoke lashon hara about Hashem when he said, “For Hashem knows that on the day that you eat thereof, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like Gods, knowing good and evil” (Breishis 3:5). However, Rabbeinu Bachya argues that the Jewish people did not malign the quality of the manna itself, rather they were opposed to the nuisance of collecting it daily, instead, they requested that an annual supply be delivered once a year. According to the perspective that the Jewish did not speak lashon hara about the manna, we must wonder why they were punished specifically with snakes?

The Gemara (Yoma 76a) relates, that the students of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai asked him: why didn’t the manna fall for the Jewish people just once a year to take care of all their needs, instead of coming down every day? He responded with a parable: To what does this matter compare? To a king of flesh and blood who has only one son. He granted him an allowance for food once a year and the son greeted his father only once a year, when it was time for him to receive his allowance. So, he arose and granted him his food every day, and his son visited him every day. So too, in the case of the Jewish people, the manna that fell each day was sufficient only for that day, so that the Jewish people would daven to Hashem for food on a daily basis. In light of this Gemara, Rav Pinchas Friedman (Shvilei Pinchas, Chukas 5781) suggests that when the

Jewish people complained about the schedule of the manna they were stricken specifically with snakes, because by lobbying for more infrequent interactions with Hashem they were longing for the lifestyle of the snake whose relationship with Hashem has been completely severed by his constant supply of sustenance. The plague of the snakes was intended to teach the Jewish people to cherish their daily exchanges with Hashem instead of resenting them.

We all daven that Hashem grant us an abundance of blessing and parnassah, but we also must never lose sight of the greatest gift of all which is a deep and meaningful relationship with Hashem. Yitzchok blessed Yaakov "And may Hashem give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fatness of the earth and an abundance of grain and wine" (Breishis 27:28). The Medrash (66:3) comments "may Hashem give you and give you again." Why does the blessing include multiple installments? Wouldn't it be better to receive the entire sum all at once? The Sfas Emes (Parshas Toldos 5650) explains that the best blessing is not a one-time lump sum payment of parnassah, but a daily ongoing relationship with Hashem.

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### Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam

#### Can You Have a Bigger Sign Than That!?

Now the heavens and the earth were completed and all their host. And G-d completed on the seventh day His work that He did, and He abstained on the seventh day from all His work that He did. And G-d blessed the seventh day and He sanctified it, for on it He abstained from all His work that G-d created to do. (Breishis 2:1-3)

The Kuzari asks a question that is so obvious that when you hear it you will wonder why you had never thought of it. To appreciate the power of the question let us back up and establish some facts, a few givens. We can know the length of a day and easily measure it by the motion of the sun. The sun is a reliable clock in concert with the earth spinning at a thousand miles an hour counting out twenty-four hours. The moon dances across the sky like the blink of an eye, opening fully and closing to a squint in the course of 29 and  $\frac{1}{2}$  days. It is our heavenly calendar.

A solar year can easily be observed by the winter solstice and the summer equinox. At certain times in the year the sun reaches a point in the horizon where the pendulum begins to return in the other direction. When the same moment of zenith arrives then we have effectively completed a 365 and  $\frac{1}{4}$  day elliptical journey around the sun at a steady speed of approximately 67,000 miles per hour.

Now we are almost ready for the big question. Shabbos is a sacred appointment for Jews around the world for thousands of years now. We take that time very seriously and therefore

it is mysteriously understandable why it is sacred and we keep track of the steady rhythm of a week. Why in the world do disparate and disconnected cultures around the world conform to a seven-day week. Where in the heavenly bodies is there any celestial sign of a seven-day period?

The answer is simple and obvious. We can go back to the very beginning of creation, "And G-d blessed the seventh day and He sanctified it". Before the existence of the Jewish Nation there has been a Holy Shabbos waiting for a people to appreciate its specialness. The whole world was aware of the notion that the world had been created and completed in seven days. It was common knowledge to all of mankind.

Similarly, we find that there are more than 500 variant versions of flood story spanning every continent, culture and language. Why should that be true even for those peoples not in the loop of biblical tradition? The answer is that it is a given, a fact of history that predated the giving of the Torah and it has been preserved as a part of cultural consciousness generation after generation ever since. Like a giant stone that crashes into a body of water it sends out waves and ripples that continue till today.

So too Shabbos is a fact of creation that has been preserved in the collective memories of all peoples for all time. Even if they can't identify the source, we know what it is and that source, our sages tell us is the source of blessing and the Jewish People have come to know it and keep it holy.

Now consider that a billion and a half adherents to the ways of Ishmael keep Friday as their day of rest but they absolutely agree that Shabbos is the next day. There are a billion and half followers of Essav – Edom resting on Sunday and happy to admit that the day before is actually Shabbos, while the rest of the world remains loyally fixed to a seven-day week. The Torah boldly claims, "And the Children of Israel keep the Shabbos, to make the Shabbos for their generations a covenant for eternity. Between Me and the Children of Israel it is an eternal sign that HASHEM made the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed. (Shemos 31:16-17) That day cannot get lost in the count!

It has been said that more than the Jews have kept the Shabbos, the Shabbos has kept the Jews. I would like to add one caveat. More than the Jews have kept the Shabbos Holy, the Shabbos has kept the Jews Holy. Can you have a bigger sign than that?!

**Weekly Parsha BERESHITH**

**Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

In the whirlwind cascade of events that fill this opening parsha of the Torah, one can easily be overwhelmed by the sheer number of subjects discussed. Nevertheless, I think we can all agree that the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, after they exercised their free will to disobey God's commandment, is an important issue to dwell upon and discuss.

What life was like within the Garden of Eden is pretty much an unknown to us. It is obvious that human nature was different there and that the prevalence of shame and titillating sexual desire was absent – certainly in a way that our world cannot countenance. But once driven from the Garden and apparently prevented from ever again returning, Adam and Eve and their offspring engage in a life and live in a world that is very recognizable to us.

Sibling rivalry, jealousy, murder, psychological depression, sexual laxity and abuse are now all part of the story of humankind. Human beings are now bidden to struggle for their very physical and financial existence in a world of wonder- complete with ever present dangers and hostility.

But the memory of the Garden of Eden has never departed from Adam and Eve or for that matter from their descendants, no matter how many centuries and millennia have passed since their expulsion. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the Torah records for us the hundreds of years that early human beings lived – to emphasize that even over nine hundred years later the memory of the Garden still burns bright in the recesses of the brains of Adam and Eve and their descendants.

It is this memory that still fuels within us our drive for a better and more ideal world. Once human beings, albeit only Adam and Eve alone, experienced what human life and our world can be – life in a Garden of Eden – the drive of society to constantly improve our world and existence is understandable. We are always trying to return to the Garden.

Even though human society has unfortunately perpetrated and witnessed millions upon millions of murders over its long bloody history, we still strive to create a murder-free society. And we do not feel that this is a vain and foolish hope on our part. Within each of us there still is a fragment of memory that recalls that human beings once lived in the Garden of Eden and were spared the woes of human society as we know it from our past history – and even from today.

It is interesting that human society never has really despaired, in spite of all historical evidence to the contrary as to the impossibility of the task, of creating this better world of serenity, spirituality, harmony and good cheer. It is the memory of the Garden that gives us no peace and does not allow us to become so desensitized that we would readily accept our current human condition as being unchangeable.

The angels that guard the entrance to the Garden were also represented in the Holy of Holies on the lid of the Ark that contained God's message to humankind. Those angels have the faces of children in order to indicate to us that somehow, someday, in God's good time in the future perhaps, we will be able to once again enter the Garden and truly live in the better world promised to us by our holy prophets.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

**BEREISHIT - The Art of Listening**

**Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

**The Art of Listening**

What exactly was the first sin? What was the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil? Is this kind of knowledge a bad thing, such that it had to be forbidden and was only acquired through sin? Isn't knowing the difference between good and evil essential to being human? Isn't it one of the highest forms of knowledge? Surely God would want humans to have it? Why then did He forbid the fruit that produced it?

In any case, did not Adam and Eve already have this knowledge before eating the fruit, precisely in virtue of being "in the image and likeness of

God"? Surely this was implied in the very fact that they were commanded by God: Be fruitful and multiply. Have dominion over nature. Do not eat from the tree. For someone to understand a command, they must know it is good to obey and bad to disobey. So they already had, at least potentially, the knowledge of Good and Evil. What then changed when they ate the fruit? These questions go so deep that they threaten to make the entire narrative incomprehensible.

Maimonides understood this. That is why he turned to this episode at almost the very beginning of The Guide for the Perplexed (Book 1, Chapter 2). His answer though, is perplexing. Before eating the fruit, he says, the first humans knew the difference between truth and falsehood. What they acquired by eating the fruit was knowledge of "things generally accepted."<sup>[1]</sup> But what does Maimonides mean by "things generally accepted"? It is generally accepted that murder is evil, and honesty good. Does Maimonides mean that morality is mere convention? Surely not. What he means is that after eating the fruit, the man and woman were embarrassed that they were naked, and that is a mere matter of social convention because not everyone is embarrassed by nudity. But how can we equate being embarrassed that you are naked with "knowledge of Good and Evil"? It does not seem to be that sort of thing at all. Conventions of dress have more to do with aesthetics than ethics.

It is all very unclear, or at least it was to me until I came across one of the more fascinating moments in the history of the Second World War. After the attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Americans knew they were about to enter a war against a nation, Japan, whose culture they did not understand. So they commissioned one of the great anthropologists of the twentieth century, Ruth Benedict, to explain the Japanese to them, which she did. After the war, she published her ideas in a book, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*.<sup>[2]</sup> One of her central insights was the difference between shame cultures and guilt cultures. In shame cultures the highest value is honour. In guilt cultures it is righteousness. Shame is feeling bad that we have failed to live up to the expectations others have of us. Guilt is what we feel when we fail to live up to what our own conscience demands of us. Shame is other-directed. Guilt is inner-directed.

Philosophers, among them Bernard Williams, have pointed out that shame cultures are usually visual. Shame itself has to do with how you appear (or imagine you appear) in other peoples' eyes. The instinctive reaction to shame is to wish you were invisible, or somewhere else. Guilt, by contrast, is much more internal. You cannot escape it by becoming invisible or being elsewhere. Your conscience accompanies you wherever you go, regardless of whether you are seen by others. Guilt cultures are cultures of the ear, not the eye.

With this contrast in mind we can now understand the story of the first sin. It is all about appearances, shame, vision, and the eye. The serpent says to the woman: "God knows that on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing Good and Evil." That is, in fact, what happens: "The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked." It was appearance of the tree that the Torah emphasises: "The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and desirable to the eyes, and that the tree was attractive as a means to gain intelligence." The key emotion in the story is shame. Before eating the fruit the couple were "naked, but unashamed." After eating it they feel shame and seek to hide. Every element of the story – the fruit, the tree, the nakedness, the shame – has the visual element typical of a shame culture.

But in Judaism we believe that God is heard not seen. The first humans "heard God's Voice moving about in the garden with the wind of the day." Replying to God, the man says, "I heard Your Voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." Note the deliberate, even humorous, irony of what the couple did. They heard God's Voice in the garden, and they "hid themselves from God among the trees of the garden." But you can't hide from a voice. Hiding means trying not to be seen. It is an immediate, intuitive response to shame. But the Torah is

the supreme example of a culture of guilt, not shame, and you cannot escape guilt by hiding. Guilt has nothing to do with appearances and everything to do with conscience, the voice of God in the human heart. The sin of the first humans in the Garden of Eden was that they followed their eyes, not their ears. Their actions were determined by what they saw, the beauty of the tree, not by what they heard, namely the word of God commanding them not to eat from it. The result was that they did indeed acquire a knowledge of Good and Evil, but it was the wrong kind. They acquired an ethic of shame, not guilt; of appearances not conscience. That, I believe, is what Maimonides meant by his distinction between true-and-false and “things generally accepted.” A guilt ethic is about the inner voice that tells you, “This is right, that is wrong”, as clearly as “This is true, that is false”. But a shame ethic is about social convention. It is a matter of meeting or not meeting the expectations others have of you.

Shame cultures are essentially codes of social conformity. They belong to groups where socialisation takes the form of internalising the values of the group such that you feel shame – an acute form of embarrassment – when you break them, knowing that if people discover what you have done you will lose honour and ‘face’.

Judaism is precisely not that kind of morality, because Jews do not conform to what everyone else does. Abraham was willing, say the Sages, to be on one side while all the rest of the world was on the other. Haman says about Jews, “Their customs are different from those of all other people” (Esther 3:8). Jews have often been iconoclasts, challenging the idols of the age, the received wisdom, the “spirit of the age”, the politically correct.

If Jews had followed the majority, they would have disappeared long ago. In the biblical age they were the only monotheists in a pagan world. For most of the post-biblical age they lived in societies in which they and their faith were shared by only a tiny minority of the population. Judaism is a living protest against the herd instinct. Ours is the dissenting voice in the conversation of humankind. Hence the ethic of Judaism is not a matter of appearances, of honour and shame. It is a matter of hearing and heeding the voice of God in the depths of the soul. The drama of Adam and Eve is not about apples or sex or original sin or “the Fall” – interpretations the non-Jewish West has given to it. It is about something deeper. It is about the kind of morality we are called on to live. Are we to be governed by what everyone else does, as if morality were like politics: the will of the majority? Will our emotional horizon be bounded by honour and shame, two profoundly social feelings? Is our key value appearance: how we seem to others? Or is it something else altogether, a willingness to heed the word and will of God? Adam and Eve in Eden faced the archetypal human choice between what their eyes saw (the tree and its fruit) and what their ears heard (God’s command). Because they chose the first, they felt shame, not guilt. That is one form of “knowledge of Good and Evil”, but from a Jewish perspective, it is the wrong form.

Judaism is a religion of listening, not seeing. That is not to say there are no visual elements in Judaism. There are, but they are not primary. Listening is the sacred task. The most famous command in Judaism is Shema Yisrael, “Listen, Israel.” What made Abraham, Moses, and the prophets different from their contemporaries was that they heard the voice that to others was inaudible. In one of the great dramatic scenes of the Bible, God teaches Elijah that He is not in the whirlwind, the earthquake, or the fire, but in the “still, small voice.”

It takes training, focus and the ability to create silence in the soul to learn how to listen, whether to God or to a fellow human being. Seeing shows us the beauty of the created world, but listening connects us to the soul of another, and sometimes to the soul of the Other, God as He speaks to us, calls to us, summoning us to our task in the world.

If I were asked how to find God, I would say, Learn to listen. Listen to the song of the universe in the call of birds, the rustle of trees, the crash and heave of the waves. Listen to the poetry of prayer, the music of the Psalms. Listen deeply to those you love and who love you. Listen to the words of God in the Torah and hear them speak to you. Listen to the

debates of the Sages through the centuries as they tried to hear the texts’ intimations and inflections.

Don’t worry about how you or others look. The world of appearances is a false world of masks, disguises, and concealments. Listening is not easy. I confess I find it formidably hard. But listening alone bridges the abyss between soul and soul, self and other, I and the Divine.

Jewish spirituality is the art of listening.<sup>[3]</sup>

[1] Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, I:2.

[2] Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1946.

[3] We will continue our theme of listening in Judaism later in this series, particularly in the essays for Bamidbar and Ekev.

## **Shabbat Shalom: Bereishit (Genesis 1:1-6:8)**

### **Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

Efrat, Israel – Our nation, Israel, has just concluded a most intensive Festival period which encompasses a rollercoaster of religious emotions. We have moved from the intense soul searching of Rosh Hashanah to the heartfelt prayers for forgiveness of Yom Kippur. We have built and dwelt for seven days in a make-shift house reminiscent of the booths in the desert as well as of the “fallen sukkah of King David”, the Holy Temple. We have punctuated our prayer for rain with joyous and sometimes even raucous dancing around the Torah, whose reading we conclude just at Festival end. After a full month of festivities, we are now entering our first post festival Sabbath, on which we shall read of the creation of the world.

Although these segments seem disparate, I truly believe that there is a conceptual scheme which connects them all. I also believe that many observant Jews miss the theological thread which magnificently unites this particular holiday period because the religious establishment does not sufficiently stress the real message which Judaism is trying to teach. Despite the hundreds of years between them, two great theologians – Rav Yosef Albo (1380-1444), in his *Sefer Haikkarim* – “Book of Essential Jewish Beliefs” and Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) in his “Star of Redemption” – insist that the fundamental principles of Jewish faith are outlined in the three special blessings of the Rosh Hashana Musaf Amidah. Conventional wisdom sees the High Holy Days as frightening days of judgment, but Rosh Hashana actually teaches us that a major function of the Jewish people in this world is to establish the Kingship of our God of love, morality and peace throughout the world. Indeed, the Hassidim – and especially Habad – refer to the night of Rosh Hashanah as the Night of the Coronation.

Yom Kippur is our Day of Forgiveness. In order for us to dedicate ourselves to the task of bringing the God of compassionate righteousness and justice to the world in the coming year, each of us must take to the task with renewed vigor. We can only muster the necessary energy if we have successfully emerged from our feelings of inadequacy resulting from improper conduct towards humanity and to God.

Yom Kippur is not only a day of forgiveness for Jews. Our reading of the Book of Jonah with God’s command that the prophet bring the gentile Assyrians to repentance and the refrain which we iterate and reiterate during our fast, “for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:7) demonstrate that God desires repentance and forgiveness for all of humanity.

The Mussaf Amidah on Yom Kippur describes in exquisite detail every moment of the Temple service for forgiveness; indeed, it transports us to the Holy Temple itself. Our sukkah represents the Holy Temple, or at least the model of the sanctuary in the desert after which it was crafted. The guests of the sukkah (ushpizin) are the great personalities of Biblical history, and the most fitting decorations for the sukkah are scenes from the Temple service (so magnificently reproduced by Machzor Hamikdash). It is not accidental that the depiction of the Temple service of the musaf amidah in the Yom Kippur service begins by invoking the creation of the world. The Temple should somehow serve as a magnet for all nations and the conduit through which they will accept the Kingship of God and a lifestyle reflecting His morality and love.

Please note the following amazing parallels when the Bible describes the building of a sanctuary; it uses the following words:

“Behold I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri the son of Hur from the tribe of Judah and I have filled him with the spirit of God: with Wisdom (Hakhmah), with Understanding (Tevunah and with Knowledge (Daat)” (Exodus 31:2,3)

In the Book of Proverbs, which invokes God’s creation of the world, a parallel verse is found

“The Lord founded the earth with Wisdom (Hakhmah), fashioned the heavens with Understanding (Tevunah) and with Knowledge (Daat) pierced through the great deep and enabled the heavens to give forth dew.” (Proverbs 3:19,20)

Apparently, the Bible is asking us to recreate the world with the Holy Temple from whence our religious teachings must be disseminated throughout humanity.

From this perspective, we understand why our rejoicing over the Torah takes place at the conclusion of this holiday season rather than during the Festival of Shavuot. Pesach and Shavuot are national festivals on which we celebrate the founding of our nation from the crucible of Egyptian slavery and our unique status as the chosen people resulting from the revelation at Sinai.

The Tishrei Festivals are universal in import, focusing on our responsibility to be a Light unto the Nations. This is why on Simchat Torah, we take the Bible Scrolls out into the street, into the public thoroughfare and dance with them before the entire world. From this perspective we can well understand why Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah moves seamlessly into the reading of Bereishit of the creation of the world.

Shabbat Shalom!

### Insights Parshas Bereishis - Tishrei 5783

Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim/Talmudic University

#### Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

This week’s Insights is dedicated in memory of R’ Moshe Chaim Berkowitz z”l – the visionary for whom our Yeshiva is named. “May his Neshama have an Aliyah!”

##### Death Becomes Us

Hashem Elokim created man from the soil of the earth (2:7).

Rashi (ad loc) quotes the Midrash (Tanchuma, Pekudei: 3), which explains that Hashem gathered soil from all four corners of the earth to create man so that, regardless of where a person should die, the earth would absorb him in burial.

This is a highly perplexing statement. Ostensibly, one of the functions of the earth is to absorb any organic matter that is buried in it. Any living thing – a bird, fish, or other animal – that dies and is buried in the earth will decompose and be absorbed by the soil. How can the Midrash assert that man had to be formed specifically from soil from all over the world in order for the earth to absorb his body? Shouldn’t the natural properties of the earth have made it inevitable that the body would be absorbed?

The Torah (Bereishis 3:19) tells us that the phenomenon of death came about as a result of Adam Harishon’s sin. Because Adam violated the prohibition against eating from the Eitz Hadaas, Hashem decreed that he and all human beings in succeeding generations would ultimately die. How are we to understand this decree?

On the third day of creation Hashem commanded the earth to bring forth fruit trees (1:11). Rashi (ad loc) relates a remarkable event that took place on that day: Hashem decreed that the earth produce fruit trees with the unique aspect that the tree itself would taste like the fruit it was supposed to produce. But the earth, fascinatingly, refused. The earth produced trees that merely brought forth fruit, not trees that actually tasted like the fruit. Rashi (ad loc) notes that the earth wasn’t punished until Adam sinned – at which point it was cursed.

Hashem created a world that was supposed to have the illusion of being separate from Him. This was done to give man free will and the ability to make choices; thus providing the ability to earn reward and the ultimate good Hashem wanted to bestow upon mankind. Therefore, man was created as a synthesis of the physical and the spiritual.

The physical component was the earth from which Adam was formed. In fact, the name Adam comes from adamah (earth). The spiritual component was, of course, the soul that Hashem blew into his nostrils. When Adam chose to violate the one commandment Hashem had given him, he was actually accessing the earth aspect of his makeup; the very same earth that had refused to heed Hashem’s command regarding the fruit trees.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 90b) relates that Cleopatra asked Rabbi Meir if the dead will be wearing clothes when they are resurrected. Rabbi Meir responded by likening the resurrection of the dead to the growth of grain. A seed, he explained, is completely bare when it is placed in the earth, yet the stalk of grain that grows from it consists of many layers. Likewise, a righteous person will certainly rise from the ground fully clad.

By comparing the burial of the dead to the planting of a seed, Rabbi Meir teaches us that when the deceased are interred in the earth, it marks the beginning of a process of growth and rebirth, a process that will reach its culmination at the time of the resurrection of the dead. The burial of a human being is not like the burial of any other living thing after its death. When a dog or a fish is buried the purpose is simply for the creature’s body to decompose and be absorbed by the soil – for which any soil will suffice.

But for a human being the process of death and burial is the process of shedding the physicality and reconnecting it back to the earth from whence it came. With that in mind, we can understand Rashi’s comment that Adam had to be made from earth from every part of the world. Burial is not a mere disposal of the body, an act of discarding the deceased. On the contrary, it is the beginning of a process of recreation. Indeed, the Hebrew word kever also has two meanings: It is the term for the grave, but it is also a word for the womb. The grave, like the womb, is a place where the body is developed and prepared for its future existence.

##### Lights of Our Lives

And God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night and the stars (1:16).

Rashi (ad loc) relates the incident that caused the moon to become a “lesser light.” The Gemara (Chullin 60b) explains how this came to be: Rabbi Shimon b. Pazzi pointed out a contradiction; one verse says: And God made the two great lights, and immediately the verse continues: The greater light [...] and the lesser light.

The moon said unto the Holy One, blessed be He, “Sovereign of the Universe! Is it possible for two kings to wear one crown?” He answered: “Go then and make yourself smaller.” “Sovereign of the Universe!” cried the moon, “Because I have suggested that which is proper must I then make myself smaller?” He replied: “Go and you will rule by day and by night.” “But what is the value of this?” cried the moon. “Of what use is a lamp in broad daylight?” He replied: “Go, Israel shall reckon by you the days and the years.”

“But it is impossible,” said the moon, “to do without the sun for the reckoning of the seasons, as it is written: And let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years.” “Go, the righteous shall be named after you as we find, Jacob the Small, Samuel the Small, David the Small.”

On seeing that it would not be consoled, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: “Bring an atonement for Me for making the moon smaller.” This “atonement” is the sacrifice that is brought on Rosh Chodesh.

What exactly is going on here? If the moon had a valid complaint then why did Hashem actually create them equally? If the complaint wasn’t valid, why does Hashem try so hard to placate the moon, leading up to Hashem asking Bnei Yisroel to bring a sacrifice for His “transgression”?

What the moon failed to recognize is that Hashem had created a perfect system of time, the sun would control days, weeks, and years, while the moon would control months and all the times of holidays. This wasn’t “two kings sharing one crown.” Hashem had created the perfect union, and the original intent was that the sun and moon would work in unison, much like a marriage. In a marriage there are different roles, each person with the responsibility for their part of the whole. Marriage isn’t a partnership between two kings; it’s a union of two individuals for the greater whole. The sun and moon were supposed to represent the ultimate man-woman relationship.

But the moon didn’t see the union for what it was, the moon felt that it needed its own identity. To that Hashem responds that if you don’t see the value of the unified whole then you have to take a smaller role because you are absolutely right – “two kings cannot share one crown.” But the moon’s reduced role was really a function of its refusal to become one with the sun.

Ultimately though, the moon gets the last laugh, so to speak. Much like in a marriage, when the woman feels wronged it doesn’t make a difference if the husband is right or wrong; he’s always wrong. That’s why the Gemara ends as it does; when Hashem saw that the moon would not be consoled he asked Bnei Yisroel to bring a sacrifice as an atonement. This was a recognition (and lesson for mankind) that being right doesn’t really matter. What really matters is recognizing another entity’s pain and accepting responsibility for their feelings; and of course doing what it takes to rectify it.

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### Drasha Parshas Bereishis :: Goal Tending

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

This week we are introduced to a formidable foe who greets us upon our entry into this world and attempts to accompany our every action throughout our mortal existence. He is known as the Yetzer Harah, the

Evil Inclination. After Kayin has an inferior offering rejected, he is very upset. G-d talks to him frankly about the nature of his act and the hidden beast that undermines our good intentions, the Yetzer Harah. "Surely, if you improve yourself, you will be forgiven. But if you do not improve yourself, sin crouches at the door. Its desire is toward you, yet you can conquer it." (Genesis 4:7). Though the imagery of sin crouching in wait seems quite ominous, the allegorical allusion to an evil force blocking a doorway lends a simile to a story I recently heard that may be quite applicable to the lessons of the finale of any sport season. It may even be a lesson to those of us who have our ears glued to the rumblings of the subway, shuttling high-flying frivolity from the Bronx to Queens.

Rabbi Sholom Schwadron had noticed that one of the students at the yeshiva was missing on Sunday and Monday. Tuesday morning he approached him, inquiring to the reason he missed those two days.

"I know you for two years. You never missed a day of yeshiva. I am sure that something important is happening. Please tell me what's going on." The boy did not want to say, but after prodding, the boy finally blurted out. "I would tell, but, Rebbe, you just wouldn't understand."

"Try me," begged Reb Sholom, "I promise I will try my hardest to appreciate what you tell me."

"Here goes," responded the student, conceding to himself that whatever explanation he would give would surely be incomprehensible to the Rabbi, who had probably had never seen a soccer ball in his life.

"I missed yeshiva because I was at the Maccabi Tel Aviv football (soccer) finals. In fact," the boy added in embarrassment, "I probably won't be in yeshiva tomorrow as well. It's the final day of the championship."

Rabbi Schwadron was not at all condescending. Instead, he furrowed his brow in interest. "I am sure that this game of football must be quite exciting. Tell me," he asked, "How do you play this game of football? What is the object? How do you win?"

"Well," began the student filled with enthusiasm, "there are eleven players, and the object is to kick a ball into the large goal. No one but the goalkeeper can move the ball with his hands or arms!"

Rabbi Schwadron's face brightened! He knew this young boy was a good student and wanted to accommodate him. "Oh! Is that all? So just go there, kick the ball in the goal, and come back to yeshiva!"

The boy laughed. "Rebbe, you don't understand! The opposing team also has eleven men and a goalkeeper, and their job is to stop our team from getting the ball into their goal!"

"Tell me," Rabbi Schwadron whispered. These other men the other team. Are they there all day and night?" "Of course not!" laughed the student. "They go home at night!"

What was the Rabbi driving at? He wondered.

Rabbi Schwadron huddled close and in all earnest continued with his brilliant plan. "Why don't you sneak into the stadium in the evening and kick the ball into the goal when they are not looking! Then you can win and return to yeshiva!"

The boy threw his hands up in frustration. "Oy! Rebbe! You don't understand. You don't score if the other team is not trying to stop you! It is no kantz to kick a ball into an empty net if there is no one trying to stop you!"

"Ah!" cried Reb Sholom in absolute victory. Now think a moment! Listen to what you just said! It is no kantz to come to the yeshiva when nothing is trying to hold you back! It is when the urge to skip class is there, when the Yetzer Harah is crouching in the goal, that it is most difficult to score. That is when you really score points. Come tomorrow, and you can't imagine how much that is worth in Hashem's scorecard!" Needless to say, the boy understood the message and was there the next day the first in class!

The Torah tells us not only about the nature of the Yetzer Harah as an adversary, but rather as our ultimate challenger. He stands crouched in the door, ready to block any shot and spring on a near hit. Our job is to realize that we must overcome him when the urge is the greatest. Because when it is most difficult to do the right thing, that is the time we really meet, and even score, the goal!

*Dedicated in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of our son, Benzion Raphael, by Karen and David Portal and family*

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### **Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Bereishis**

#### **The Moon Provides an All-Star Example of Sincere Repentance**

In the beginning of Parshas Bereshis, the Torah says that the Ribono shel Olam created two big luminaries in the heavens—the sun to rule by day and the moon to rule at night. There is a well-known teaching of Chazal (Chulin 60b) that the moon complained to the Ribono shel Olam that it is not practical "for two kings to share one crown." The Talmud says that the Almighty's response to the moon was "You are right. Go ahead and make yourself smaller." As a result, the moon downsized. It made itself much smaller and became the "smaller luminary that ruled at night." Not only did it make itself much smaller, but originally, at the time of Creation, it had its own source of light. After downsizing, the moon accepted a status of only being able to reflect the light of the sun, forgoing being a source of light on its own.

The Gemara says that the moon felt bad about its diminished status, and therefore the Almighty consoled it, saying, "Don't feel bad about being the 'small luminary' because Tzadikim will be called 'small' as we see Yaakov is called 'Katan,' Shmuel is called 'Katan,' and Dovid is called 'Katan.'" Then the Ribono shel Olam consoled the moon even further. The Medrash says, "Since this luminary diminished herself to rule at night, I decree that she shall be accompanied by innumerable stars and galaxies." The moon received a consolation prize of many billions of stars. When the moon becomes visible at night, the stars become visible as well.

The question must be asked: Where do we ever find that the Ribono shel Olam punishes someone and then seemingly reconsiders and says, "You know, I feel bad that I am punishing you, so I will give you a consolation prize to compensate you for the punishment." The moon acted improperly by complaining about the two co-rulers. Hashem commanded her to minimize herself. The Ribono shel Olam is not a parent who has second thoughts – "Maybe I punished my child too severely so I am now going to give him a treat." The Ribono shel Olam does not act like that. What He does is Just. If it is proper that the moon had to make itself smaller, then there was no need for any consolation prize!

Rav Leibel Heiman offers an interesting observation in his sefer Chikrei Lev: The Almighty told the moon to make itself smaller. How much smaller? He left that up to the moon. The moon did not need to reduce itself to a fraction of what the sun is. The moon could have said, "Okay. Three percent. Five percent. Ten percent." The sun is so many times bigger than the moon. In addition, who said the moon had to give up its own source of light? The moon could have even reduced itself by fifty percent but held onto its own source of light. Becoming merely a reflection of the sun was not part of Hashem's instruction. That was not part of the punishment.

When the moon greatly reduced its size and changed its entire nature—going far beyond what was decreed upon it—the Ribono shel Olam saw a tremendous teshuva in that.

We are talking about the moon, but this is a metaphor. This is a lesson for all of us. It is a lesson that when we do something wrong, real teshuva is demonstrating our sincere regret by doing much more than we need to do. If someone insults another person or hurts the person's feelings, he needs to apologize. "I'm sorry." That is required. But when a person really tries to make it up to the other person and goes out of his way to demonstrate his sincere regret, that is a true teshuva.

The Ribono shel Olam provided all this consolation by saying that Yaakov, Shmuel and Dovid are all called Katan and by providing billions of stars, because the moon's action demonstrated tremendous contrition. "Ribono shel Olam, You were right. That was no way for me to talk!" To prove it, the moon goes lifnim m'shuras haDin—so much further than was necessary. The moon was rewarded with consolation prizes for that sincere teshuva!

**The Garments of Adam and Chava Were Made from the Skin of the Nachash**

The pasuk says that when the Nachash (snake) seduced Adam and Chava into eating from the Etz HaDa'as, they realized they were naked, and “G-d made for them garments of skin and dressed them.” (Bereshis 3:21) The Medrash says that these garments of skin came from the Nachash. The Ribono shel Olam skinned the Nachash (which was a huge animal), took his hide and made it into clothing for Adam and Chava. What is this Medrash trying to teach us?

These are metaphors. Chazal say that jealousy prompted the Nachash to try to entice Adam and Chava to eat from the Tree of Knowledge and change the world. Rashi quotes the Medrash that the Nachash observed them engaging in marital relations and he lusted for Chava. He was jealous of Adam and hatched this plot to bring them down. Jealousy was the root cause that prompted the Nachash to change the world.

What caused the Nachash's jealousy? He saw them engaging in private activity that is supposed to remain private between a man and a woman. He looked where he was not supposed to look, and he wanted what he was not supposed to want. The root of Midas HaKinah (the Attribute of Jealousy) is that someone looks where he is not supposed to look, and as a result, wants that which is really off limits to him. If someone restricts his eyes and his thoughts to his own four amos (cubits), there is no jealousy. That is the way it is.

I see my friend or my neighbor driving a better car. I want that car. I see that my friend remodeled his kitchen. I need to remodel my kitchen. He has granite counter tops. I also want granite counter tops. Why are you going around looking at his kitchen? His kitchen is his kitchen! Your kitchen is your kitchen. Maybe you can't help seeing a car. But kinah stems from me looking into the private affairs of someone else where I have no business looking.

This is perhaps why a famous Gemara in Maseches Taanis (8a) equates the Ba'al Lashon HaRah to the Nachash. The Gemara asks what pleasure does either get from their destructive actions? Lashon HaRah is also an aveira of revealing information which should be hidden. What is Lashon HaRah? I know something about someone that others do not know. I spread it. Again, I am looking at that which should remain hidden. I see it and I share it with others. It is the same aveira as the Nachash—looking where you should not look, wanting what you should not want, and going where you do not belong.

The Tolner Rebbe explains the reason why the Ribono shel Olam punished the Nachash by taking its skin and making garments of hide for Adam and Chava. What is skin? Skin is the most basic covering of a being. It keeps hidden that which should be hidden. The Nachash failed to understand that. There are things that should remain closed, should remain behind the screen, behind the skin. They should be hidden. Do not look where you are not supposed to look.

By taking the skin of the Nachash, the Ribono shel Olam was teaching us that this Nachash did not respect the privacy of a human being and looked where he should not look. As a result, the Ribono shel Olam took off his skin—uncovered him—and used that skin to cover the human beings.

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### Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

#### **Parashat Breishit 5783 :: Who Is the Ideal Religious Person?**

This Shabbat, the first after Simchat Torah, we will begin again with the annual cycle of reading the Torah. The first Torah portion, Breishit, brings us back to the foundations of human conception: the creation of the world, the relationship between humans and G-d, humans and nature, man and woman, sin, guilt and punishment, human suffering, the complex relationships between siblings, and more.

Let's delve into the relationship between the first brothers – Cain and Abel. Their short story is constructed in a tight structure and deals with Adam and Eve's oldest son – Cain and his younger brother – Abel. The story begins with the brothers' occupations. "...and Abel was a shepherd of flocks, and Cain was a tiller of the soil." One was a shepherd wandering with his flock, and the other was a farmer rooted in his land and growing food. And here the story gets complicated. Cain decides to

bring an offering to G-d from the fruit of the land, but G-d does not accept it. After him, Abel brings a choice offering from his herd and G-d willingly accepts it. Cain of course was sad and angry. G-d consoled him and taught him that acceptance of the offering was contingent on improving one's acts. "Is it not so that if you improve, it will be forgiven you? If you do not improve, however, at the entrance, sin is lying..."

Here's where the complication reaches its peak: "And Cain spoke to Abel his brother, and it came to pass when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him." What does Cain say to Abel? The Torah doesn't tell us. It doesn't matter what the argument was about since every argument, as bitter and serious as it may be, is not reason enough for murder. After the murder, we wonder how the story continues. What more could happen? And then there's a twist in the tale. G-d shows up and turns to Cain with a question: "Where is Abel your brother?" But Cain, pretending to be innocent, answers: "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

G-d does not accept Cain's answer and rebukes him: "What have you done? Hark! Your brother's blood cries out to Me from the earth." We, readers beginning to read the Torah, discover that there is someone who hears the muted cry of the murdered. G-d is not indifferent to what happens. A person can choose evil, but the cry that emanates from the iniquity does not reverberate in an empty space. Cain's punishment comes quickly. "And now, you are cursed even more than the ground... it will not continue to give its strength to you; you shall be a wanderer and an exile in the land." Cain, who works the land, was punished with infinite wandering. And here the story ends with the characters dispersed. "And Cain went forth from before the Lord, and he dwelt in the land of the wanderers..." Cain leaves for distant lands to the east and becomes a nomad.

Israeli philosopher Yoram Hazony turns our attention to the fact that this story is a continuation of the previous one, the sin of eating from the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden despite G-d's prohibition. At the end of that story, G-d punishes Adam with the following words, "...cursed be the ground for your sake; with toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life." And after that, "And the Lord God sent him out of the Garden of Eden, to till the soil." Man is sent to work the land, and that is precisely what Cain did. "Cain was a tiller of the soil."

Cain seems like he was a very religious man. He accepts the punishment and goes to work the land. Later, he also brings G-d an offering. But Cain is the prototype of a person who does not take responsibility for his actions and looks despairingly toward the cosmic, supreme, divine. Abel, on the other hand, embarks on a new road. He finds a way to avoid the curse. He abandons working the land and turns to shepherding. He takes responsibility for his life and tries to release himself from dependency. And sure enough, G-d does not accept Cain's offering, but that of his younger, somewhat rebellious brother, He does accept.

Cain might seem to us to be the ideal religious person, but this is not what the Torah asks of us. The Torah's typical religious person is one who takes responsibility and tries to advance to a better situation. The ideal person that the Torah presents is one who tries to be similar to G-d: to build, to initiate, to move things forward with faith in creation and the Creator; as G-d teaches Cain, "Is it not so that if you improve, it will be forgiven you?"

The entire book of Genesis is dedicated to stories of non-conformists, people who courageously followed their conscience and strived to move forward. Abel was the first person to stop working the land and turn to shepherding. Abraham, our patriarch, left his family for the unknown. Joseph dreamed dreams of monarchy. In this first parasha, the Torah is giving us a taste of the foundations of Jewish values, those that make demands of us and call to us not to be satisfied with what exists but to march forward with courage and faith.

*The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.*

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### Rav Kook Torah

#### **Bereishit: The Titans, Men of Renown**

#### **Rabbi Chanan Morrison**

The Nephilim

Immediately before the story of Noah and a corrupted world, the Torah makes a passing mention of the Nephilim, powerful giants who lived at that time.

“The Nephilim were on the earth in those days.... They were the mightiest ones ever, men of renown.” (Gen. 6:4)

Who were these titans? Why does the Torah call them Nephilim?

The Midrash explains that they were called Nephilim because they fell (naphlu) and brought about the world’s downfall (nephilah). These giants were the catalysts for society’s great moral collapse.

#### Studying Foreign Languages

In 1906, fifteen-year-old Tzvi Yehuda Kook, Rav Kook’s son, asked his father whether he should devote time to learning other languages. In his response, Rav Kook analyzed the relative importance of expertise in languages and rhetoric:

“We should aspire to help others, both our own people and all of humanity, as much as possible. Certainly, our influence will increase as we gain competence in various languages and speaking styles.... But if perfecting these skills comes at the expense of analytic study, then this will reduce the true intellectual content of one’s contribution to the world.”

Some people mistake proficiency in many languages for intellectual greatness. This is not the case. Linguistic talent is merely a tool. Genuine perceptiveness and intellectual insight are a function of how well one has established the foundations of one’s own inner integrity.

To demonstrate his point, Rav Kook noted that the great Nephilim who brought about the world’s moral collapse were anshei shem. Usually translated as “men of renown,” this phrase literally or “men of words.” They were great leaders, skilled in the arts of persuasion and rhetoric. But their talents were an empty shell, devoid of inner content. On the contrary, they used their eloquence for unscrupulous purposes.

It is interesting to contrast the Nephilim and their highly developed oratorical skills with the individual responsible for bringing the Torah’s teachings to the world, Moses. The highest level of prophecy was transmitted through a man who testified about himself that he was not a man of words, but “heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue” (Ex. 4:10). Moses was not talented in rhetoric and lacked confidence in his communication skills. Nonetheless, his moral impact on the world is unparalleled in the history of humanity.

#### Tools of War

In these pre-Messianic times, Rav Kook wrote, when we must wage battle against ideological foes who attack all that is holy to us, we should look to King David for inspiration. David was untrained in the art of war and refused to wear the heavy armor that King Saul presented to him. Rather, he gathered five smooth stones from a stream. The five stones are a metaphor: David utilized the teachings of the Five Books of Moses to wage battle against Goliath and his blasphemy.

We should emulate David and not invest too much time and effort acquiring the tools of ideological warfare. Like the young shepherd who took up a simple slingshot in his fight against Goliath, we should not totally eschew the implements of rhetoric, but realize that David’s victory over the blasphemous Philistine was achieved due to the purity of his charge, “in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel” (I Samuel 17:45).

Eloquence and elocution are but tools. They may be used for nefarious purposes, like the corrupt Nephilim, or for conquering evil, like David. Ultimately, it is not the medium but the message that counts.

(*Sapphire from the Land of Israel*. Adapted from *Igrot HaRe’iyah* vol. I, pp. 29-30)

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#### Shema Yisrael Torah Network

#### Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Parashas Bereishis

פרשת בראשית תשפ"ג

בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ

In the beginning of G-d’s creating the heavens and the earth. (1:1)

ויאמר אלקים יהי אור

G-d said, “Let there be light.” (1:3)

ויאמר אלקים ידי רקייע בתוכה המים

G-d said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters.” (1:6)

ויאמר אלקים יהי מאורות ברקייע השמים

G-d said, “Let there be luminaries in the firmament of the heaven.” (1:14)

*Rashi* comments, “All the potentials of heaven and earth were created on Day One, but Hashem commanded each to actualize on a designated day. The heavens had been created on the first day, but they were still in a state of flux. On the second day, when Hashem said, ‘Let there be a *rakia*, firmament,’ the heavens solidified, thereby creating a separation between the waters above (clouds) and the waters below.” We wonder why there had to be a process whereby the heavens required a day to congeal. Also, Hashem created light on the first day, but He did not put the luminaries into place until the fourth day. As mentioned earlier, all of Creation occurred on the first day, but the individual creations were not put into place until their designated time. Why? It is not as if Hashem could not have the finished creation ready the “first” time. Why wait?

*Horav Yosef Nechemia Kornitzer, zl*, says that this process was a Heavenly design established in order to convey an important lesson. Hashem deliberately discontinued aspects of Creation, “returning” to them at a later time, to teach that greatness and successful achievement do not just happen instantly. The *pasuk* in *Iyov* 8:7 states, *V’hayah reishischa mitzaar, v’acharischa yisgeh me’od*; “Although your beginning is small, your end will prosper.” Just as a human being develops over time, as he is nurtured and educated, develops physically and emotionally, until he is able to take his place in society. Great achievements take time. One must introspect, take a step back and observe: Is he going in the right direction? Is the organization/institution/program that he is developing evolving in the manner that he had planned? Are his dreams achieving reality, or have they become nightmares? When we accept the fact that creation requires time and patience, one will not be upset when things do not go exactly as planned: the timing is off; there is a snag, an obstacle, a challenge that has surfaced which must be overcome.

This is the idea behind *Bereishis*, “In the beginning.” A beginning implies a time line, a starting point that continues on until it achieves fruition. The process has a beginning, a half-way point, and a finish line. All the heavens and earth began with something (which is beyond our grasp) and later evolved into its final configuration. Nothing received its full significance and capacity instantaneously. From the very outset, the Torah wants us to know and internalize the idea that growth and development (especially in Torah, which is a gift from Hashem) take time, patience and perseverance.

ויאמר אלקים נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו

And *Elokim* said, “Let us make Man in Our image, after Our likeness.” (1:26)

*Chazal* (*Midrash*) teach, “When Moshe Rabbeinu wrote the Torah (as dictated to him by Hashem), he came to this *pasuk*, ‘Let Us make...’ which is written in the plural, thus implying the notion that there might *chas v’shalom*, Heaven forbid, be more than one Creator. *Ribbo Shel Olam!* Why did You give the heretics a pretext to suggest a plural of divinities?” Hashem replied, “Write... whoever wishes to err will do so regardless. Rather, let them learn from their Creator, Who (although He) created all, still consulted with the Ministering Angels.” Thus, Hashem taught us that, regardless of one’s greatness, he should always consult with others.

The *Chasam Sofer, zl*, ruled that the Orthodox community should adopt the principle of “Austritt/Secession,” separating the Orthodox Jewish community from its nonobservant counterpart (Similar to what *Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl*, did in Frankfurt, Germany). In response, some came with a *taaneh*, accusation: This separation will undermine our efforts to influence the non-observant community positively. They felt that as long as they maintained even a somewhat diplomatic relationship with non-observant Jews, it was possible to circumvent the possibility of their complete alienation from the Torah way of life.

The *talmidei Chasam Sofer* (his students) replied with the above words of *Chazal*. It is not our responsibility to tolerate anything less than complete *shleimus*, perfection, in our relationship with Hashem, in order to prevent the heretics from descending further down the ladder to the abyss. *Emes*, truth, must remain unvarnished, regardless of the price. We do not compromise our religious beliefs in order to prevent them from plummeting to spiritual extinction.

This has been the *shitah*, principle, by which our Torah leadership has been guided in their recognition of, and relationship with the secular streams. Sharing a dais, a conference, with them implicitly acknowledges and validates their antithetical Torah beliefs. We wish them well, but we cannot allow them to achieve legitimacy by our association with them – even if this means having a religious division.

We should not forget *Horav Elchonan Wasserman*'s position *vis-à-vis* the heretics who deny *Torah min ha'Shomayim*, Torah from Heaven, with Hashem as the Divine Author of the Torah. Their denial neither has anything to do with principle, nor is it an error in *hashkafah*, Jewish philosophy. It is purely *taaveh*, victims of lust, desire, who seek to follow their hearts and live like the gentiles. What restrains them from adopting the secular lifestyle? The Torah! They simply do away with it, so that they can do whatever they want.

The Jew who seeks the truth will understand the lesson of *Naaseh Adam*, “Let us make man.” The one who seeks to live a life of unrestrained debauchery will find any and every excuse to criticize the Torah. We will not change them. Let us not allow them to change us.

**מען הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל ממן כי ביום אכלך ממן מות תמות  
But the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad you must not eat thereof; for on the day you eat of it, you shall surely die. (2:17)**

Hashem established life as we know it following the sin which Adam *HaRishon* committed. Hashem warned him not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. He ate and was punished with death (which did not occur for another 930 years). Otherwise, he would have lived forever. *Horav Yaakov Moshe Charlap*, *zl*, expands on the change that took place as a consequence of Adam transgressing Hashem's command. Prior to the sin, life was idyllic; man was to live morally, justly, and perform only positive acts of pure good. We were to create and build – everything was positive – neither evil nor negativity was in mankind's lexicon.

With the advent of sin, everything changed. No longer was it all about “good” and “positive.” Now, life was filled with contradiction and negativity. Man's joy in life is, unfortunately, often predicated on his fellow's failure/downfall. It is all about “me,” what “I” have that my fellow does not. Every individual wants to outdo and often consume his fellow. Competition can, at times, become ugly. People quarrel, nations go to war, often over petty differences. All of this is due to the introduction of *ra*, bad, into the system. This, explains the *Rav*, is the underlying concept of *eitz hadaas – tov v'ra*. It was no longer only *tov*. It was no longer simple and idyllic. If the emotions of life are now ravaged by incongruity, it makes sense that life itself is confronted with its ultimate antagonist/antithesis: death.

Chavah and womanhood were also punished with an added form of death; “I will greatly increase your suffering in childbearing; in pain shall you bear your children.” To Adam, Hashem said, “Accursed is the ground because of you, through suffering shall you eat of it all the days of your life” (*Ibid. 3:16,17*). The words *etzev*, *itzavon*, which denote suffering and pain, are derived from the word *atzvus*, worry, anxiety, depression, which are all aspects of *missah*, death. Just as Torah study and *mitzvah* performance gladden one's heart and infuse him with life, depression and worry negatively impact life by transforming excitement and joy into negativity and suffering. The lesson is powerful. When one succumbs to *atzvus*, sadness, he experiences a taste of death.

**ויקרא ד' אלקים אל האדם ואמר לו איכה  
Hashem Elokim called out to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” (3:9)**

Hashem certainly knew the location of Adam's hiding place; rather, He wanted to determine if Adam knew where he (himself) was. One must know where he is with regard to fulfilling his potential. We

often sell ourselves short, settling for mediocre success, because we (or others) have convinced (us) ourselves that this is all that we are capable of achieving. One day, we will stand before the Heavenly Tribunal and will be presented with a Heavenly image of who we could have been. Hashem asked Adam, *Ayeca*, “Where are you,” in comparison to where you should be? This is a question which we should ask ourselves all the time, and the answer should spur us to continued growth.

The well-known story of *Horav Zusia*, *zl*, of Anipole, underscores this idea. The great *tzadik* was at the waning stages of his life. At this point, he became increasingly introspective concerning his mortality. One day, his students, noticing that he was depressed, asked what was troubling him. He explained that he felt that his end was near, and he was concerned that he might not have achieved sufficient merit to gain entry into *Olam Habba*, the World to Come. His students countered, “But, *Rebbe*, you have the patience of *Hillel* (the great *Tanna*), the wisdom of *Shlomo Hamelech* and the humility of *Moshe Rabbeinu*.” To this, *Rav Zushia* said, “My dear students, I am not concerned about my response when I am asked: ‘Why were you not more like *Hillel*; like *Shlomo Hamelech*, *Avraham Avinu* or *Moshe Rabbeinu*?’ I am concerned how I will respond when they ask me, ‘Why were you not like *Zusia*?’” (He meant the *Zusia* which Heaven had in mind.)

The greatest competition in life is not when we compete against others, but when we compete against ourselves - our own potential. We can study the strengths and weaknesses of our competition and design a plan of action so that we will succeed against them. Do we know (or are we willing to acknowledge) our strengths and weaknesses? Do we have a clue what is our potential? The only advice that we can apply to ourselves is to try as hard as we can. Be sincere in our efforts. Be honest with ourselves. If we can do more or better, do it!

In 1986, the United States Army, reeling from poor recruitment, added a new slogan: “Be all you can be.” In other words, they dared young men to maximize their potential. This slogan, which lasted for two decades, made a huge difference. Too many of us are complacent with our meager successes, and, as a result, settle for less.

The Heavenly potential with which we must reckon is on a completely different standard. One can go through life and be quite successful. He may be a big *baal tzedakah*, a philanthropist, learn a few hours per day, even become a scholar of note; be involved in multifaceted acts of *chesed*, helping numerous people. If, however, his Heavenly image is to have used all of his G-d-given talents and skills for Torah only, then he has fallen short of his potential.

Hashem intimated to *Adam HaRishon*, “I expect better of you.” The first man had no room for error, as the *yetzir kapav shel HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, he was fashioned by Hashem. The Almighty does not make mistakes, neither should Adam. It is not in his Heavenly “job description.”

*Horav Chaim Soloveitchik*, *zl*, was once walking on the street when he chanced upon a young, teenaged non-Jew leading two large horses. He kept the horses in line with the help of a large stick, which he used whenever one of the horses veered off the straight path. These two horses went wherever the boy directed – almost as if they did not have minds of their own (which they do not). No argument, no protest; whatever the boy wanted, they followed his directions. *Rav Chaim* was amazed. The horse is one of the strongest animals. It has the extraordinary ability to pull large, heavy wagons loaded with people or produce. Yet, these two horses just followed wherever they were led. He wondered, “How is it possible for such a young boy to control two such strong horses?”

“The answer is,” declared *Rav Chaim*, “that they are horses and, as such, are unaware of their extraordinary strength. If they would possess half a brain, they would be leading, not being led.”

*Rav Chaim* applied this idea to explain *David HaMelech*'s exhortation, *Al tiheyu k'suss k'fered ein havin*, “Be not like a horse, like a mule, uncomprehending” (*Tehillim 32:9*). This statement begs elucidation. In the previous *pasuk*, *David* declares, “I will educate you and enlighten the path which to travel. I will advise you with what I

have seen.” We, the “students,” are waiting and prepared to hear and learn from the master a lesson that is not simply crucial – it will be life-altering. What is the lesson? “Do not be like a horse.” One would think that the great *Melech Yisrael* would impart a lesson that carries greater profundity than, “Do not be a horse.” One does not need the king to inform us of something which every person who possesses a modicum of common sense knows (or, at least, should know).

Rav Chaim explains that David *Hamelech* was teaching us that we should not be like the horse who is unaware of its enormous strength, and, as such, allows itself to be guided and driven by a child. A horse does not know its potential, and, therefore, allows itself to be controlled to the right and to the left, all on the whim of whoever is leading. Likewise, one who is clueless to his inherent potential will allow the *yetzer hora* to manipulate his life.

We are (sadly) aware of instances in which individuals whose self-esteem could use a boost judge themselves through the eyes of others. In other words, if my friend or mentor or even spouse (and especially children) does not see my potential (the one which I personally see), I will accede to their value rating. My choices in life will be predicated by my identity as seen through the lens of others. While this is clearly nonsensical, it occurs much more than we care to admit. *Horav Elimelech Biderman, Shlita*, relates the following anecdote.

A young man convinced himself that he was a mouse. He clearly was unhinged and needed to be confined to an institution to address the emotional needs of a human being who thought he was a mouse. The young man’s parents were people of means who would give anything to have their son cured of his *meshugas*, insanity. They hired a distinguished psychologist who felt he could help their son. The psychologist’s technique was to have the disturbed young man repeat, “I am not a mouse. I am a human being,” a number of times each day. Three months passed, and the doctor felt that it was time for the young man to return home. He no longer felt that he was a mouse. The therapy had been successful.

The excited parents picked up their son and, after speaking to him, acknowledged that he was doing well. He no longer thought himself to be a mouse. “I am not a mouse!” he emphatically told his parents. “I am a human being.” “Is this not true?” he asked his parents. He so needed their support after having been committed for three months.

“Yes, yes, this is true!” his parents replied. They were so relieved that finally they had their son back.

They pulled into the driveway of their home, and, as soon as the door was open, the young man ran off. Worried, they searched for him, only to find him crouching beneath a car.

“Why are you hiding under a car?” the parents asked (almost in unison).

“I saw a cat,” the son replied.

“Why should that bother you? You are not a mouse. You are a human being,” they argued.

The young man replied, “Yes, I know that I am not a mouse, but does the cat know that?”

The young man was superficially cured. Beneath the surface, he thought himself to be a mouse. Moreover, he was concerned about what the cat thought. Even if he believed himself to be a human being, if the cat viewed him as a mouse, he was a mouse. His self- identity was determined by the cat.

*Va’ani Tefillah*

עֲזַרְנוּ אֶלְקֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ עַל דָּבָר כְּבוֹד שָׁמֶד וְחַזְיָלוֹנוּ וְכַפֵּר כָּל חַטָּאתֵינוּ לְמַעַן שָׁמֵךְ – *Azreinu Elokei yisheinu al dvar kvod Shemecha v’hatzileinu v’chapeir al chatoseinu l’maan Shemecha*.

Assist O’G-d of our salvation, for the sake of Your Name’s glory; rescue us and atone for our sins for Your Name’s sake.

The first part of this verse, the word/term *kvod*, glory, is connected to Hashem’s Name. In the second part of the verse, we ask that Hashem save and atone for us for His Name – *l’maan Shemecha*. In his *Tenufah Chaim*, *Horav Chaim P’lagi, zl*, explains that we present

Hashem with two requests. The first is that He spare/save us from the overwhelming *tzaros*, troubles/adversity. Second, we ask Hashem to expiate our sins. *Chazal (Yerushalmi)* relate the story of a man who had the same name as the king. Since this was the case, he was spared from execution, for it would be a disgrace to the king for a man sharing his name to hang publicly. We ask Hashem to save us from those who would do us harm and destroy our peoplehood as the nation of Hashem. This is the meaning of *al kevod Shemecha*, for the glory of Your Name – which would be defamed with our destruction. Second, we ask Hashem to forgive and atone our sins – which are like thorns to the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence. This is not only about Hashem’s Name; it is also a personal request.

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*prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*

## Living Things Carrying Themselves?

**Rabbi Yirmiyahu Kaganoff**

Since our parsha discusses both the creation of all living things, and the creation of Shabbos...

Question #1: Animals on Shabbos

Why must animals observe Shabbos, when they are not required to observe any other mitzvos?

Question #2: A Bird in the Hand

Does carrying a bird desecrate Shabbos min haTorah?

Question #3: Togetherness

If two people carry an item together, are they culpable of *chillul Shabbos*?

Introduction:

The words of the *Aseres Hadibros* are: “The seventh day is Shabbos for Hashem, your G-d. You may not do any work; not you, your son, daughter, your slave and maidservant, or your animal.”

Thus, we are introduced to the concept that Shabbos is not only for us to observe, but also for us to ensure that animals are not involved in Shabbos desecration. We understand that we are required to observe Shabbos, but why should our animals be required to do so? Does the Torah assume that they comprehend what Shabbos means and can calculate which day of the week it is? How should we punish them if they disobey?

The answer is that they are not required to keep Shabbos; animals have no requirement to observe mitzvos. The mitzvah applies to us: included in our observance of Shabbos is an obligation that we are not to have our animals perform *melacha* for us.

There are two aspects to this mitzvah, one called *shevisas beheimah* and the other called *mechameir*. *Shevisas beheimah* requires that my animal not be worked by a person, and includes a situation in which a Jewish animal owner allows another person to use his animal to perform *melacha* for human benefit. The owner violates this *lo saaseh* even if he allows a non-Jew to use his animal to perform *melacha*, notwithstanding that the non-Jew has no mitzvah to observe Shabbos, and, indeed, is not even permitted to do so (*Sanhedrin 58b*).

*Mechameir* is when a Jew uses an animal to perform a *melacha*, even if he does not own the animal.

We see that these two activities, *shevisas beheimah* and *mechameir*, are both prohibited min haTorah. Does this mean that they are considered on the same level as performing one of the 39 *melachos* on Shabbos? *Chazal* explain that there are two categories of activities that are prohibited min haTorah on Shabbos -- those that are included under the heading of *melacha*, and those that are not. The first are those that the Torah says could require capital punishment, as we see from the story of the *mekosheish* (see *Bamidbar 15:32-35*). *Shevisas beheimah* is certainly not considered a *melacha*, notwithstanding that it is prohibited min haTorah.

According to some *tanna’im*, *mechameir* has the full status of a *melacha*. The halacha is that although *mechameir* is not a *melacha*, it still violates Shabbos min haTorah, on a level approximately similar to the way that stealing violates the Torah.

## Only melacha

Both shevisas beheimah and mechameir violate Shabbos min haTorah only when the animal is used to perform an activity that for a person is considered melacha. Thus, having an animal plow or plant a field violates Shabbos. We will see more on this topic at the end of this article. Before we do, we need to discuss a different subject.

## Chai nosei es atzmo

In several places, the Gemara discusses a halachic principle called *chai nosei es atzmo*, literally, “a living thing carries itself” (Shabbos 94a, 141b; Eruvin 103a; Yoma 66b). The Gemara (Shabbos 94a) quotes and explains this concept, when it cites a dispute between Rabbi Nosson and the chachamim regarding someone who carries an animal or bird on Shabbos. Rabbi Nosson rules that the carrier is not in violation of Shabbos min haTorah, because of the principle of *chai nosei es atzmo*, whereas the chachamim rule that the carrier is culpable of desecrating Shabbos. The Gemara then states that the chachamim agree that carrying a person does not violate Shabbos min haTorah, because of *chai nosei es atzmo*. The chachamim contend that, notwithstanding the principle of *chai nosei es atzmo*, carrying an animal desecrates Shabbos min haTorah, because animals will try to wriggle out of the person’s control when they are carried. This argument that does not concern Rabbi Nosson, although the Gemara never tells us why.

## A bird in the hand

At this point, we have enough background to answer the second of our opening questions:

Does carrying a bird desecrate Shabbos min haTorah? The answer is that this is the subject of a dispute among tanna’im, in which Rabbi Nosson rules that the person doing this is not guilty of desecrating Shabbos because of *chai nosei es atzmo*, but the chachamim conclude that it does violate carrying, min haTorah. The halacha follows the opinion of the chachamim (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 18:16).

## Why is *chai nosei es atzmo* exempt?

Why is it that, because of the principle of *chai nosei es atzmo*, carrying a person is not considered desecrating Shabbos? Tosafos (Shabbos 94a s.v. *she’ha chai*) is bothered by this issue, mentioning three approaches to explain why this is true, each of which requires a lengthy introduction. To remember the three approaches in the order in which Tosafos proposes them, I suggest the follow popular acronym: ATM

### 1. Assistance

The “passenger” assists the “carrier” in the transportation.

### 2. Togetherness

Two (or more) people, or one person and one (or more) animal(s), are involved in performing the melacha, together.

### 3. Mishkan

The melacha activity is dissimilar from the way any carrying was performed in the construction of the Mishkan.

## Assistance

The first approach suggested by Tosafos understands that carrying a person is not a melacha min haTorah because the “passenger” distributes his weight to help out the person who is hauling him. Tosafos rejects this approach because, although it is easier to carry a person than the same amount of dead weight, it is far easier to carry a much lighter object than it is to carry a person, yet carrying the light object violates Shabbos min haTorah, whereas carrying a person does not. Thus, Tosafos explains that there must be a different reason to explain *chai nosei es atzmo*.

A point that Tosafos does not note is that the approach just mentioned appears to be how Rashi (Shabbos 93b s.v. *es*) understands the topic of *chai nosei es atzmo*. We will need to address this sub-topic at another time.

## Togetherness

The second approach to explain *chai nosei es atzmo* quoted by Tosafos is based on a principle, taught by the Mishnah (Shabbos 92b, 106b), that there is a qualitative difference between a melacha that is performed by two people together and one that is performed by a sole individual. The halachic term applied when two people perform a melacha together is *shenayim she’asu*. When the person being carried makes it easier for

someone else to carry him, it is considered *shenayim she’asu*, and neither the carrier nor the passenger violates a Torah melacha.

However, based on detailed analysis of the rules of *shenayim she’asu*, Tosafos denies that this rationale will exempt the performer of this act from culpability on Shabbos.

There are three opinions among tanna’im as to what are the rules germane to *shenayim she’asu*. Rabbi Meir, the most stringent of the three, disagrees with the rule that *shenayim she’asu* is not considered as performing a melacha (Shabbos 92b). He contends that when two people perform a melacha activity together, they are usually both culpable of violating the melacha. (We will mention shortly the one case when even Rabbi Meir accepts that there is an exemption.)

## Second opinion

The tanna Rabbi Yehudah, a second opinion, draws a distinction regarding whether the two people can perform the melacha only when they are working together or whether each can perform the melacha separately. When two people carry something together that neither would be able to carry on his own, both are culpable for carrying the item on Shabbos, since this is the usual way for two people to perform this melacha activity. For example, a table too heavy or bulky for one person to carry is usually carried by two people. Therefore, two people carrying this table is the usual way to transport it. This case is called *zeh eino yachol vezeh eino yachol*, in which case, both transporters are culpable for desecrating Shabbos, according to Rabbi Yehudah.

However, regarding an item that each would have been able to carry on his own, such as a chair that is easily carried by either individual alone, should the two of them carry it together, neither is guilty of violating Shabbos, since this is an unusual way of carrying it. This case is called *zeh yachol vezeh yachol*.

## Third opinion

The third approach is that of Rabbi Shimon, who rules that whether the item can be carried by each person separately or whether it cannot, no one violates Shabbos min haTorah.

The conclusion of the rishonim is that the halacha follows the middle opinion, that of Rabbi Yehudah (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 1:16).

## Two together

At this point, I will digress briefly to answer the third of our opening questions: If two people carry an item together, are they culpable of *chillul Shabbos*?

The answer is that this case usually involves a dispute among tanna’im, and the accepted halacha is that, if either could carry it by himself, they are exempt from *chillul Shabbos min haTorah*. However, if it is a large item, and neither can carry it on his own, they are culpable of desecrating Shabbos.

## One can and one cannot

What is the halacha if one of them is able to carry it by himself, and the other cannot? This case is called *zeh yachol vezeh eino yachol*, which we have thus far omitted from our discussion. What is the halacha if one of the parties can perform the melacha activity by himself, and the second cannot perform it without the assistance of his associate?

The Gemara raises this question and concludes that the person who can perform the melacha by himself is culpable, even when he is assisted, and the person who cannot perform it by himself is exempt from a melacha min haTorah (Shabbos 93a).

Now, notes Tosafos, let us compare the case of *chai nosei es atzmo*, when one person carries another, to the rules of *shenayim se’asu*. In this case, the person doing the carrying can obviously perform the melacha by himself without the assistance of the other person. And, the person being carried is not performing the melacha by himself. According to what we just learned, the person doing the carrying should be culpable for violating the melacha. Since the halacha of *chai nosei es atzmo* is that the person doing the carrying is exempt from violating the melacha min haTorah, the approach of *shenayim she’asu* does not explain the halachic conclusion, and clearly cannot be the correct reason for the principle of *chai nosei es atzmo*. In baseball jargon, we would call this a swing and a miss.

## Mishkan

Tosafos, therefore, proposes a third way to explain the principle of *chai nosei es atzmo*: The 39 melachos of Shabbos are derived from the activities performed in the building of the Mishkan in the Desert. Notwithstanding the importance of constructing the Mishkan as quickly as possible, it was strictly prohibited to perform any aspect of its building on Shabbos. This implies that the definition of what is prohibited on Shabbos is anything necessary to build the Mishkan.

Tosafos notes that building the Mishkan never necessitated carrying something that was alive. Although both hides of animals and dyes manufactured from animal sources were used in the construction of the Mishkan, Tosafos concludes that the animals whose hides were used were led, rather than carried, to where they were slaughtered, and the animals that provided sources for the dyes were transported after they were dead. Thus, *chai nosei es atzmo* creates an exemption from desecrating Shabbos because of a unique rule in the melacha of carrying: for an activity to be considered a melacha *min haTorah* of carrying, the activity has to be fairly comparable to the way it was done in the construction of the Mishkan (see Tosafos, Eruvin 97b s.v. *es* and Shabbos 2a s.v. *pashat*; see also *Penei Yehoshua* on Tosafos 94a s.v. *shehachai*).

#### Chachamim

We noted above that, whereas Rabbi Nosson rules that someone who carried an animal on Shabbos is exempt from violating Shabbos *min haTorah*, the chachamim disagree. However, the Gemara concludes that the chachamim also accept the principle of *chai nosei es atzmo*, but disagree with its application regarding the case of someone carrying an animal, since the animal will be trying to escape. The chachamim agree that *chai nosei es atzmo* applies when carrying a person, as evidenced in two different places in the Mishnah:

In *Mesechta Shabbos*, the Mishnah (93b) states that carrying a bed containing an ill person on Shabbos is not a melacha *min haTorah*. This is because the bed is subordinate to the person, just as clothing or jewelry is. Carrying the person, himself, is not a melacha, because of *chai nosei es atzmo*.

The second place is a Mishnah discussing a rabbinic injunction banning sale of a donkey or cow to a non-Jew on any day of the week (*Avodah Zarah* 14b). The Gemara (15a) explains that this prohibition is because of concern that selling a large animal to a non-Jew could cause the seller to desecrate Shabbos, and then explains two different scenarios whereby this could happen.

#### A. Renting or lending

One way is that a Jew may rent or lend an animal to a non-Jew over Shabbos, which could easily cause the Jewish owner of the animal to desecrate Shabbos. When the non-Jew renter or borrower uses the animal on Shabbos, the Jewish owner violates the Torah prohibition of *shevisas beheimah*, explained at the beginning of this article. Prohibiting the sale of large animals to non-Jews avoids a Jew having any financial dealings involving these animals.

#### B. Mechameir

The other concern is that the Jew might sell the animal to a non-Jew before Shabbos, but the non-Jew discovers on Shabbos that he cannot get the animal to follow his instructions, so he asks the Jew for help with the animal after Shabbos starts. If the Jew speaks and the animal obeys his voice and thereby performs melacha, the Jew has directed the animal to work on Shabbos, which is a desecration of *mechameir*, even should the non-Jew already own the animal.

For those in the cattle business, there are heterim discussed in the Gemara and the halachic authorities, which we will leave for another time.

#### Chai nosei es atzmo

We now know why Chazal banned a Jew from selling an animal to a non-Jew. What does this have to do with *chai nosei es atzmo*?

The Mishnah teaches that Ben Beseira permits selling horses to non-Jews, which the chachamim dispute. Having your animal work on Shabbos is prohibited *min haTorah* only when the animal performs what is considered melacha. Thus, having an animal plow, plant, or grind grain is prohibited, *min haTorah*, on Shabbos. However, having an

animal carry a human rider on Shabbos is prohibited only *miderabbanan*, since the human is capable of walking – *chai nosei es atzmo*. Therefore, Ben Beseira permitted selling a horse to a non-Jew, because this would never lead someone to violate Shabbos *min haTorah*. The Sages prohibit selling a horse, because there are instances in which it is used to perform melacha *de'oraysa*, and therefore it is included in the prohibition of selling large animals to a non-Jew.

#### Conclusion

As I mentioned above, animals have no requirement to observe mitzvos. The requirement that it is forbidden to do melacha is a commandment that applies to us; observing Shabbos requires that we refrain from having them perform melacha for us. And the reason is simple: Hashem gave us permission, indeed responsibility, to oversee and rule over the world that He created. However, we must always remember that it is He who gave us this authority, and, by observing Shabbos, we demonstrate this. Our power extends over all of creation, including the animal kingdom. Thus, Shabbos limiting our control of animals demonstrates that our authority the rest of the week is only by virtue of the authority granted us by Hashem.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (*Shemos* 20:10) notes that people mistakenly think that work is prohibited on Shabbos in order to provide a day of rest. This is incorrect, he points out, because the Torah does not prohibit doing *avodah*, which connotes hard work, but *melacha*, which implies purpose and accomplishment. On Shabbos, we refrain from constructing and altering the world for our own purposes. The goal of Shabbos is to emphasize Hashem's rule as the focus of creation by refraining from our own creative acts (*Shemos* 20:11). Understanding that the goal of our actions affects whether a melacha activity has been performed demonstrates, even more, the concepts of purpose and accomplishment.

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#### Carpe Diem!

#### Rabbi YY Jacobson

What Can We Accomplish After Millenia of Great People Doing Great Things?

"I do not expect from you to refrain from sin because of a lack of interest in sin; I want you to abstain from sin because of a lack of time for it." — Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kutzk, to his disciples.

"The world says, 'Time is money.' I say, 'Time is life.'" — Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, to my father, Gershon Jacobson, in 1985.

#### Cheating on the Shabbos?

The marvelous invention of the Shabbos, a day in which we put our stressful lives on hold and dedicate a day to our souls, loved ones, and spiritual growth, is introduced in this week's portion, the opening section of the Torah.

"And G-d saw all that He had made [during the six days of creation], and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus, the heaven and the earth were completed, and all their array. G-d completed, on the seventh day, His work, which He had done, and He abstained on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He ceased from all His work."<sup>[1]</sup>

The contradiction is striking. On the one hand the Torah states that G-d "abstained on the seventh day from all His work which He had done; G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He ceased from all His work." This would mean that G-d completed His work on the sixth day, followed by a day of rest. Yet the very same verse declares that "G-d completed His work on the seventh day," meaning that He completed the work on the seventh, not on the sixth, day.

#### Divine Punctuality

The Midrash and Rashi offer the following explanation:<sup>[2]</sup>

A human being, incapable of determining the precise moment of nightfall, can't establish the exact moment when Friday ends and Saturday begins. Therefore, Jewish law obligates us to begin observing the Shabbos a short while before it begins. G-d, on the other hand, knows the exact moment when Friday merges into Shabbos, and

therefore, on the first Friday of creation, He continued His work throughout the entire day, until the end of the very last moment before the Shabbos began. Since G-d would not cease building His world until the moment that Shabbos began, it appeared as if He completed His work on the Shabbos day itself. Because of this appearance, the verse states that G-d completed His work "on the seventh day," since that is how it looked from a human vantage point.[3]

But why? What was the purpose of G-d working all the way till Shabbos and making it appear that He is "violating" the holy day? What compelled G-d to give off this false impression that He was laboring on the Shabbos? And why would the Torah be interested in relating this detail to us?

#### Cherish the Moment

It is here that we are presented with one of the important contributions of Judaism to civilization: the value of time.

For six full days G-d created a universe that is extraordinary in its magnitude and grandeur. During this week, the Creator fashioned a cosmos of endless mystery and limitless depth. One could not conceive of a more accomplished and successful week. Following such a fruitful and productive work week, as the sixth day was winding down, G-d had the full right to sit back and enjoy His grand achievement.

Comes the Torah and declares—no! As long as there was even one moment remaining during which the building of a world can continue, G-d would not stop.

#### How to Manage Your Time

We, too, are builders of the world, in the lovely Talmudic phrase, "partners of the Divine in the work of creation." [4] G-d built a physical world out of Divine energy; our job is to build spiritual energy out of a physical world; to transform the universe into a moral and sacred space, saturated with light and goodness.

Comes the Torah and teaches that even if you have already employed your strengths to build a beautiful world; even if you have affected many people, ignited many hearts, and touched many souls, as long as you have the capacity to construct one more heart, inspire one more soul, empower one more mind, and transform one more individual—do not cease from the sacred work.

G-d continues to fashion His world up to, and including, the last possible moment, in order to teach us: Carpe Diem! Every moment of life contains infinite value. If there is still one human being you can touch, do not desist.

Sometimes, you may have accomplished so much during your life, and you feel that it is time to slow down. Comes the Torah and says: If you

still have life in your bones, and there is one soul for whom you can make a difference—do not stop.

#### The Final Blow

What is more, the Torah emphasizes that "On the seventh day G-d completed His work." The work G-d had done during the final moments of the sixth day brought to completion all the amazing work of the six preceding days.

The same is true in our individual lives. The work you do in the final moments of your "week," may seem small and insignificant, relative to all the great things you did earlier. But in actuality, these final acts may be the ones that complete your life's mission. You never know the full significance of a singular act.

Just as this is true in each of our personal lives, it also holds true about all of history. Our generation, as the sixth millennium is winding down, has been compared in Jewish texts to the "Friday" afternoon of history,[5] moments before the Shabbos of history arrives. We may often view our daily involvement in acts of kindness, in the study of Torah and observance of Mitzvos as inconsequential in the big picture. After millennia of great people doing great things, what can I, a small person, already accomplish?

In truth, however, it is the small and ordinary things that we do in our lives today that grant completion to 6,000 years of love, commitment, and sacrifice. It is our "final touch" that will turn the world into a G-dly place and bring redemption to our turbulent planet.

We are the fortunate ones to bring it all to completion.[6]

[1] Genesis 1:31; 2:1-2.

[2] Bereishis Rabah 10:9. Rashi to Genesis 2:2. Cf. Rashi to Megilah 9a.

[3] Cf. Likkutei Sichos vol. 5 pp. 24-33, where it is demonstrated that Rashi's view is that G-d actually completed the work at the first moment of the seventh day; yet it was a type of work that is permitted on the Shabbos (See there for a full-fledged presentation of this fascinating idea.)

[4] Shabbos 119b

[5] See Ramban to Genesis 1:1; Or Hachaim beginning of Parshas Tzav. Cf. Sefer Hasichos 5750 p. 254 and references noted there as well as Sefer Hasichos 5749 p. 477

[6] This essay is based on a talk delivered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe on Shabbas Parshas Bereishis 5728, October 28, 1967. The talk is published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 5 pp. 24-35; Sichos Kodesh 5728 pp. 114-115.

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לע"ג

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה  
בillya bat (ariya) Lieb U"h  
אנא מלכה בת ישראל ע"ה

## **PARSHAT BREISHIT**

How many stories of Creation are there in Parshat Breishit, ONE or TWO? Although this question is often discussed more by Bible critics than yeshiva students, its resolution may carry a significant spiritual message.

In this week's shiur, we discuss the structure of Parshat Breishit, in an attempt to better understand the meaning of the Torah's presentation of the story of Creation. Our analysis will also 'set the stage' for our discussion of the overall theme of Sefer Breishit in the shiurim to follow.

### **INTRODUCTION**

From a literary perspective, it is quite easy to differentiate between two distinct sections in the Torah's account of the story of Creation:

- SECTION I - THE CREATION IN SEVEN DAYS /1:1->2:3
- SECTION II - MAN IN GAN EDEN / 2:4 ->3:24

In our shiur, we will first explain what makes each section unique. Afterward we will discuss how they complement one another.

### **PEREK ALEPH**

SECTION I, better known as PEREK ALEPH, is easily discerned because of its rigid structure, i.e. every day of creation follows a very standard pattern. Each day:

- \* Begins with the phrase: "VA'YOMER ELOKIM...", heralding a new stage of creation (see 1:3,6,9,14,20,24);
- \* Continues with "VA'YAR ELOKIM... KI TOV" (see 1:4,10,12,18,21,31);
- \* Concludes with "VAYHI EREV VAYHI BOKER, YOM..." (see 1:5,8,13,19,23,31).

In fact, one could construct a 'blank form' that would fit just about any day of Creation, that would look something like this:

"va'yomer Elokim" - And God said... \_\_\_\_\_

[followed by some act of Creation.]

"va'yhi chen" - And so it was

[often followed by some naming process: like  
"va'yikra.Elokim... , or some divine 'comment'"]

"va'yar Elokim... ki tov" - And God saw it was good

"va'yhi erek va;yhi boker, yom \_\_\_#\_\_\_"

Even though certain days may vary from this basic format, certainly each day begins with the phrase "va'yomer Elokim...".

This observation allows us to identify the first two psukim of this unit (1:1-2) as its header, for Day One must begin with the first "va'yomer Elokim" (in the third pasuk/ see 1:3 and Rashi on the meaning of the word "Breishit" in his interpretation to 1:1).

We reach a similar conclusion in regard to the 'Seventh Day' (i.e. 2:1-3). Since these psukim describe 'Day Seven', they must be part of this overall Story of Creation; yet because they begin with "va'yachulu..." - and not with "va'yomer Elokim" - they form the conclusion of this unit.

To verify this, note the beautiful parallel between these two 'bookends' (i.e. 1:1-2 and 2:1-3, noting the phrase "shamayim v'aretz" and the verb "bara'"), and how Day Seven 'concludes' that which was introduced in 1:1.

This introduction and conclusion define for us the primary topic of this entire unit - - "briyat ha'shamayim v'ha'aretz" - God's Creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This topic is presented through a daily progression of God's creations that span over six days.

With this general framework defined, we can now begin our

analysis of the progression of Creation from one day to the next. We will pay attention to how each day either follows, or slightly varies from the standard format discussed above. [For example, the fact that day two does not include the phrase "va'yar Elokim ki tov" should be significant.]

### **A DAILY "CHIDUSH"**

As we mentioned above, within this unit, the phrase "va'yomer Elokim" begins each day, and is always followed by an act God's Creation - or at least some type of "chidush" [i.e. something new, that didn't exist the day before].

After the execution each act of Creation, we may find 'peripheral' comments such as God giving names or duties to what He just created. However, we will show how the next "chidush" of Creation doesn't take place without an additional "va'yomer Elokim"!

We should also point out that in Days Three and Six we find our basic form repeated twice, i.e. the phrase "va'yomer Elokim" appears twice on each of these days, and each time followed by a distinct act of Creation, followed by the evaluation of - "va'yar Elokim ki tov". This suggests that each of these days will contain two acts of Creation. [The deeper meaning of this will be discussed as we continue.]

Therefore, our analysis begins by identifying what was the precise "chidush" of each day. Then, we will discuss the 'peripheral comments' of each day, showing how they relate to that "chidush".

### **DAY ONE (1:3- 5)**

God's first act of creation (i.e. what follows the first "va'yomer Elokim") was making "OR" - or what we call 'light'.

This creation is followed by a 'naming process' where God calls the light - 'Day', and the darkness (the lack of light) is called 'Night'.

### **DAY TWO (1:6-8)**

God makes the "rakiya" - whose function is to divide between the 'water above' and the 'water below'.

Then, God names these 'waters above' - "shamayim" [Heavens]. Note that the 'waters below' are not named until Day Three. Note as well that this is only time when God's creation is not followed by the phrase "va'yar Elokim ki tov". Hence, it appears that something on this day is either 'not so good' or at least incomplete. [We'll return to this observation later in the shiur.]

### **DAY THREE (1:9-12)**

\* Stage One: (i.e. the first "va'yomer Elokim").

Gods makes the "yabasha" [dry land].

Then God names this 'dry land - ARETZ [Earth?] and the remaining "mayim" - YAMIM [Seas].

Followed by God's positive evaluation: "va'yar Elokim ki tov"

\* Stage Two (i.e. the second "va'yomer Elokim" / 1:11-12)

God creates what we call 'vegetation', i.e. all the various species of vegetables and fruit trees. Note how these psukim emphasize precisely what makes the 'plant kingdom' unique - i.e. how these species contain seeds that will produce the next generation - e.g. "esev mazria zera" and "etz pri oseh pri".

Note that God no longer gives 'names' to what He created. However, we still find the standard positive evaluation "va'yar Elokim ki tov". [You were probably aware that "ki tov" is mentioned twice in Day Three, but you probably weren't aware that it was because it contains two "va'yomer Elokim's"!]

### **A QUANTUM LEAP**

Note the 'quantum leap' that takes place in stage Two on Day Three. Up until Stage Two, everything that God had created was 'inanimate' (non-living). From this point on, living things are created. [Keep this in mind, as we will uncover a similar 'quantum leap' when we discuss the progression from Stage One to Two in Day Six!, i.e. when we jump from animal to man.]

This may explain why Stage One of Day Three is the last time that we find God giving names. It seems as though God gave names only to His 'non-living' creations.

[In chapter two, we will see how it becomes man's job to give

names to other living things (see 2:19), and maybe even to God Himself! (see 4:26)!

Furthermore, note the 'separation process' that emerges as God created "shamayim v'aretz". In the introduction, we find "mayim" - with "ruach Elokim" [God's spirit?] hovering over it (see 1:2). Then, in Day Two, God takes this "mayim" 'solution' and separates it ["va'yavdel"] between the "mayim" 'above' and 'below' the "rakiya". The 'water above' becomes "SHAMAYIM", but the 'water below' needs further separation, which only takes place on Day Three - when the remaining 'solution' separates between the "ARETZ" [Land] and the "YAMIM" [Seas].

Technically speaking, this is how God created "shamayim v'aretz". [The creation of the remaining "v'kol tzvaam" - and all their hosts (see 2:1) - takes place from this point and onward.]

#### DAY FOUR (1:14-19)

God creates the "meorot", i.e. the sun, moon and stars.

This time however, note how God explains the function of His new creations (instead of giving names). For example, "va'hayu l'otot u'moadim" - and they shall be for signs and appointed times; and later - "l'ha'ir al ha'aretz" - to give light on the land (see 1:14-15). And finally: "l'mshol ba'yom u'valayala" - to rule over day and night (1:18). [Note as well how this day relates back to Day One.]

#### DAY FIVE (1:20-23)

On this day, we find yet another 'quantum leap', as God begins His creation of the 'animal kingdom' (i.e. in contrast to the 'vegetation' created on day three). God creates all living things that creep in the water or fly in the sky (i.e. fish and fowl).

Even though this day follows the standard 'form' (discussed above), we do find two very important additions.

1. The verb "bara" is used to describe how God creates this animal kingdom: "va'yivrah Elokim et ha'tananim ha'gedolim v'et kol nefesh ha'chaya..." (1:21). Note how this is the first usage of this verb since the first pasuk of "breishit bara..." (1:1)! The Torah's use of the verb "bara" specifically at this point may reflect this 'quantum leap' to the animal kingdom in this critical stage of the Creation.
2. A 'blessing' is given (for the first time) to these fish and fowl after their creation: "va'yvarech otam Elokim laymor - pru ur'vu..." - that they should be fruitful and multiply and fill the seas and skies. Note how this blessing relates to the very essence of the difference between the 'plant kingdom' and the 'animal kingdom'. Whereas self produced seeds allow vegetation to reproduce itself, the animal kingdom requires mating for reproduction to take place, and hence the need for God's blessing of "pru u'rvu" to keep each species alive.

#### DAY SIX (1:24-31)

Here again, like in Day Three, we find two stages of Creation, each beginning with the phrase "va'yomer Elokim, with yet another 'quantum leap' in between:

##### \* Stage One (1:24-25)

God creates the living things that roam on the land, i.e. the animals. There is really nothing special about this stage, other than the fact that God found it necessary to create them 'independently' on the first stage of Day Six, instead of including them with His creation of the rest of the animal kingdom (i.e. with the fish and the fowl) in Day Five.

In fact, we find an interesting parallel between both days that contain two stages (i.e. days Three and Six). Just as Stage One of Day Three (separating the Earth from the 'water below') completed a process that God had begun in Day Two, so too Stage One of Day Six (the animals) completed a process that God began in Day Five!

##### \* Stage Two (1:26-31)

God creates MAN - "b'tzelem Elokim"!

Note how many special words and phrases (many of which we encountered before) accompany God's creation of man:

First of all, we find once again the use of the verb "bara" to

describe this act of creation, suggesting that the progression from animal to man may be considered no less a 'quantum leap' than the progression from vegetation to animal.

Secondly, God appears to 'consult' with others (even though it is not clear who they are) before creating man ("naaseh adam b'tzalmeinu...").

Here again, we find not only an act of creation, but also a 'statement the purpose' for this creation - i.e. to be master over all of God's earlier creations:

"v'yirdu b'dgat ha'yam u'b'of ha'shamayim..." – Be fruitful and multiply and be master over the fish of the seas and the fowl in the heavens and the animals and all the land, and everything that creeps on the land." (see 1:26).

Thus, it appears that man is not only God's last Creation, but also His most sophisticated creation, responsible to rule over all other creations 'below the heavens'.

This explains we find yet another blessing (following this act of creation / similar to the blessing on Day Five). This blessing to man includes not only fertility, but also relates to his potential to exert dominion over all that Elokim had created. ["pru u'rvu v'kivshuha, u'rdu b'dgat ha'yam..." / see 1:28, compare with 1:26)

It should be noted that we find one final section, that also begins with the phrase "va'yomer Elokim" (see 1:29), but quite different than all the earlier ones, as this statement does not introduce an act of Creation, but rather the administration of food. In a nutshell, in these psukim God allows the animal kingdom to consume the plant kingdom. The green grass is given for the animals (to graze upon), while man receives the 'added privilege' of eating the fruit of the trees (see 1:29-30).

#### SOMETHING SPECIAL

As you surely must have realized, all of these 'variances' from the 'standard format' in regard to God's creation of man emphasize that there must be something very special about man's creation, and hence his purpose. But this should not surprise us, for that is precisely what we should expect from a book of prophecy, a divine message to man to help him understand his relationship with God, and the purpose for his existence.

All of these special points about man's creation should be important, but before we discuss their significance, we must take into consideration one more observation concerning the progression of Creation during these six days.

#### A PARALLEL STRUCTURE

Let's summarize our conclusions thus far concerning what was created on each day (and each statement of "va'yomer Elokim..."):

DAY	GOD CREATED...
==	=====
I.	"OR" = LIGHT
II.	"RAKIYA" - separating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. the MAYIM above [=SHAMAYIM], and</li> <li>B. the MAYIM below [=YAMIM].</li> </ul>
IIIa.	"YABASHA", called the ARETZ (the Land) -
IIIb.	Vegetation (on that ARETZ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. seed-bearing plants / "esev mazria zera"</li> <li>B. fruit-bearing trees / "etz pri oseh pri"</li> </ul>
IV.	LIGHTS in the SHAMAYIM (sun, moon, stars etc.)
V.	LIVING CREATURES: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. birds in the sky [=RAKIYA SHAMAYIM]</li> <li>B. fish in the sea [=MAYIM]</li> </ul>
VIa.	LIVING CREATURES who live on the ARETZ (land) animals - all forms
VIb.	MAN - b'tzelem Elokim, blessed by God to dominate all other living creatures
Then, God assigns the appropriate food for these living creatures:	
1. Man - can eat vegetation and fruit (see 1:29)	
2. Animals - can eat only vegetation/grass - (see 1:30)	
VII.	SHABBAT - God rested, as His Creation was complete.

Now, let's turn our list into a table.  
If we line up the first three days against the last three days, we find a rather amazing parallel:

DAYS 1-3	DAYS 4-6
I. LIGHT	IV. LIGHTS in the heavens
II. RAKIYA - dividing: SHAMAYIM (above) MAYIM (below the sea)	V. Living things: Birds in the SHAMAYIM Fish in MAYIM
III. ARETZ (land) Seed bearing plants Fruit bearing trees	VI. Animals & Man on the ARETZ Plants to be eaten by the Animals Fruit of trees, to be eaten by Man

Note how this parallel reflects our discussion above concerning the internal progression of these six days of Creation; and our observation that from Day Four and onward, God not only creates, but He also states the purpose of His creations.

It also shows how the last three days 'fill in' the potential for what God created in the first three days. Basically, from day four and onward, nature 'goes into motion', as we find 'movement' both in the Heavens above and in the Earth below.

In summary, when these six days are complete, what we call 'nature' has gone into motion.

## DIVINE EVOLUTION

If we understand the phrase "tohu va'vahu" in the introductory section (see 1:2) as total chaos, then from this primordial state - six days later, we find a beautifully structured universe containing all of the various forms of life that we are familiar with; including plants, animals, and man.

Note that the Torah emphasizes that each form of life is created in a manner that guarantees its survival, i.e. its ability to reproduce:

- a. plants: "esev mazria zera" - seed-bearing vegetation  
"etz pri oseh pri" - fruit-bearing trees (1:11-12)
- b. fish and fowl: "pru u'rvu" - be fruitful & multiply (1:22)
- c. Man: "pru u'rvu..." - be fruitful & multiply (1:28)

One could summarize and simply state that the end result of this creation process is what we call NATURE - in other words - the exact opposite of TOHU VA'VAHU.

In this manner, PEREK ALEPH describes God's creation of nature, i.e. the entire material universe and its phenomena.

Even though 'nature' itself remains dynamic, with living things constantly changing and reproducing, its basic framework remains constant - for after "va'ychulu" (2:1), nothing 'new' will be created, and certainly, nothing more advanced or sophisticated as man.

This established, we must now ask ourselves the more fundamental question, which is - what can we learn from the unique manner by which the Torah tells over the story of Creation? Is it recorded for the sake of our curiosity, simply to let us know 'how it all happened' - or does it carry a prophetic message - for any human being contemplating the purpose of the world that surrounds him!

## ONE GOD, OR MANY?

Certainly, one primary message that emerges from this presentation is that the creation of nature, with all its complexities and wonders, was a willful act of GOD. Hence, by keeping Shabbat, resting on the seventh day, as God did, we assert our belief that God is the power the created nature (and continues to oversee it).

This analysis can also help us appreciate why the Torah uses the name -Elokim - to describe God throughout this entire chapter. As Ramban explains (toward the end of his commentary on 1:1), the Hebrew word "el" implies someone with power (or strength) and in control. Therefore, "shem ELOKIM" implies the master of **all** of the many forces of nature.

[This can explain why God's Name is in the plural form- for He is all of the powers / see also Rav Yehuda ha'Levi, in Sefer Kuzari, beginning of Book Four.]

This understanding can also help us appreciate the Torah's use

of the verb "bara" in PEREK ALEPH. Note how the THREE active uses of the verb "bara" in PEREK ALEPH reflect each level of sophistication in Creation, i.e. "tzomeyach" [plant kingdom], "chai" [animal kingdom] and "m'daber" [man]. This also reflects the three 'quantum leaps' that we discussed in the evolutionary development of nature during these six days.

### \* STEP ONE - All matter and plants -

"Breishit BARA Elokim et ha'SHAMAYIM v'et ha'ARETZ" (1:1)

This includes everything in the SHAMAYIM and on the ARETZ, i.e. the creation of all "domem" (inanimate objects) and "tzomeyach" (plants). Note that this takes place during the first FOUR days of Creation.

### \* STEP TWO - The animal kingdom

"va'YIVRA Elokim - and God created the TANINIM and all living creatures... by their species" (1:21)

This includes the birds, fish, animals, and beasts etc. which are created on the fifth and sixth days.

### \* STEP THREE - Man

"va'YIVRA Elokim et ha'ADAM..." (1:27)

The creation of man b'tzelem Elokim, in God's image.

Now we must ponder what may be the Torah's message in telling man that the creation of nature was a willful act of God?

In his daily life, man constantly encounters a relationship with nature, i.e. with his surroundings and environment. Man does not need the Torah to inform him that nature exists; it stares him in the face every day. As man cannot avoid nature, he must constantly contemplate it, and struggle with it.

Without the Torah's message, one could easily conclude that nature is the manifestation of many gods - a rain god, a sun god, a fertility god, war gods, etc. - as ancient man believed. Nature was attributed to a pantheon of gods, often warring with one another.

In contrast, modern man usually arrives at quite the opposite conclusion -- that nature just exists, and doesn't relate to any form of god at all.

One could suggest that Chumash begins with story of Creation, for man's relationship with God is based on his recognition that nature is indeed the act of one God. He created the universe for a purpose, and continues to oversee it.

But how does this relate to man himself?

## MAN - IN PEREK ALEPH

In Perek Aleph, man emerges not only as the climax of the creation process, but also as its MASTER:

"And God blessed man saying: Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and MASTER it, and RULE the fish of the sea, and the birds in the sky, and the living things that creep on the earth..." (1:28).

Note that this is God's BLESSING to man, and NOT a commandment! One could consider this 'blessing' almost as a definition of man's very nature. Just as it is 'natural' for vegetation to grow ["esev mazria zera"], and for all living things to reproduce ["pru u'rvu"], it is also 'natural' for man to dominate his environment; it becomes his natural instinct.

The Torah's use of the verb "bara" at each major stage of creation, and then in its description of God's creation of man - may shed light on this topic. When contemplating nature and his relationship with the animal kingdom, man might easily conclude that he is simply just another part of the animal kingdom. He may be more advanced or developed than the 'average monkey', but biologically he is no different. The Torah's use of the verb "bara" to describe God's creation of man informs us that man is a completely new category of creation. He is created "b'tzelem Elokim", in the image of God, i.e. he possesses a spiritual potential, unlike any other form of nature.

[See the Rambam in the very beginning of Moreh N'vuchim (I.1), where he defines "tzelem Elokim" as the characteristic of man that differentiates him from animal.]

In other words, man's creation in a separate stage of Day Six, and the use of the verb "bara", and his special blessing etc. all come to impress upon man that he is indeed a 'quantum leap' above all other creations. He should not view himself as just the most sophisticated animal of the universe, but rather as a Godly creation.

Perek Aleph teaches man to recognize that his very nature to dominate all other living things is also an act of God's creation.

However, man must also ask himself, "Towards what purpose?" Did God simply create man, or does He continue to have a relationship with His creation? Does the fate of mankind remain in God's control; does there remain a connection between man's deeds and God's "hashgacha" (providence) over him?

The answer to this question begins in PEREK BET - the story of Gan Eden, and will continue through the rest of Chumash!

#### **PEREK BET (2:4-3:24)**

PEREK BET presents what appears to be conflicting account of the story of Creation. As your review chapter two, note how:

- 1) Nothing can grow before God creates man (see 2:5), therefore:
- 2) God creates man FIRST (2:6-7), then:
- 3) God plants a garden for man, vegetation develops (2:8-14);
- 4) God gives man the job to work and guard this garden (2:15);
- 5) God commands man re: what he can/cannot eat (2:16-17);
- 6) God creates animals for the sake of man (2:18-20)
- 7) God creates a wife for man, from his own rib (2:21-25).

Clearly, the **order** of creation is very different. In PEREK BET we find that man is created FIRST, and everything afterward (i.e. the plants and the animals) are created FOR him. In contrast to perek Aleph where man was God's final Creation - the most sophisticated - and blessed to exert his dominion over the entire animal kingdom; in Perek Bet we see how man is simply a servant of God, tending to His Garden (see 2:15-16), and searching for companionship (see 2:18-25). In perek Aleph, he emerged as 'ruler', almost like a god himself ("b'tzelem Elokim"); in perek Bet he is a servant.

In addition, there are several other obvious differences between these two sections:

- \* Throughout this section, God's Name is no longer simply ELOKIM, rather the name HASHEM ELOKIM (better known as "shem Havaya").
- \* In contrast to the consistent use of verb "bara" (creation from nothing) in Perek Aleph, Perek Bet uses the verb "ya'tzar" (creation from something/ see 2:7,19).

Although it is possible to reconcile these apparent contradictions (as many commentators do), the question remains - Why does the Torah present these two accounts in a manner that (at least) appears to be conflicting?

We obviously cannot accept the claim of the Bible critics that these two sections reflect two conflicting ancient traditions. Our belief is that the entire Torah was given by God at Har Sinai - and hence stems from one source. Therefore, we must conclude that this special manner of presentation is intentional and should carry a prophetic message. For this reason, our study of Sefer Breishit will focus more so on how the Torah's 'stories' of Creation explain the nature of man's relationship with God, and less so on how to resolve the 'technical' problems to determine what events actually took place and when.

Two renowned Torah scholars of the 20th century have discussed this issue of the two creation stories at length. The analytical aspect, the approach of "shtei bechinot" (two perspectives), has been exhausted by Rabbi Mordechai Breuer in his book Pirkei Breishit. The philosophical implications have been discussed by Rav Soloveichik ZT"l in his article 'The Lonely Man of Faith' (re: Adam I & Adam II).

It is beyond the scope of this shiur to summarize these two approaches (it is recommended that you read them). Instead, we will simply conduct a basic analysis of PEREK ALEPH & PEREK BET and offer some thoughts with regard to its significance. Hopefully it will provide a elementary background for those who wish to pursue this topic in greater depth.

With this in mind, we begin our analysis in an attempt to find the primary message of each of these two sections. We begin with a review of our conclusions regarding Perek Aleph.

#### **PEREK ALEPH - THE CREATION OF NATURE**

Nature - the entire material universe and its phenomena ["ha'shamayim v'haretz v'chol tzvaam"] - was the end result of the Seven Days of Creation. Without the Torah's message, man may logically conclude that the universe that surrounds him is controlled by various different powers, each controlling their own realm (or what ancient man understood as a pantheon of gods).

Chumash begins by informing us that nature itself, with all its complexities and wonders, was a willful act of the 'one God' - who continues to oversee His creations. [Hence the name -Elokim - (plural) all of the powers of nature.]

However, if there is one phenomenon in nature that appears to contradict this conclusion of unity, it is the very existence of "shamayim" [Heaven] and "aretz" [Earth]. Two totally different realms, with almost not contact between them, separated by the "rakiya"! This observation may explain why there was 'nothing good' about Day Two, when God made the "rakiya", for it was this very first division that leaves us with the impression that there must be 'many gods', and not one.

This may also explain why the entire story of Creation begins with the statement that Elokim made [both] "shamayim v'aretz" (see 1:1), and concludes with a very similar statement (see 2:1 & 2:4).

[Note as well See Breishit 14:19-22 & 24:3. Note as well Devarim 31:28 & 32:1. See also Ibn Ezra on Devarim 30:19 (his second pirush on that pasuk)!]

One could suggest that this may be one the primary messages of the Torah's opening story of Creation - that the apparent 'duality' of "shamayim v'aretz" is indeed the act of one God. Hence, the only aspect of Creation that could not be defined a 'good' was the creation of the "rakiya" which divides them. Later on, it will becomes man's challenge to find the connection between "shamayim v'aretz"!

#### **PEREK BET - MAN IN GAN EDEN**

Perek Bet presents the story of creation from a totally different perspective. Although it opens with a pasuk that connects these two stories (2:4), it continues by describing man in an environment that is totally different than that of Perek Aleph. Note how man is the focal point of the entire creation process in Perek Bet, as almost every act taken by God is for the sake of man:

- \* No vegetation can grow before man is created (2:5)
- \* God plants a special garden for man to live in (2:8)
- \* God 'employs' man to 'work in his garden' (2:15)
- \* God creates the animals in an attempt to find him a companion (2:19/ compare with 2:7!)
- \* God creates a wife for man (2:21-23)

In contrast to Perek Aleph, where man's job is to be dominant over God's creation, in Perek Bet man must be obedient and work for God, taking care of the Garden:

"And God took man and placed him in Gan Eden - L'OVDAH u'ISHOMRAH - to work in it and guard it." (2:15)

Most significantly, in PEREK BET man enters into a relationship with God that contains REWARD and PUNISHMENT, i.e. he is now responsible for his actions. For the first time in Chumash, we find that God COMMANDS man:

"And Hashem Elokim commanded man saying: From all the trees of the Garden YOU MAY EAT, but from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad YOU MAY NOT EAT, for on the day you eat from it YOU WILL SURELY DIE..." (2:16-17)

This special relationship between man and God in Gan Eden, is paradigmatic of other relationships between man and God found later on in Chumash (e.g. in the Mishkan).

God's Name in perek Bet - HASHEM ELOKIM (better known as "shem HAVAYA") - reflects this very concept. The shem HAVAYA comes from the shoresh (root) - "l'hiyot" (to be, i.e. to be present). This Name stresses that Gan Eden is an environment in which man

can recognize God's **presence**, thus enabling the possibility of a relationship.

Should man obey God, he can remain in the Garden, enjoying a close relationship with God. However, should he disobey, he is to die. In the next chapter, this 'death sentence' is translated into man's banishment from Gan Eden. In biblical terms, becoming distanced from God is tantamount to death. [See Devarim 30:15-20.]

In the Gan Eden environment, man is confronted with a conflict between his "taava" (desire) and his obligation to obey God. The "nachash" [serpent], recognizing this weakness, challenges man to question the very existence of this Divine relationship (3:1-4). When man succumbs to his desires and disobeys God, he is banished from the Garden.

Whether or not man can return to this ideal environment will later emerge as an important biblical theme.

#### **A DUAL EXISTENCE**

From PEREK ALEPH, we learn that God is indeed the Creator of nature, yet that recognition does not necessarily imply that man can develop a personal relationship with Him. The environment detailed in PEREK BET, although described in physical terms, is of a more spiritual nature - for God has created everything specifically for man. However, in return he must obey God in order to enjoy this special relationship. In this environment, the fate of man is a direct function of his deeds.

So which story of Creation is 'correct', PEREK ALEPH or PEREK BET? As you probably have guessed - both, for in daily life man finds himself involved in both a physical and spiritual environment.

Man definitely exists in a physical world in which he must confront nature and find his purpose within its framework (PEREK ALEPH). There, he must struggle with nature in order to survive; yet he must realize that God Himself is the master over all of these Creations. However, at the same time, man also exists in a spiritual environment that allows him to develop a relationship with his Creator (PEREK BET). In it, he can find spiritual life by following God's commandments while striving towards perfection. Should he not recognize the existence of this potential, he defaults to 'spiritual death' - man's greatest punishment.

Why does the Torah begin with this 'double' story of Creation? We need only to quote the Ramban (in response to this question, which is raised by the first Rashi of Chumash):

"There is a great need to begin the Torah with the story of Creation, for it is the "shoresh ha'eminah", the very root of our belief in God."

Understanding man's potential to develop a relationship with God on the spiritual level, while recognizing the purpose of his placement in a physical world as well, should be the first topic of Sefer Breishit, for it will emerge as a primary theme of the entire Torah.

shabbat shalom,  
menachem

## Parshas Bereishis: Two Versions of the Truth

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

### BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION...

Since we are beginning a new cycle of learning, back to the "beginning", it seems appropriate to introduce this shiur with a short statement about the perspective of this series of shiurim and their place within the constellation of Torah study.

In the first story of Man's creation (see below), God declares: "Let us (?) make Man in our (?) Image" (B'resheet 1:26). Besides the theological problems raised by the use of the plural (for instance, the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Tanakh generated in the Alexandrian community in the first century BCE, renders this in the singular due to the significant problems raised by "our Image"; see also Rashi *ibid*; note also the fascinating comment of Ramban here), there is a more "anthropological" issue here - what does it mean to be created in the Image of God? Indeed, not only in Chapter 1, but again at the beginning of the "begats" (Chapter 5), the Torah declares that God created Man in His Image. How do we understand this description?

Rashi explains that "image" here refers to the ability to reason. Rav Soloveitchik z"l expands on this theme, building on the context of creation, and defines Man's "Divine Image" as the creative spark; that uniquely human ability to enter an environment, whether intellectual or social, and to devise an innovative way to overcome obstacles which prevent that environment from flourishing. In the intellectual arena, this means the innovative mode of thought known, in circles of Torah study, as "Hiddush". A Hiddush is an explanation which resolves contradictions in the text, which clarifies the conceptual background of various sides of a dispute - in short, a Hiddush is "digging well below the surface" of study in order to unearth the principle which drives the idea of that particular text. The difficulty inherent in any Hiddush is that there is, ultimately, no way to be certain if the Hiddush is "valid"; the ring of truth may be a hollow one, resonating only in the ears of the innovator.

It is our hope that the Hiddushim shared in this shiur, week after week, will resonate with our readership and that they will clarify more than they confound.

### I. B'RESHEET - THE "GENESIS" OF A PROBLEM

Following the Torah's recounting - how long did Creation take? When (in that sequence) was Man created? When were the animals created? Where does the creation of Woman fit within this matrix?

Although most people would give singular answers to each of these questions (Creation took six or seven days, depending if you reckon Shabbat; Man was created on the sixth day; the animals were created just before that; Woman was created from Man's rib [sic]), the reality of the Torah's narrative is far more complex.

Not only are there two different stories of Creation (the first story continues from 1:1 until the middle of 2:4; the second continues from there); but, from a purely text-driven read of the information, the accounts are contradictory! In the first story, creation takes six or seven days, Man is created as a complete (single male-female) being at the apex of Creation. In the second story, Creation takes one day, Man is created as a lonely being at the beginning of the process. Woman is formed from Man - and is his "completion" - at the end of this "Creation process". Among the most pronounced differences between the two stories is the Name for God; in the first story, God is exclusively referred to as the generic "Elohim"; whereas in the second story, He is consistently called "Hashem (Y-H-V-H) Elohim".

These differences are among the stronger "arguments" marshalled by the school of "Bible Criticism", which, for the past 300 years, has been at the forefront of secular (and non-Orthodox) study of Tanakh. This school of thought (which is really many different schools, each with its own variation) maintains that the Torah is not the unified Word of Hashem; rather they see it as a patchwork of narratives, legal texts and prophecy/poetry, each produced by a different community of priests and scholars during the 10th-6th centuries BCE, which were woven into the Torah as we know it - sometime around the era of Ezra's leadership (5th c. BCE).

The Bible critics maintain that each of these communities had a different "version" of Creation, a different Name for God etc. - thus explaining the many apparent discrepancies and stylistic variations within the text.

For a myriad of reasons both in the areas of creed and scholarship, we absolutely reject this "Documentary Hypothesis". Our belief is that the entire Torah was given by God to Moshe (ignoring for a moment the problem of the last 8 verses) and that the authorship is not only singular, it is exclusively Divine. These two statements of belief - whether or not they can be reasonably demonstrated (and there is much literature, both medieval and contemporary, coming down on both sides of this question) - are two of the 13 principles enumerated by the Rambam.

Because both intellectual honesty and religious tenet prevent us from positing that the Divine Author presents inconsistent information, how can we explain the "multiple versions" - and apparent contradictions within the text?

## **II. TWO BASIC APPROACHES**

From the perspective of tradition there are several ways to resolve these apparent contradictions. Most of them can be categorized into one of two basic approaches.

### **APPROACH #1: EACH VERSION COMPLETES THE OTHER**

Fundamentally (no pun intended), we could try to "meld" the stories together. Rashi adopts this approach; for instance, in his commentary on the first verse in the Torah, Rashi notes that the first version of Creation uses the name "Elohim" for God - denoting strict justice (a court of law is also called Elohim - see Sh'mot 21:6), whereas the second version includes both the name "Hashem" and "Elohim" - indicating that although God's original intention was to create a world that would operate according to strict justice, He saw that that world could not last, so He integrated compassion (indicated by "Hashem" - see Sh'mot 34:6) into the process.

[We will temporarily suspend discussion of the theological difficulties raised by claiming that God "changed His mind"].

The Gemara in Ketubot (8a) takes a similar approach to the two versions of the creation of Woman - "originally God intended to create them as one being, but in the end He created them as separate individuals".

There are many examples of this approach, which is a distinct thread of exegesis in Rabbinic and medieval commentary. The upshot of this approach is that each version tells "part of the story" - and the "alternate version" completes the picture.

This approach has been adopted by some contemporary authors who attempt to "reconcile" science and Torah (why this attempt may not be necessary and may, indeed, be misleading and harmful, will be addressed in next week's shiur). The thinking goes as follows: Since each version provides only "part" of the information, it stands to reason that we may "synthesize" the versions together in various ways - including those which appear compatible with modern scientific theories about the origin of the universe, age of the earth and origin of the species.

In any case, this approach is both well-known and ubiquitously applied throughout Rabbinic exegesis regarding the Creation story (stories).

For purposes of our discussion, we will introduce another approach, which has its roots in Rabbinic literature and which was adopted by several Rishonim and more recent commentators, including Rabbi Yosef Dov haLevi Soloveitchik zt"l.

### **APPROACH #2: CHANGING THE FRAME OF REFERENCE**

Both the problem - and the various solutions proposed by the proponents of the first approach - are predicated on an understanding of the role of the Torah which is not the only valid one.

## **III. TWO TYPES OF TRUTH**

A brief segue on the nature of "Truth" is in order here:

There are statements which fall under the category of "Mathematical Truth"; for instance, that 7 times 9 equals 63 is not only an uncontested statement; it is also the only acceptable one. In other words, 7 times 9 MUST equal 63; if it equals anything else, something is wrong with the computation. Mathematical Truth is not only consistent, it is also exclusive.

If we maintain that the Torah is speaking the language of "Mathematical Truth", we have no recourse but to satisfy the two sides of the contradiction and either demonstrate that there is no contradiction at all - or to "weave" the information together (as demonstrated above).

There is, however, another type of statement which does not admit to "Mathematical Truth"; we will refer to it as "Ontological Truth" - (the reality about living, growing and dynamic beings). For instance, whereas it would be accurate to say that a certain boy loves to play baseball - that does not tell the full story of the boy. He is also afraid of spiders, excited about his upcoming trip to Washington and has great aptitude in science. Whereas 7 times 9 cannot equal anything but 63, the boy can simultaneously be a baseball fan, a science whiz and arachnaphobic.

As many commentators have pointed out (e.g. see S'foro's introduction to B'resheet, Shadal's introduction to his commentary on the Torah; note also Rashi's second comment on B'resheet), the goal of the Torah is not to present "Mathematical Truths" in the realms of biology, mathematics or "the origin of Man"; rather the Torah is geared to teaching us basic principles of faith, shaping proper attitudes towards the world around us, towards God and fellow humans. In addition - and most critically, the Torah's aim is to build a holy nation that will ultimately teach the basic truths and ethics of the Torah (note D'varim 4:6) to the entire world.

That being the case, we may certainly understand the various versions of creation as relating to different aspects of the world and of Man - and, notably, of Man's relationship with both the world around him and with the Creator.

We can then look at each story not as a "mathematical statement" which is either true or false - and is vulnerable to contradiction from another, equally valid source (such as the next chapter!); rather, we look at each version as a series of "ontological statements", geared to teaching us significant and focal perspectives about who we are and how we should act.

#### **IV. TWO STORIES: HEAVEN AND EARTH; EARTH AND HEAVEN**

We may find a clue into the "dual" nature of the Creation narrative via a careful look at the point where the two stories "meet" - immediately after the Shabbat narrative:

"These are the products of the heaven and earth when they were created, On the day when Hashem God made the earth and the heaven"

Note that the first half of this verse is a perfect conclusion to the "first version"; it utilizes the common "Eleh" (these...) concluding formula. Note also that just as the first story began with the creation of "Shamayim va'Aretz" - (Heaven and earth); this half-verse seems to conclude that creation.

The second half begins a new "story" - or another perspective of the same story. "On the day when Hashem God made the EARTH and HEAVEN". Note that the order is reversed - this is a deliberate move on the part of the text to shift the emphasis and the perspective of the story.

Now let's see what the two stories are - which two perspectives of Creation are being presented here.

[Much of this material based on the "Adam I & Adam II" theory of Rav Soloveitchik zt"l - the interested reader is directed to his opus: The Lonely Man of Faith].

#### **V. VERSION #1: THE STORY OF THE WORLD**

The first version is, indeed, the story of the creation of the heaven and the earth - in other words, it is the story of the creation of the world from a Divine perspective. It begins with the Heavens, presenting an orderly world structured in an hierarchical manner in which every manner of life has its place (note the refrain of "according to its species" in the third, fifth and sixth days). Man is created as the final, crowning touch of this glorious labor - and is formed "in God's image" in order to be His "agent", as it were, on earth: "...fill the earth and subdue it, having dominion over the fish of the sea..." (1:28). Man is complete, Man is a master over his world and Man needs for nothing. Man here is also not commanded - God blesses him with fertility, but there is no direct relationship between Man and God in this version.

This is truly the story of the world; an orderly world created by God in which Man can be His partner, His agent - but not His "servant". The Name for God which denotes compassion - Hashem - is totally missing from this account, since there is no need for Divine compassion where there is no Divine command and no Divine worship.

## **VI. VERSION #2: THE STORY OF MAN**

There is another side to the story - the story of "the earth and the heavens" - the story from the perspective of Man (God is still "telling" the story - but from Man's point of view).

From the human perspective, everything created serves a human purpose; even the animals can serve as Man's companions (and thus are "created" after him) - but Man is not nearly as complete as the "detached" view would have it. Man is lonely, Man seeks out God as he seeks out meaning in this world of alienation and discord. This is a world where nothing grows because "there is no man to work the land" (2:5). God forms Man and then, around him and for his sake, creates a beautiful world of orchards and rivers. Immediately, the most crucial point in their relationship is realized - God commands Man! Man is no longer lonely, on one level, because he is in relationship with God. From a different perspective, however, he is lonely - because there is no one with whom to share this new life. Unlike the first - "detached" - story, in which everything is assessed as "good" (and, ultimately, "very good"), the first "non-good" thing is introduced - loneliness (2:18). As we follow "Adam II" through his bouts with temptation, guilt, cowardice, etc., we learn more about who he is - and who we are.

The Torah is not telling us two conflicting versions about creation; rather, we are seeing two sides of the same coin. The world is, indeed, an orderly place of hierarchical systems, where Man is the ultimate creature; yet, the world is also a place where Man feels alien and distant, seeking out companionship and meaning in his relationships with fellow humans, with a mate, and with God.

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## Parshat Bereshit: Eat Your Vegetables

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

### "Tzelem Elokim": Eat Your Vegetables!

Parashat Bereshit recounts not only the creation of humanity and the rest of the world, but also supplies our most basic ideas about the nature and mission of humanity. Humanity is created with special capabilities and commanded to develop and actualize them in specific ways. The whole world is fresh, totally unspoiled; all potentials await fulfillment. The infant world sparkles with innocence and energy, with the wonder of Creation.

But Creation is really not the only theme of our parasha. Creation is only the beginning; the genesis of the world shares the stage with the genesis and evolution of the relationship between Hashem and humanity.

### A BACKGROUND OF FAILURES:

Since we cannot take a detailed look at every event of the parasha, let's just make brief mention of one important event we're not going to look at this time: the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, which forever changes the way people live -- and die. Already moving beyond the theme of Creation, we encounter Hashem as commander ("Thou shalt not eat") and humanity as servant. Without much delay, humanity creates something Hashem had not created: failure. Blighting the beautifully ordered description of the construction of the cosmos, Adam and Eve's sin is humanity's first failure and Hashem's first disappointment (see Bereshit 6:6). This failure changes humanity and changes the world, as the "first family" is ejected from the garden and forced to struggle through life in the more difficult world outside. As this disappointment is the first of many disappointments for Hashem, this failure is the first of many failures for humanity. Many of the stories in the first few parshiot of the Torah are not about Creation, but about disappointment and failure and how they change the course of history by changing Hashem's plan for humanity.

### IMAGES OF GOD:

The specific topic we're going to look at this time is the theme of "tzelem Elokim," the idea that humankind is created in the image of Hashem. Our close look at this theme, and the conclusions we draw, should help us understand not only the events of our parasha, but also the development of the theme of all of Sefer Bereshit (Genesis).

"Tzelem Elokim" itself simply means an image or form of Hashem. What is this usually understood to mean? In what way are humans God-like? Some interpretations by mefarshim (traditional commentators):

- 1) Like Hashem, humans have intelligence (Rashi, Rashbam, Radak, Seforno).
- 2) Like Hashem, humans have free will (Seforno).
- 3) As Hashem is a "spiritual" Being, humans have a soul (Ibn Ezra, Radak, Ramban, Seforno).
- 4) As Hashem rules over the universe, humans rule over the lower world (R. Sa'adya Gaon, Hizkuni).
- 5) Like Hashem, humans have the faculty of judgment (Hizkuni).
- 6) Like Hashem, humans have an inherent holiness and dignity (a more modern perspective).

### MISSION STATEMENT I:

Although it is always important to see how mefarshim define terms which appear in the Torah, we can often gain additional understanding or a different perspective by examining the Torah directly and sensitively to see if the Torah itself defines the term.

The first time we find the term "tzelem Elokim" is just before the first humans are created:

BERESHIT 1:26-27 --

Hashem said, 'Let us make Man in our image [be-tzalmeinu], in our form; they shall rule over the fish of the sea, the bird of the sky, the animal, and all the land, and all that crawls on the land.' Hashem created the man in His image; in the image of Hashem [be-tzelem Elokim] He created him; male and female He created them.

What we have next is a short section with a very clear theme: humanity's mission:

## BERESHIT 1:28-30 --

Hashem blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the land and conquer it; rule over the fish of the sea, the bird of the sky, and all animals which crawl on land.' Hashem said, 'I have given to you all grasses which produce seeds on the face of the land, and all the trees which produce fruit with seeds -- it is for you to eat, and for the animal of the land, for the bird of the sky, and for that which crawls on the land which has a living soul; all the grassy plants are to eat.' And it was so.

What we have read so far begins with Hashem's plan to create a being in the image of Hashem and ends with this "mission statement," communicated to the being which has been created. The mission contains three charges:

- 1) Emulate Hashem's creativity by procreating.
- 2) Emulate Hashem's mastery of the universe by "conquering" the world and extending mastery over the lower creatures.
- 3) Emulate Hashem by eating the grasses, fruits, and seeds!

The last element of humanity's mission seems fundamentally different than the previous two elements ("One of these things is not like the other one . . ."): What does eating vegetation have to do with the lofty destiny of humanity? And since Hashem obviously does not eat vegetables, how does one emulate Hashem by doing so? For now, let us hold this question; we will return to it later to see how it adds to the *tzelem Elokim* mission.

In any case, one thing should be clear about *tzelem Elokim* which may not have been clear before: *tzelem Elokim* is not a \*description\* of humanity, it is a \*goal\* for humanity. We usually think of *tzelem Elokim* as a description of humanity's basic nature, which entitles humanity to certain privileges ("We hold these truths to be self-evident . . .") and expresses certain capabilities. But the Torah implies that *tzelem Elokim* is more than simply a description, it is a mission, a command: humanity must \*live up to\* *tzelem Elokim*! People are created with the potential to reflect God by achieving the *tzelem Elokim* missions -- procreation, mastery of the world, and, well, eating vegetables(!) -- but each person must \*become\* a *tzelem Elokim* by actualizing this potential.

If *tzelem Elokim* is a mission, of course, it can be achieved or failed. How well humanity fares in achieving this mission is the major subtext of the Torah from the creation of Adam until the selection of Avraham in Parashat Lekh Lekha.

We will now follow the history of the *tzelem Elokim* idea through the first generations of humanity's existence to see whether humanity lives up to the mission or not and whether the mission changes over time.

## THE FIRST MURDER:

Our first look at how *tzelem Elokim* plays out in history brings us to the story of the first siblings, Kayyin and Hevel (Cain and Abel). Hevel offers to Hashem a sacrifice of his finest animals; Kayyin offers his finest fruits. Hashem is happy with Hevel's offering but unsatisfied with Kayyin's. The Torah reports that Kayyin is deeply upset and angry at being rejected. Shortly thereafter, man creates again, as Kayyin invents murder by killing his brother Hevel, whose offering had been accepted. Kayyin then attempts to hide the evidence but soon learns that Hashem doesn't miss much:

## BERESHIT 4:3-9 --

It happened, after awhile, that Kayyin brought an offering to Hashem from the fruits of the ground. Hevel also brought from the firstborn of his sheep and from their fittest; Hashem turned to Hevel and his offering, but to Kayyin and his offering He did not turn. Kayyin became very angry, and his face fell . . . It happened, when they were in the field, that Kayyin rose up to Hevel his brother and killed him. Hashem said to Kayyin, 'Where is Hevel, your brother? . . . Now, you are cursed from the ground . . . you shall be a wanderer and drifter in the land.'

Kayyin's response to his punishment:

## BERESHIT 4:13-15 --

Kayyin said to Hashem, 'My sin is too great to bear! You have driven me today from the face of the land, and I will be hidden from Your face, a wanderer and drifter in the land; anyone who finds me will kill me!' Hashem said to him, 'Therefore, anyone who kills Kayyin will suffer seven times' vengeance.' And Hashem gave Kayyin a sign so that whoever found him would not kill him . . .

## MURDER, A FAMILY TRADITION:

We will now look at the continuation of what we've been reading about Kayyin. If you're not paying very careful attention, it seems like a collection of "random" events -- the Torah appears to be reporting "trivia" about Kayyin's post-punishment life. But there is much more here than there might seem at first. Our observations should shed light on the development of the *tzelem Elokim* theme.

## BERESHIT 4:17-19--

Kayyin 'knew' his wife; she conceived and bore Hanokh . . . and to Hanokh was born Eerod; Eerod bore Mehuyael, Mehuyael bore

Metushael, Metushael bore Lemekh. Lemekh took two wives, one named Ada and the other named Tzila . . . .

Kayyin has had children, and we hear about his descendants. A nice family story, but what is the Torah trying to tell us?

BERESHIT 4:23-24 --

Lemekh said to his wives, 'Ada and Tzila, hear my voice; wives of Lemekh, hear my speech; for a man I have killed for my wound, and a child for my injury. For Kayyin will be avenged seven-fold, and Lemekh seventy-seven.'

Apparently -- as all of the mefarshim explain -- Lemekh has killed someone. As he recounts the murder to his wives, he implies that although he expects to suffer punishment, as his great-grandfather Kayyin suffered for murder, he prays that Hashem will take seventy-fold revenge on anyone who kills him. He explicitly refers to the murder committed by his forebear Kayyin and to the protection extended by Hashem to Kayyin.

What the Torah tells us next is absolutely crucial:

BERESHIT 4:25-5:1-3 --

Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son; she called his name Shet, 'For Hashem has sent to me another child to replace Hevel, for Kayyin killed him' . . . . This is the book of the descendants of Adam. When Hashem created Adam, in the image of Hashem He made him . . . Adam lived thirty and a hundred years, and bore in his image, like his form, and he called his name 'Shet.'

Certainly, the order of this story -- Kayyin's murder of Hevel, then Kayyin's punishment, then Lemekh's murder, then the birth of another son to Adam and Hava -- is not at all random. What connections is the Torah trying to make?

Lemekh the murderer is a descendant of Kayyin, the first murderer. Not only is Lemekh a direct descendant of Kayyin, he even makes explicit reference to his great-grandfather's murderous behavior and hopes that he will benefit from the same protection as (or greater protection than) Kayyin received, despite the punishment he expects. What the Torah may be hinting is that Kayyin and his family do not sufficiently value human life. Kayyin kills his brother Hevel in frustration and jealousy; Lemekh kills an unnamed person in retaliation for a "wound and injury." For Kayyin, murder is an acceptable solution to problems or frustrations, and he passes his values on to his children. Lemekh's murder and his reference to Kayyin's similar crime manifest the moral failure of this family. One generation's failure to understand the value of human life plants murder in the heart of the next generation.

## **BEGINNING FROM THE BEGINNING AGAIN:**

The Torah next tells us that Adam and Hava have another child "because Kayyin killed Hevel." Actually, Adam and Hava are replacing not only Hevel, but both of their sons -- Hevel, because he is dead, and Kayyin, because his murder and his descendants' similar action shows that his behavior was not a freak incident, but a deficiency in values. By having another child, Adam and Hava begin again, attempting to produce an individual who really understands the mission of humanity as achieving the status of tzelem Elokim. By murdering his brother, Kayyin fails this mission (as we will explain). Lemekh's action shows that Kayyin has not learned from his mistake and has not successfully taught his children to respect human life.

This is why the Torah begins the story of humanity's creation "anew" with the birth of Shet, telling the story as if Adam and Hava had had no children until now:

BERESHIT 5:1-3--

This is the book of the descendants of Adam. When Hashem created Adam, in the image of Hashem He made him . . . Adam lived thirty and a hundred years, and bore IN HIS IMAGE, LIKE HIS FORM, and he called his name 'Shet.'

The Torah is trying to communicate that humanity is starting over, beginning from scratch. The first attempt, the one which produced a murderer and his victim, has come to a tragic close with another murder (Lemekh's). Adam and Hava realize that they must start anew, and the Torah makes this explicit by placing the literary structure of a "beginning" at the birth of Shet. The real "descendants" of Adam are only those who maintain "his image . . . his form", the image and form of tzelem Elokim.

But how has Kayyin failed as a tzelem Elokim? Has he not excelled as a conqueror of the earth, a tiller of the ground who brings fruits to Hashem as an offering? Has he not "been fruitful and multiplied," producing descendants to fill the earth? Have his descendants not exercised creativity like that of the Creator, inventing tools and instruments? True, Kayyin has murdered, and true, his great-grandson Lemekh has as well, but how is this a failure as a tzelem Elokim?

## **MISSION II:**

To answer this question, we must look to next week's parasha, where we again (and for the last time) find the term "tzelem Elokim." As the generations pass, humanity sinks deep into evil, filling Hashem's young world with corruption. Disappointed again, Hashem floods the world and drowns His creatures -- all except Noah and those aboard the ark with him. As the Flood ends and Noah and his family emerge from the ark to establish the world once again, Hashem delivers a message to Noah and his family at this point of renewal: a

"new" mission statement for humanity. Comparing it to the first mission statement (1:28-30), which was addressed to Adam and Hava, shows that the two statements are very similar. But there are a few very important differences.

**BERESHIT 9:1-2 --**

Hashem blessed Noah and his children and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land. Fear of you and fright of you shall be upon all the beasts of the field, and all the birds of the sky, with whatever the ground crawls, and all the fish of the sea; in your hands they are given.'

So far, nothing seems new -- humanity once again is blessed/commanded to procreate and is informed that the animals of the world are given to humanity to rule. But as Hashem continues, the picture of humanity's responsibilities and privileges changes radically:

**BERESHIT 9:3-4 --**

All crawling things which live, they are for you to eat, as the grassy plants; I have given to you everything. But flesh with the soul -- blood -- do not eat.

Although previously, humanity had been given permission to eat only vegetable matter, now Hashem permits humans to eat animals as well, as long as they do not eat the "soul" -- the blood. But is that all? Can it be that the main difference between the first mission and the second mission is vegetarianism versus omnivorism? When humanity failed as vegetarians and filled the world with corruption and evil, Hashem decided to fix everything by allowing the eating of meat? Certainly not. As we read on, the picture becomes clearer:

**BERESHIT 9:3-6 --**

All crawling things which live, they are for you to eat, like the grassy plants; I have given to you everything, EXCEPT the flesh with the soul -- blood -- you shall not eat; and EXCEPT that your blood, for your souls, will I demand; from the hand of any beast I will demand it, and from the hand of Man; from the hand of EACH MAN'S BROTHER will I demand the soul of Man. He who spills the blood of Man, by Man will his blood be spilled, for \*IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE MADE MAN.\*

The animals are promised that Hashem will punish them for killing people, and humanity is warned that people will be punished by execution for killing other people -- since people are created be-tzelem Elokim.

### **THOU SHALT NOT KILL:**

What is the theme of this new mission?

Originally, humanity had been charged with the mission of reflecting Hashem's characteristics. That mission included three different elements:

1) Creativity: humanity was to emulate Hashem as Creator by having children. This mandate of creativity may have also included creativity in general, not merely procreation, but it focused most specifically on procreation.

2) Conquering: humanity was to emulate Hashem as Ruler of Creation by extending control over nature, and over the animals in particular.

3) Eating vegetative matter. The point of this command was not that eating vegetables somehow is an essential part of imitatio Dei (emulating Hashem), but that eating vegetables means \*not\* killing for food.

This third element -- not killing for food -- was an oblique way of expressing the prohibition of murder. If even animals could not be killed for the 'constructive' purpose of eating, humans certainly could not be killed. Kayyin either never understood this element of the mission or found himself unable to meet its demands. But as a murderer, he renounced his status as tzelem Elokim, for the third element of the mission of tzelem Elokim is to emulate Hashem as a moral being. And the most basic expression of morality is the prohibition of murder.

Eventually, even Shet's descendants fall prey to the same weakness, filling the world with evil and violence, and Hashem decides that the entire world must be destroyed. The fact that immorality is the area of their failure is hinted not only by the Torah's explicit formulations ("For the world is full of violence before them," 6:11 and 6:13), but also by the way the Torah formulates the new mission commanded to Noah and his family as they re-establish the world after the Flood:

**BERESHIT 9:5 --**

... from the hand of each man's \*brother,\* will I demand the soul of Man . . . .

This is clearly a hint to the first murder, that of Hevel by his brother, and a hint as well that the failure of those destroyed by the Flood was in interpersonal morality, since this mission is delivered to those about to re-found the world on better foundations.

This new mission, which makes the prohibition of murder explicit, is a more clear version of the first mission, which merely hinted at the prohibition. But it is much more than a repetition/elaboration. It also expresses implicit disappointment in humanity: before, humanity had

been forbidden to kill even animals; now, animals may be killed for food. Hashem recognizes that humanity cannot maintain the very high moral standards originally set, and so He compromises, permitting killing of some creatures (animals) for some purposes (food). But the prohibition of eating the blood of these animals seeks to limit humanity's permission to kill; blood represents the life-force, the "soul" (the blood-soul equation is one the Torah makes explicit several times later on), and humanity must respect the sanctity of life and recognize its Maker by not consuming the symbol of that life-force. In other words, humanity has permission to take life for food, but this permission comes along with a blood-prohibition, a reminder that even life that can be taken for some purposes is sacred and must be respected.

#### **CAPITAL PUNISHMENT:**

Next, this new mission asserts that animals and people will be punished for killing people. The penalty for murder is death. Why? The Torah itself supplies the reason: because man is created be-tzelem Elokim. Usually, we understand this to mean that since humans are created in the image of Hashem, it is a particularly terrible thing to destroy human life. This crime is of such enormity that an animal or person who murders a person must be punished with death.

But perhaps the reason there is a death penalty for humans who kill is not only because the \*victim\* is created in Hashem's image, and destroying an image of Hashem is a terrible act, but also because the \*murderer\* is created in Hashem's image! Murder merits the death penalty because it destroys two tzalem Elokim: the victim and the perpetrator. The murderer was charged with the mission of tzalem Elokim, emulating Hashem in exercising moral judgment, but he has failed and renounced that mission. And the mission is not an "optional" one -- it is the entire purpose of humanity's existence, the whole reason people were created, as Hashem makes clear in discussing His plans to create humanity. The punishment for rejecting this mission of tzalem Elokim is therefore death, because Hashem grants Hashem-like potential to humans only on condition that they attempt to reflect His qualities. Humanity does not have two options, one being accepting the mission and the other being rejecting it and becoming an animal. A person who rejects the mission of emulating Hashem cannot continue to exist and profane the image of Hashem.

Tzalem Elokim mandates our becoming creators and conquerors, but it also mandates our behaving morally. It means that we have the potential, unlike animals, to create, to rule, and to be moral. But it does not guarantee that we will develop that potential. Tzalem Elokim is something we can \*become,\* not something into which we are born.

Shabbat shalom