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WORLD MIZRACHI Picture of the Week

Mazal tov to Debra Kay,
former Director of Mizrachi
Manchester, and her husband
Ben on their recent Aliyah.

This week's edition is dedicated in memory of Mrs. Susan Taragin, Shulamit Bat Harav Shmuel Tzvi Halevy zt"l,
with our deepest condolences to her wonderful family. May her neshama have an aliyah.

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Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrahi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrahi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.



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The Politics of Power

The 'Original Sin'



Rabbi Doron Perez
Executive Chairman, World Mizrahi

The father of modern political philosophy, Niccolò Machiavelli, was crystal clear about the role of power in political leadership. In his landmark book, *The Prince*, written in medieval Florence, the primary question he asks is not, "What is right?" for a leader to do, but rather "What works?" And the answer to the question of what works, says Machiavelli, is simply one thing – power. Power is the supreme political currency. His claim is that relationships are measured according to one yardstick – their utility to build power or undermine it. Loyalty is conditional, trust is fragile – success belongs to the one who acquires, maintains, and expands power. All means are justified towards the end of maintaining power.

Although separated from us by five centuries, Machiavelli merely gave sophisticated expression to an instinct and paradigm as old as humanity itself – the instinct to see life as a struggle for dominance and power. According to the Bible, this is the ultimate human misperception: the "original sin," the source of so much human suffering.

The Torah begins with an entirely different vision. The opening chapters of Genesis are not merely the story of creation – they are G-d's blueprint for human civilization.

They begin with the first human beings – a couple – a man and a woman brought together in the very first human interaction. I believe that in this first human union – and more specifically in the "original sin" that corrupted it, we find the ideology of the first political agitator, the serpent. The corrupted philosophy of the serpent holds the key to understanding

the role and status of power in the cosmic and human order.¹

The First Human Relationship

The Torah could have begun with the creation of tribes, kingdoms, or civilizations. But, instead, it begins with one man and one woman. This is not by chance. For Genesis teaches that the most fundamental building block of society is neither the individual nor the state but the interpersonal human relationship at the core of marriage.

The first description of the first human in the opening chapter of creation is striking: "*G-d created Adam in His image; in the image of G-d He created him; male and female He created them.*"²

The first human – Adam – which literally translates as "humanity" or "from the earth" seems to be a male-female being, an androgynous in scientific jargon. A single dual-gendered being with two sides – one male and one female. Already, the Sages observed the remarkable tension in this verse. Adam appears first as a singular being – G-d creating "him" and immediately afterward as both male and female – He created "them." The human being is simultaneously one and two. Indeed, the original Adam contained both male and female dimensions before being separated into two distinct persons. This carries profound significance. Humanity is born in oneness – unity of diversity.

The Torah, therefore, rejects two equally mistaken assumptions. The first is that equality requires sameness. The second is that difference necessarily creates hierarchy. Neither is true. Man and woman are different, yet they emerge as part of one original human being – together

sharing the Divine image. And as such, we understand that equality does not require identical roles but rather requires equal worth, status, and standing.

The second chapter of creation famously describes a very different story. Not one being with a female and male component as in the first Chapter, described above, but indeed, Adam, created as a male, and then, out of an existential state of loneliness, a female is later created from his side.

Traditional Rabbinic commentators, such as Rashi and the Sages of the Talmud, do not view these chapters as separate, conflicting stories but rather as complementary. Chapter 1 is a general overview and Chapter 2 is a detailed breakdown of the exact same event. As such, the overview of the account describes the general perspective of humanity – that male and female are essentially one part of the same existential being. This is a critical perspective on how Torah Judaism views humanity in the relationship between male and female – **no hierarchy of power or precedence.**

Even though in the detailed description in the second chapter of Genesis, Adam is created first as a male, it is striking to note how his female counterpart is created. When Chapter 2 describes G-d taking a *tzela* from Adam to form a woman, the Hebrew word is often mistranslated as “rib.” Everywhere else in the Torah (such as in the construction of the Tabernacle), *tzela* means “side” or “structural flank.” Therefore, traditional commentary suggests that G-d did not pull out a rib bone, but rather split the dual-gendered being down the middle, separating them into two independent, equal individuals who must now choose to reunite.

Their names are telling. The woman is not called *Chava* – Eve – at this stage: that will only emerge after the sin. Now, in their original, ideal state, they are called *Ish* and *Isha* – man and woman. The Hebrew names themselves express remarkable closeness. She is called *Isha* because she was taken from *Ish*. She is created from his side – not from his head to dominate him, nor from his feet to be dominated by him. Not a relationship of ruler and servant, nor superior and inferior, but a reciprocal rather than hierarchical relationship.

Perhaps nowhere is the Torah's revolutionary understanding of the reciprocal and complementary nature of human relationships – in the creation and union of the first Man and Woman – expressed more beautifully than in the verse: “*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*”³

The Torah speaks of becoming “one flesh.” Just like their very names proclaim, neither exists in fullness without the other. Just as they are portrayed in the first chapter – one being, one flesh. Aiming to bring their different beings into one covenantal unit. Unity without uniformity. Difference without domination. Love without hierarchy. One.

The Serpent's Political Philosophy - Power Politics

If Adam – man and woman – presents the ideal of what we have termed the non-hierarchical structure of relationships, then the serpent introduces the antithesis – the politics of power. The serpent's temptation is often understood as encouraging disobedience. But a closer reading suggests something deeper.

The serpent attributes motives to G-d's prohibition not to eat from the one elusive tree. He tells Woman: “*G-d knows that on the day you eat from it (the tree of knowledge of good and evil) your eyes will be opened and you will be like G-d.*”⁴

Notice what the serpent assumes. Life is about a power struggle. He assumes G-d fears competition and G-d governs because He wishes to monopolize power – to be all-powerful over humanity. In the serpent's worldview, authority and power must suppress others lest they become rivals.

And so, the serpent projects onto G-d the psychology of the power-hungry leader. This is the first great perversion of the ideal world – the great political lie. This then, is the “original sin” – transforming authority into domination, relationship into competitive power struggles, and creation into control. According to the serpent, existence itself is a hierarchy in which one either rules or is ruled. And this

becomes the defining political instinct throughout human rulers and empires. Democracies, too, can become obsessed with domination rather than fair representation and service orientation. The serpent's worldview remains alive whenever power becomes more important than people, when it is “us” versus “them,” opponents locked in a Machiavellian ongoing struggle for dominance. Living under the sin and spell of the serpent.

The Curse of Dominion

After the sin comes tragedy. The snake, woman and man are all punished for their string of iniquities. For bringing hierarchy and power struggle into human relationships, the snake is punished, becoming the most antagonistic creature to human life – an enemy in constant combat.

“And the L-rd G-d said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, cursed be you more than all the cattle and more than all the beasts of the field....’ And I shall place hatred between you and between the woman, and between your seed and between her seed. He will crush your head, and you will bite his heel.”

But Woman also suffers. She gave into the serpent's world-view of power and domination and is tragically now cursed to suffer from this very malady.

To the woman, He said, “I shall surely increase your sorrow and your pregnancy; in pain you shall bear children. And to your husband will be your *teshuka* – desire, and he will rule over you.”

Woman was tragically cursed that Man would now have dominion over her. While some have mistakenly read this as G-d's ideal, it is nothing of the sort. In fact, on the contrary, as is clear from the verse, it is part of the curse. Just as pain in childbirth is not an ideal but a consequence of human brokenness, so too, male dominion is described as a tragic distortion of creation.

The Torah is not prescribing or justifying patriarchy, it is predicting it. Hierarchy enters marriage only after sin enters humanity. Once the original partnership is fractured, and power replaces reciprocity, control replaces covenant. Woman as the physically weaker gender, can now

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be more easily controlled and exploited by man. Now the relationship is becoming one of power, dominion, and control, instead of love, cleaving to one another in oneness. Power is therefore not the foundation of marriage, but rather evidence of its brokenness.

This terrible curse of dominion and domination is one of the Torah's most radical insights – when relationships become dominated by control and power struggles instead of mutuality, something has gone gravely wrong. It is part of the serpent's spell, and the consequence is human suffering.

Casting off the Serpent's Spell

The arc of Jewish history is not essentially about failure and decline. On the contrary, it is primarily about hope and faith in humanity – about the constant betterment of the human condition and striving always for reconciliation and redemption.

One of the remarkable developments within human and Jewish history is the gradual movement back toward the Edenic human ideal – casting off the spell of the serpent and of human dominion one over the other. For this suffering is not inevitable and not eternally irreversible. We are not determinists. Human progress has, indeed, slowly but surely, returned to the *Ish/Isha model of shared mutuality*. Just as the life-threatening risks and great pain of childbirth have both been significantly reduced by modern medicine, so too has the reality of patriarchal dominance been redeemed to mutual complementary leadership in marriage and slowly in society in general too.

There is thankfully much less slavery in the modern world and so much more personal freedom, especially in democratic societies. There is much still to redeem, but great strides have and are being made to reverse the curse to blessing, and to redeem humanity from the paradigm of ongoing power struggles, to genuine partnerships of equal worth, status and standing – beginning with the core and original human relationship of man and woman. Not because men and women became identical. They did not, nor should they.

Rather, because the Torah treasures difference, differences need not create unequal power. Marriage flourishes not through sameness but through shared covenant. Modern culture often struggles with this distinction. Some assume equality requires erasing differences between men and women. Others assume that difference necessarily produces inequality. The Torah rejects both extremes, providing us with a clear and rich Jewish vision. Men and women possess unique signature strengths, distinct emotional worlds, and different biological realities. The different spiritual gifts do not establish any superiority – complementarity is not hierarchy. The orchestra requires many instruments, and the human body requires many organs. The family requires different roles expressed through shared dignity. And the image of G-d shines equally through both husband and wife.

Two Political Visions

Throughout history, humanity has oscillated between two competing political visions. The first begins with power: Who governs and controls – who wins? The spell of the serpent.

The second begins with a relationship: How do we build togetherness and trust, partnership and integrity? How do we cultivate win-win relationships of validating the other, not manipulating and controlling them? Giving appropriate space and representation to others.

The first inevitably produces endless competition because power is finite. The second creates abundance because love and respect multiply when shared.

While the politics of power may ask who stands above, the politics of relationships asks who stands together. Power is a zero-sum game of victory and defeat, whereas relationship seeks the covenant of collective collaboration. Power divides humanity into rulers and subjects, whereas relationship sees every human being as co-partners in bearing G-d's image.

Returning to G-d's Original Dream

The opening chapters of Genesis are not merely ancient history, they are our roadmap to return to humanity's future.

The Garden of Eden represents not only where we came from but where we are meant to return. Redemption is the gradual restoration of relationships distorted by sin. And so marriage becomes partnership once again, parenthood becomes loving guidance, and communities become covenantal. Politics becomes about unity in diversity rather than domination over others.

This is not naïve idealism. It is the deepest realism. Power alone has never healed humanity.

Empires rise and fall, kings come and go, and ideologies flourish and collapse. Yet every civilization ultimately depends upon the quality of its relationships.

The Torah, therefore, begins where redemption must always begin – with one man and one woman standing before G-d, not as competitors but as partners; not seeking to dominate one another but to become “one flesh;” not bound together by hierarchical power but by covenant. Perhaps that is the enduring message of Genesis. Marriage and family are G-d's first institutions. The politics of power asks how we can compete, dominate, and rule. The politics of relationships asks how we can complete and complement each other in a relationship of reciprocity and mutuality.

It behooves us to remember this as Israel enters into a challenging period leading up to the general elections. Politics, and certainly Jewish politics, ought to be less about power and control but more about people and collaboration. The strength of a society rests on the trust and the reciprocity of its relationships.

● *This dvar Torah is an extract of a chapter of Rabbi Perez's new book to be released in English in November, entitled “Smallest Nation, Largest Family: Family as the Foundation of Jewish Identity.”*

1. This idea is beautifully developed in Rabbi Chaim Navon's book (Hebrew) *Incorrect – A Jewish Alternative to Political Correctness and Power Theories* pgs 132-134, Yedioth Ahronoth Books and Chemed Books, 2022.
2. Genesis 1:27
3. Genesis 2:24
4. Genesis 3:5



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Yesterday Came Suddenly



Rabbi Reuven Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi
Dean of Overseas Students, Yeshivat Hakotel

Written on Wednesday, 18 Tishrei, right after the burial and in memory of my mother, Shulamit Bat HaRav Shmuel Tzvi Halevy, z"l.

Suddenly

Yesterday morning, my dear mother, Mrs. Susan Taragin, appeared to be in good health. She spent the first day of Yom Tov with my immediate family and looked forward to another family gathering today.

In the afternoon, she took a nap – and did not wake up. Hashem took her peacefully; after 83 years, her time had come.

My mother had always prayed for this outcome. She did not want to suffer, nor did she wish to endure hospitals, surgeries, medical interventions, or pain. Hashem heard her prayers and granted her wish.

Thankfully, her passing was relatively peaceful for her, but it was profoundly difficult for us – her children, family, and loved ones. One moment, we were speaking with our mother and planning to see her the next day, and the next moment she was gone, and we found ourselves arranging the funeral that has just concluded.

Reflecting In Between

And now I find myself in an in-between state. I am a mourner, yet I am unable to mourn because it is *Yom Tov*. Although I attend *shul*, I cannot fully celebrate because I am a mourner. Every aspect becomes a complex *halachic* question: Should I wear mourning attire? Should I lead prayers? Should I study or teach Torah?

Typically, death is followed by burial, which begins the week of *shivah*. In my case, there are four intervening days that feel like a twilight zone, neither here nor there. I am formally an *avel*, yet I am

unable to express this status in the traditional manner with other people.

So, I reflect alone. This is something I am both able and obligated to do. Perhaps these reflections can help others to be better prepared than I was for the inevitable.

Kohelet teaches that “the heart of the wise man is present in the mourner’s home.”¹ While the wise possess wisdom in all circumstances, they become more reflective, and their words are best received, in appropriate settings. May Hashem grant me wisdom in my private, unofficial mourner’s home.

I should have been more prepared, as we recently read *Kohelet*, which emphasizes the fleeting nature of life. Life can be, and often is, taken without warning – suddenly.²

This serves as a reminder that our lives are not under our control³ and should not be taken for granted.⁴ We are often surprised when people do not awaken; in reality, we should be surprised when they do. The regularity with which people awaken leads us to take this for granted.

Improve

The suddenness of loss also imparts a second lesson: to live each day as if it could be our last. Recognizing this, Rebbe Eliezer encouraged performing *teshuvah* daily, as any day could be our final one.⁵ We must remember that our lives can change instantly, often without warning. This awareness should inspire us to improve ourselves today, while we can.

Share Feelings

However, daily life is not solely about *teshuvah*. It encompasses much more, particularly the appreciation of our own lives and the lives of those around us.

We interact with remarkable individuals whom we are fortunate to have in our

lives. We love and are loved by parents, spouses, children, and friends. Do they truly know how we feel about them? Do they sense our love and appreciation? Do we?

“If Tomorrow Never Comes” is a song that encourages us to express our feelings to those who are important to us.⁶ We must do so today, as either we or they may not be here tomorrow. We should share our hearts with those who share our lives. Both they and we deserve it.

I hope my mother knew how much I truly loved and appreciated her. I can no longer tell her, but losing her reminds me to make sure to let others know today – in what B.A. Robertson described as “the living years.”

Maximize

Living each day as our last should entail embracing each moment with a profound sense of meaning and purpose.

We are all aware that this world is temporary and meant to give us the opportunity to earn a share in the next. However, we often become distracted by the pleasures and circumstances of this world.

Death provides perspective.⁷ It reminds us that we are all destined for the same end, a place of soil and physical decomposition,⁸ and that we should strive to make the most of our lives by investing in what truly matters in both this world and the next.⁹

A popular song encourages us to “live like you are dying;”¹⁰ and indeed, we should. We ought to live with full awareness of mortality and let this understanding inspire us to live our lives to the fullest.

Our Legacy

My mother, Mrs. Susan Taragin, made a significant impact and left a lasting legacy. She was born in Baltimore, which at that time was nearly devoid of Torah

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DRAWING WEEKLY WISDOM FROM THE MESHECH CHOCHMA

Room to Choose



Rabbanit Shani Taragin

Educational Director, World Mizrahi

Educational Director, Mizrahi Lapidot and Matan Eshkolot Programs for Educators
Rosh Beit Midrash of Mizrahi-Tzemach David Women's Learning Hub, Mizrahi Lapidot,
and Yeshiva University in Israel Women's Torah Studies Program

This Elul marked one hundred years since the passing of Rav Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk (1843–1926). It seems fitting, then, to spend this year of *parshiyot* in his company, allowing his *Meshech Chochmah* to accompany us through the Torah.

Rav Meir Simcha served as rabbi of Dvinsk's Misnagdic community for nearly four decades, while the Rogatchover Gaon led its Chassidic community. In the *beis medrash* he is perhaps best known for *Or Sameach*, his monumental commentary on the Rambam. Yet his commentary on the Torah, published in Riga shortly after his death, may be his most enduring gift to the broader Jewish world.

He lived through an era of extraordinary upheaval: emancipation, mass emigration, assimilation, the First World War and the beginnings of the Jewish national return to *Eretz Yisrael*. Those transformations left their imprint on his Torah. His celebrated warning in *Parshat Bechukotai* about Jews who come to believe that “Berlin is Jerusalem,” only to be overtaken by a raging storm, reads today with an almost unsettling immediacy.

What makes the *Meshech Chochmah* such a compelling companion for our own generation, however, is not only the breadth of Rav Meir Simcha's knowledge, but his textual sensitivity and questioning. He begins with the words of the Torah themselves: a missing phrase, an unexpected plural, a subtle change in syntax. From there, he opens a much wider conversation. He reads narrative through *halachah* and *halachah* through narrative, showing how a law can illuminate a story and how a story can reveal the deeper meaning of a law.

His sources range from the Bavli and Yerushalmi to Midrash, Rav Saadia Gaon and the Rambam's *Moreh Nevuchim*, and the Ramban. Yet his Torah repeatedly leads us toward questions that remain remarkably alive: What does it mean to be free? What is the relationship between nature and the Divine? What is the purpose of human creativity? And what role does the Jewish people play in shaping history? For those of us living in a generation of Jewish national renewal, his Torah offers a particularly compelling conversation partner.

“Tzelem Elokim”

The Torah's description of humanity begins with an ambiguous phrase: “Let Us make man in Our image” – נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ (*Bereishit* 1:26)

What does it mean for a human being to bear the *tzelem Elokim*, the image of G-d?

Rav Meir Simcha offers an extraordinarily precise answer: “הצלם הא-לקי הוא הבחירה” – “החפשיית בלי טבע מכריח, רק מרצון ושכל חפשי” – the Divine image is free choice, uncoerced by nature, governed instead by free will and intellect.

The sun follows its course. The sea remains within its boundaries. Plants grow according to their nature. But the human being possesses a unique capacity: to act against instinct, inclination and even against the tendencies of his own nature. We can choose good or evil. We can overcome what seems naturally compelling. We can act, as Rav Meir Simcha puts it, “against the temperament of our nature” and even against what is objectively right in the eyes of G-d.

But this freedom raises an ancient theological question. If G-d knows what we

will choose, how can our choices truly be free? Following the Rambam, Rav Meir Simcha explains that Divine knowledge is fundamentally different from human knowledge. G-d's knowledge does not come from outside Himself, as human knowledge does through the senses; it is part of His very essence. How Divine foreknowledge can coexist with human freedom is ultimately beyond our comprehension.

Yet Rav Meir Simcha believes that we can understand something profound about what that freedom means. “השי”ת מניח מקום לברואיו לעשות כפי מה שיבחרו” – Hashem leaves room for His creatures to act according to what they choose. That may be the deepest meaning of *tzimtzum* in this context: not Divine absence, but Divine restraint. G-d creates a space in which human beings can genuinely act.

Perhaps this is why the Torah speaks in the plural: נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם – “Let Us make man.” Rav Meir Simcha explains that the Torah is speaking in human language: as though Hashem says, “Let Us leave room for human choice.” Man will not be compelled in his actions or predetermined in his thoughts. He will be free to choose.

The *tzelem Elokim*, then, is not merely something we possess; It is something we exercise. To be created in the image of G-d is to be given room to choose what we will become.

Why Is Man Not Called “Good”?

This insight illuminates another striking feature of the Creation narrative. Again and again, after each stage of creation, the Torah tells us: “*And G-d saw that it was good*” – וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב. Rav Meir Simcha notices that when humanity is created,

the Torah does not say “G-d saw that man was good”; instead, man is incorporated within the larger declaration concerning all of creation – “G-d saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good” – וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד (Bereishit 1:31)

Why? Because the other creations are *natural*. Their nature determines what they are and how they behave. Therefore, what G-d sees in them today is what they will continue to be. אבל האדם אינו בטבעו, רק – but man is not defined by his nature; he is defined by his choices, and his choices can change. A human being cannot simply be declared “good” at the moment of creation because his moral identity remains unfinished. The human being is created with potential and then given the freedom to determine what he will do with it.

The Torah waits until the creation of humanity is complete before declaring the entire creation *tov me'od*, because humanity possesses the capacity to elevate everything else. “שע”י האדם מתעלֵין כולן” – through man, all the other creations are elevated. When a person performs the will of Hashem, Rav Meir Simcha writes, “יתברכו כולם בגללו” – they are all blessed through him. Creation acquires an additional “*ma'alah vezohar*,” an added degree of elevation and radiance beyond what it possessed at its creation. This is a breathtaking conception of the human vocation. The world is not static; Hashem creates it *tov* and entrusts it to human beings who

possess the freedom to bring it toward *tov me'od*. The human being is not merely another component of creation – he is the creature through whom creation can be elevated.

What Does G-d Want From What We Make?

Rav Meir Simcha develops this same principle in the very next chapter, in the tragic story of Kayin and Hevel. Kayin brings an offering מִפְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה – “from the fruit of the ground.” (Bereishit 4:3) Why is Kayin's offering rejected?

Rav Meir Simcha's explanation is striking. G-d desires a *korban* like Hevel's in which human effort participates – בהשתתף מעשה – “the animal offered on the altar is not simply a creature taken from nature. A domesticated animal has been cared for, tended and raised by human beings. Similarly, a proper meal offering involves human transformation of wheat into flour or grain suitable for offering; wine and oil likewise involve human production.

Kayin's fruit is different as its growth has been completed by nature itself. “שיגידולו נגמר מהטבע בלבד בלא מעשה האדם” – once its growth has been completed entirely by nature, without human action, it is not suitable for a *reiach nichoach*, a pleasing offering before Hashem. G-d does not ask us merely to return to Him what He has already made. He asks us to cultivate and to take what He has placed in our hands and, through human effort, transform it into something that could

not have existed in precisely that form without us. The *korban* becomes a model for the human calling itself: creation is given to us unfinished, so that we can become partners in completing it.

From Creation to Eretz Yisrael

This message acquires particular resonance in our generation.

To live in *Eretz Yisrael* is to witness human beings participating in creation in ways that previous generations could scarcely have imagined. We plow and plant. We build cities and communities. We cultivate the land, develop its resources, and defend it. But the *Meshech Chochmah* challenges us to ask a deeper question: *What are we making of what Hashem has given us?*

Human creativity by itself is not necessarily *tov*. The very freedom that makes us *tzelem Elokim* also gives us the capacity to choose wrongly. Rav Meir Simcha's point is not that every human achievement automatically elevates creation, but that when human freedom is directed toward doing the will of G-d, creation itself is elevated through us and becomes *tov me'od*.

The world G-d created is good but intentionally incomplete. It awaits the choices of those who were created in His image. Hashem invests us with the dignity, responsibility, and possibility to partner in its unfolding through choosing well to make it VERY good!

שבת שלום בברכת חודש וחורף טוב – מאד!

Continued from page 5

observance, yet she left behind six children and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren, all of whom are *Shomrei Torah U'Mitzvot* and live in *Eretz Yisrael*.

Each of us inherits a torch from our ancestors. The value of our lives is determined by how we enhance the light of this torch and the light of our own lives.

May the reality of death inspire us to make the most of our lives.

1. *Kohelet* 7:4.
2. *Kohelet* 9:12.
3. *Kohelet* 8:8 with Rashi, d.h. *Ein*.

4. This explains why Dovid Hamelech praised G-d for the day of death (*Berachot* 10a). See also *Berachot* 17a and *Bereishit Rabbah* 9:5.
5. *Avot* 2:10 as explained in *Shabbat* 153a.
6. “The thought crosses my mind:
If I never wake in the morning, would she ever doubt the way I feel about her in my heart?
If tomorrow never comes, will she know how much I loved her?
Did I try in every way to show her every day that she's my only one?
And if my time on earth were through and she must face this world without me, is the love I gave her in the past gonna be enough to last?
If tomorrow never comes.
Because I've lost loved ones in my life who never knew how much I loved them.

- Now I live with the regret that my true feelings for them never were revealed.
So I made a promise to myself to say each day how much she means to me.
And avoid that circumstance where there's no second chance to tell her how I feel.”
 (“If Tomorrow Never Comes,” Ronan Keating)
7. See Rashi to *Kohelet* 7:4; *Berachot* 5a; *Berachot* 18a with Rashi, d.h. *Eilu*; and *Sha'arei Teshuvah* 2:17.
8. *Avot* 3:1. This *Mishnah* is recited as the body is taken to the grave for burial. See also *Talmidei Rabbeinu Yonah* to *Berachot* 19b (Rif pages).
9. *Avot* 6:10.
10. “I hope you get the chance to live like you were dying. Like tomorrow was a gift and you've got eternity. To think about what to do with it. What did you do with it? What did I do with it? What would I do with it?” (“Live Like You Were Dying,” Tim McGraw).

Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Nasi, World Mizrahi | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council

Rosh Yeshiva, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

Is someone who dips in the mikvah allowed to shower afterwards, or are we concerned about the gezeirah that says that someone who does so becomes impure again?

Although the custom is not to shower, there is reason to be lenient. However, one should wait about a minute before doing so. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, when asked whether he showers after going to the mikveh, responded "I shower beforehand because of 'Ve'ahavta l're'acha kamocho,' and I shower afterward because of those who did not fulfill 'Ve'ahavta l're'acha kamocho'."

May a diabetic walk around on Shabbat with an insulin pump in an area without an eiruv? What about candies to help raise their blood sugar?

The *Mishnah* in *Masechet Shabbat*¹ says that the prohibition against going out with an amulet into the public domain applies only when the amulet is not from an expert. Rashi² explains that if it is an amulet made by an expert, it is permitted to go out with it into a public domain on Shabbat, because "it is an adornment for the sick person, just like one of his garments." Tosafot³ similarly writes that it "is considered like a completely normal garment because of the healing it provides." This is likewise ruled as *halacha* in the *Shulchan Aruch*.⁴

Seemingly, based on this, it should be permissible to go out into the public domain on Shabbat with an insulin pump that is attached to the body since it is considered like a garment or adornment due to its medical benefit. However, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach⁵ writes that one should not go out with an oxygen tank because of its medical necessity, since the person does not need all of the

oxygen at every moment. This may be the reason that in *Teshuvot Shevet HaLevi*,⁶ he prohibits going out with "a small machine that injects medication into the body every two hours." However, regarding an insulin pump that continuously releases medication, *Chut Shani*⁷ writes:

"Since this is the normal manner of use – that a small amount enters his body gradually, and it is attached to his body and he needs it – this is the normal manner of using these devices."

However, even according to his words, the permission applies specifically when the person needs to use it in this manner, with a small amount of the necessary substance continuously being introduced into his body. But if, for example, a diabetic person only needs to eat sugar once every two hours and can be without the sugar for the rest of the time, it is possible that it would be prohibited to carry this device, because the entire basis for the permission is specifically when the person needs it continuously.

Therefore, in practice, **when the patient needs the device continuously while outside the eiruv, it is permissible to carry it. But if the patient only needs it periodically, he should not go outside the eiruv with the device.**

It is apparent from the *Gemara*⁸ that even an expert-made amulet may be carried when it is placed on the person's body, but not when he is holding it in his hand. Therefore, it is prohibited to carry candies even when they are needed for medical purposes.

In practical terms, if a person needs to take medication with them while traveling and it is not possible to rely on having candies available at the destination, it is permissible to carry the medication *beshinui* for the purpose of going to prayer, taking a walk that is necessary

for one's health, and even going out for fresh air so as not to remain confined to the house.

If one can avoid stopping in the middle of the journey, there is an advantage to doing so, so that the person leaves one *reshut hayachid* and arrive at another *reshut hayachid*, passing through the *reshut harabim* in between.

And if the individual needs to take medication, if it is possible to wait a little, one should try to enter a nearby *reshut hayachid* and take the medication there. But of course, one should not take any risk; if the person needs the medication immediately, one should take it immediately (based on *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata* in the name of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach).

If in my yeshiva it is customary to daven Nusach Sefard and say Vidui and the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, but I do not normally follow this practice, should I say them along with everyone else, or should I proceed on my own to Nefilat Apayim?

Generally, it is customary to say the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy and *Nefilat Apayim*. However, since this is currently your community, there is good reason to also say the *Vidui*. Nevertheless, it seems that there is no obligation to do so.

● Compiled and Translated by Elan Finkelstein.

1. מסכת שבת ט.
2. שם ד"ה "שאינו"
3. שבת נז. ד"ה "במה"
4. או"ח שא:כח.
5. נשמת אברהם שא, סעיף יז.
6. תשובות שבת הלוי ט:סז.
7. שבת ד עמ' קמב.
8. מסכת שבת טב.

מחיפוש למציאה

הרבנית שרון רימון
Tanach teacher and author



אלקים שבה, בשילוב הייחודי בין חומר לרוח. אך יחד עם זאת היא איננה חלק ממנו, אלא היא עומדת בפני עצמה, נפרדת לגמרי. בעלת כישורים ותכונות ודעות אחרים משלו. כך היא יכולה להיות חברה, בת-שיח, שותפה, עזר כנגדו.

היווצרות האשה מן האיש איננה מפחיתה ממעלתה אלא הופכת אותה לקרובה אליו באופן המהותי ביותר. כך היא יכולה להיות לו "עזר". ומצד שני היא יכולה להיות "כנגדו" מאחר והיא נפרדת ממנו, ושונה ממנו בתכונות ובכישורים. האשה היא בת-ברית שוות ערך לאדם, ושניהם יחד נושאים את תפקידם בעולם כ"אדם" שלם.

סיפור ראשוני זה, על בריאת האיש והאשה, הוא ייחודי לאדם הראשון ולאשתו, אך יש בו תובנות משמעותיות על המין האנושי, על תחושת הלבדיות וחופש הזוגיות.

הכתוב עצמו מבהיר לנו שתהליך חיפוש זה איננו חד פעמי ואיננו מקרי, אלא הוא תהליך שימשיך להניע את בני האדם לכל אורך הדורות: "עַל כֵּן יַעֲזֹב אִישׁ אֶת אָבִיו וְאֶת אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד" (כד) - כל אדם נולד יחידי; כל אדם עובר תהליך של התבגרות במהלכו הוא מחפש את עצמו ואת ייחודו לעומת הסביבה; בשלב מסוים הוא מבין שהוא "לבדו", למרות שגדל במשפחה, והוא מרגיש חסר והזדקקות לבן זוג שימלא את חסרונו ויהיה שותף לדרכו בחיים; בתהליך החיפוש אחר בן זוג הוא מגלה את ייחודו, מהותו ועצמיותו, ומבין מה חסר לו ולמה הוא זקוק; ובמצאיתו את זיווגו הנכון הוא מתרגש ונפעם מן התחושה החזקה ש"זאת הפעם עצם מעצמי ובשר מבשרי".

שיקרא להם שמות. מה פשר החיפוש המזור הזה? האמנם היינו מעלים בדעתנו שבעל-חיים יהיה בן זוגו של האדם?

מסע החיפוש של האדם אחר זיווגו הוא שלב חשוב בבירור הזהות האנושית. בחיפוש אחר בן זוג, האדם מתבונן בעולם שסביבו, ומחפש מה מתאים לו. לשם כך עליו להתבונן פנימה, בעצמו, ולזהות את מהותו ועצמיותו. מתוך כך הוא יכול להבין מה הדבר שחסר לו ומה הוא מחפש ומבקש כדי למלא את חסרונו.

האדם הראשון מתבונן על בעלי החיים שסביבו וקורא להם שמות - מזהה ומגדיר את תכונותיהם ומהותם. התבוננות זו מביאה אותו להבנה הברורה שהוא נבדל מבעלי החיים באופן מהותי ובעלי החיים אינם יכולים להיות העזר כנגדו. הם לעולם לא יוכלו להפיג את בדידותו הקיומית מאחר והם חסרים את היכולות המעשיות, האינטלקטואליות והרוחניות הגבוהות שיש לאדם. בתהליך ההתבוננות והחיפוש האדם מגלה את ייחודו כאדם ואת עליונותו על פני בעלי החיים. הוא מבין שהוא אינו עוד יצור במערך הזואולוגי. יש בו צלם אלוהים, בינה ומוסר, ויש לו ייעוד שונה בעולם.

בהיותו לבד, הבין האדם שהוא אינו כאלקים, הוא חסר וזקוק לבן-זוג. הבנה זו מולידה ענווה, מנפצת את אשליית העצמאות המוחלטת ומכשירה את הלב להיקשרות.

בתהליך החיפוש, הבין האדם שהוא אינו כבעלי החיים, אלא יש לו מעלה ייחודית - צלם אלקים. מתוך ההכרה בייחודיותו ובייעודו יכול האדם למצוא את זיווגו הראוי.

בשלב זה נבראת האשה ומובאת אל האדם. האדם מבחין מיד בהתאמתה אליו - הרי היא עצם מעצמי ובשר מבשרו. היא זהה לו באופן מהותי, בצלם

יפור בריאת האשה בפרק ב' של ספר בראשית מעורר תמיהה פרשנית וקיומית עמוקה. האדם נברא יחידי, אך ה' מצהיר שמצב זה איננו טוב: "לא טוב הִיֹת הָאָדָם לְבָדוֹ אֶעֱשֶׂה לוֹ עֶזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ" - מדוע מצב זה אינו טוב?

מתוך התבוננות בחיינו האנושיים אנו מבינים שהלבדיות איננה טובה לאדם. הן מבחינה רגשית, והן מבחינה מעשית. האדם הוא יצור חברתי, שצריך להרגיש שייכות חברות ואכפתיות. תחושת הבדידות מעיקה עליו. גם מבחינה מעשית אדם אינו יכול לחיות לבדו - הוא זקוק לבן זוג על מנת להביא ילדים לעולם; בכל פרויקט הוא זקוק לעזרה ולשותפות עם אנשים בעלי כישורים שונים משלו; זוית הראיה של האדם מאד מצומצמת, ואדם נוסף מרחיב את אופקיו ואת שדה הראיה שלו, ואף משלים אותו בתכונות, דעות וכישורים. לא טוב לאדם להיות לבדו. הוא זקוק לעזר, שיהיה "כנגדו" - משלים אותו, ואף מביא קול אחר והופך משלו.

כל זה נכון מן הפרספקטיבה האנושית. אולם, הפסוק לא עוסק בהבנה האנושית אלא מצהיר הצהרה עקרונית יותר - לא טוב שהאדם יהיה לבדו. המציאות של אדם יחידי איננה טובה. מדוע? מפני שאדם שחי לבדו בעולם עלול לטעות ולחשוב שהוא כל-יכול, שהוא כאלקים.

האדם נברא יחידי, ובצלם אלקים, אך מיד עם בריאתו מתברר שהוא איננו אלקים, הוא חסר, וזקוק לבן זוג ולבני אדם נוספים שימלאו את חסרונו, ויהיו לו לעזר.

מיד לאחר הבנה זו, היינו מצפים שה' יברא את האשה, ותבוא הגאולה לבדידותו של האדם. אולם תחת זאת, ה' מעביר אותו תהליך של חיפוש - הוא בורא את כל בעלי החיים ומביאם אל האדם כדי

The Lessons We Cannot Afford to Miss



Sivan Rahav Meir

World Mizrahi Scholar-in-Residence

Our Sages teach us not to be indifferent. Not to let things simply pass us by. Not to treat everything as a random occurrence, a meaningless coincidence. Not to look at reality as nothing more than a collection of news stories that have nothing to say to us.

Let's look for a moment at the rescue of the Flydubai plane last week. Naturally, we are always looking for the "hero" of the story. But this week, there wasn't just one hero. There was an extraordinary chain of rescue, made up of many small pieces that came together – many pieces of a puzzle.

There was the woman who heard a noise and realized that something was wrong; the pilot who had been stabbed and apparently managed to open the door; the heroes who overpowered the terrorist; and the two pilots who were there and landed the plane.

And above it all is the sense that this cannot be explained solely in rational, realistic terms. There was another dimension here – miraculous, Divine. There was something more.

Most of us will never be called upon to take control of an airplane cockpit. But there is much we can learn from this story about resourcefulness, alertness, and stepping outside our comfort zone. After all, they boarded that plane as anonymous passengers, probably planning to catch a little sleep, and stepped off it as heroes.

So what does a person do in a moment when there is no established procedure to follow? And how did we once again discover this extraordinary spirit in seemingly "ordinary" Jews?

But these are only initial thoughts, while history is still being written. This is something we should continue to

reflect on, rather than simply scrolling on to the next story. After all, we are the commentators. We are the first generation telling this story.

Three years ago, we entered Simchat Torah with the leading headline focused on a Supreme Court hearing over the use of *mechitzas* in Dizengoff Square ahead of the post-holiday *hakafot*. The next day, the fences protecting the Gaza border communities were breached, and we were reminded who the real enemy was.

Do we remember? Have we broken free of all our old assumptions?

A year ago, we entered Simchat Torah just hours after all the living hostages had returned home, on a morning of embraces, tears, and gratitude. Since then, the hostages have asked us, again and again, to listen to their message – to strengthen our faith, our unity, and our identity.

Are we listening?

And this year, during the dramatic period in which we are living, an event took place just before the holiday that will one day be recounted in books and portrayed in films. But each of us can already think about how we will tell this story around our own family table, and what we will take from it going forward.

May we know how to give thanks when gratitude is called for, to grieve when grief is called for, to feel, to reflect and also, to learn and take the lessons to heart.



Hila Baravitz, a midwife who lives in Kibbutz Sa'ad, sent me the following story:

"Thursday evening. I'm in the middle of cooking for Shabbat when the phone rings. It's Tzvika Rider, our neighbor, a senior medic. He tells me: 'I have a call for a woman in labor.'

"Half a minute later, I'm already in his new ambulance, donated in memory of his son Dor, who was murdered in Be'eri on Simchat Torah. We start driving toward the entrance to Be'eri, in the area of the fields. On the way, Tzvika says: 'How I wish there would be a birth here, in Dor's ambulance. This is my first call with this vehicle.'

"On the way to Be'eri, opposite Kibbutz Alumim, Tzvika spots the car that called us, pulled over at the side of the road. We get out and see a woman leaning against the trunk of the car, two small children inside, and a husband who is very, very (!) happy to see us...

"I hurry over. The woman is already in active labor. Tzvika rushes to take out a stretcher so we can get her into the ambulance. We get inside, and within seconds she gives birth. A boy. Gorgeous. Beautiful.

"We are all overwhelmed with emotion. I hold myself together so I won't cry. With perfect timing, a mobile intensive care ambulance arrives and takes her, overjoyed, to the maternity ward. On the way back, I think about the project called 'Potchot Tzir,' which brings together the Midwives Association and Magen David Adom precisely for situations like these. Baruch Hashem, thanks to this project, I was there.

"People always say about a new ambulance: 'May it only be used for births.' And here we were, fortunate enough to experience exactly that.

"Then I think about Dor Rider, *Hy"d*, Tzvika's son who was murdered in Be'eri. An ambulance was dedicated in his memory, and its very first call was for a baby boy, born right on the road to Be'eri. At that point, the tears won't stop.

"I cry for dear Dor. For my friend Adrian, the beloved midwife who was murdered

Continued on page 14

For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis

CEO, World Mizrahi

Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“**A**nd Hashem, G-d, commanded man, saying, ‘From all the trees of the garden you shall surely eat. And from the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you shall not eat from it, for on the day that you eat from it, you shall surely die.’” (*Bereishit* 2:16-17)

Following the creation of man, we read what can be understood as two separate commandments relating to consuming from the trees of the garden. First, a positive commandment – to eat from the trees of the garden. Second and much better known is a negative commandment not to eat from one tree in particular.

We can ask a simple question: If Hashem really did not want us to eat from that particular tree, why did He create it? Why

place it in the garden of Eden? And if for some reason, it did need to be part of creation, then why not place it far away, protected by angels and swords so that nobody would erroneously eat from it? Why introduce such temptation and such a stumbling block into an otherwise perfect world?

Perhaps we can explain that from the very inception of the world it was important for us to know that there are boundaries in life. Even in paradise and even in the most perfect world we can imagine, we need to know that not everything is permitted, not everything is appropriate, and not everything is ours.

This is something the Tifferet Shlomo learns from a careful reading of the verse above. We are not told that Hashem, G-d,

commanded man. Rather, “Hashem, G-d commanded UPON man (*Al Ha'Adam*)...” These instructions from Hashem were not just local guidelines. They were part of defining mankind and what it means to be human.

An ideal world is one filled with blessing and opportunity, together with certain limitations. Boundaries do not make life less ideal, but are part of what it means to be an “Adam” – to be a “Mensch.”

Shabbat Shalom!

Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh

Mizrahi Melbourne

Find a four letter word in the parsha that is a “hapax legomenon” being the only time it appears in all of Tanach.

Clue: The vowels under the first three letters are Sheva, Patach and Kamatz in that order.

See page 27 for the answer to the Parsha Riddle (See page 18 for last week's answer)

The Garments of Light



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt”l

The context is one of the best-known stories of the Bible. Together in the Garden of Eden, surrounded by the rich panoply of creation, the first human couple have everything they could possibly want - except one thing, a tree from which they are forbidden to eat. Needless to say, that is the one thing they want. “Stolen waters taste sweet,” says the Book of Proverbs. They eat; their eyes are opened; they lose their innocence; for the first time they feel shame. When they hear “the Voice of G-d” they try to hide, but they discover that G-d is someone from whom we cannot hide. G-d asks them what they have done. Adam blames his wife. She blames the serpent. The result is paradise lost.

The episode is rich in its implications, but I want us to study one of its strangest features. The woman has been told that “with pain she will give birth to children.” Next, Adam is informed that he will face a life of painful toil. There then follows a sequence of three verses which seem to have no connection with one another. Indeed, they sound like a complete non sequitur:

“By the sweat of your brow,” G-d says to Adam, “will you eat bread, until you return to the land, for from there you were taken. You are dust, and you will return to dust.” Then the man named his wife Eve, for she would become the mother of all life. Then the Lord, G-d made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

Genesis 3:19-21

The problems are obvious. Adam has just blamed his wife for leading him into sin. He has also been condemned to mortality. Why, at just this juncture, does he turn to her and give her a new name? And why, immediately afterward,

as they are about to be exiled from Eden, does G-d perform an act of kindness to the couple - giving dignity to the very symbol of their sin, the clothes with which they hide their shame? The mood seems to have changed for no reason. The bitter acrimony of the previous verses suddenly dissolves, and instead - between Adam and his wife, and between G-d and the couple - there is a new tenderness. Rashi is so perplexed that he suggests that the middle verse is out of chronological sequence. It is the end, not of the story of the sin of eating the forbidden fruit, but of the earlier scene in which Adam gave names to the animals and while doing so found “no suitable companion.” As we will see, that is not the only way of interpreting it.

Stranger still is the interpretation given by the first century sage Rabbi Meir to the phrase “garments of skin,” *“bigdei or.”* Rabbi Meir reads the ayin of the second word as an *aleph*, *“bigdei or”* - and thus interprets the phrase as “garments of light.” This is an almost mystical suggestion and a deeply intriguing one. Why - not when they were in paradise, but as they were leaving it - were the couple bathed with Divine radiance, clothed in “garments of light”?

Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah said, “It is impossible for there to be a session in the house of study without some new interpretation.” In that spirit let us see whether we can find new meaning in this passage.

When he heard the words, “dust you are and to dust you will return,” it was the first time Adam became conscious of his mortality. There is no more profound self-knowledge than this - that the world will one day be without us, and we without the world. Much of civilisation has turned on this single fact, that our lives

are finite, a microsecond in the context of eternity; that however long we live, our time is limited and all too short. The Torah is silent on what Adam's thoughts were in the wake of this discovery, but we can reconstruct them. Until then, death had not entered his consciousness, but now it did. What, if we are mortal, will live on? Is there a part of us that will continue, even though we ourselves are no longer here? It was then that Adam remembered G-d's words to the woman. She would give birth to children - in pain, to be sure, but she would bring new life into the world.

Suddenly Adam knew that though we die, if we are privileged to have children, something of us will live on: our genes, our influence, our example, our ideals. That is our immortality. This was an idea that eventually shaped the character of the whole of Judaism in contradistinction to most other cultures in ancient and modern times. The Tower of Babel and the great buildings of Ramses II - the two most significant glimpses the Torah gives us of the empires of the ancient world - testify to the idea that we defeat mortality by building monuments that outlast the winds and sands of time. Judaism had a quite different idea, that we defeat mortality by engraving our ideals on the hearts of our children, and they on theirs, and so on to the end of time. Where the Mesopotamians and Egyptians thought of buildings, Abraham and his descendants thought of builders (“Call them not ‘your children’ but ‘your builders’”). Judaism became the most child-centred of faiths.

But there is one significant difference between personal immortality and the immortality we gain by those we bring to life and who will live on after us. The latter cannot be achieved alone. Until he

became aware of his mortality, Adam could think of his wife as a mere *ezer kenegdo*, usually translated as “a suitable helper.” He thought of her as his assistant, not his equal. “She shall be called ‘woman’ [*ishah*] for she was taken from man [*ish*].” She was, in his eyes, an extension of himself.

Now he knew otherwise. Without Eve, Adam could not have children – and children were his share in eternity. He could no longer think of her as an assistant. She was a person in her own right – even more so than he was, for she, not he, would actually give birth. In this respect she was more like G-d than he could be, for G-d is He-who-brings-new-life-into-being.

Once he had thought these thoughts, recrimination ended, for he saw that their physical being, their “nakedness,” was not simply a source of shame. There is a spiritual dimension to the physical relationship between husband and wife. At one level it is the most animal of desires, but at another it is as close as we come to the principle of Divine creativity itself, namely that love creates life. That is when he turned to her and for the first time saw her as a person and gave her a personal name, Chava, Eve, meaning, “she who gives life.” The significance of this moment cannot be sufficiently emphasised. It was not that previously Adam had given his wife one name and now gave her another. It was that previously Adam had not given her a name at all. He called her *ishah*, “woman,” a generic noun not a proper name (Incidentally, he himself had not had a proper name until now either. He is simply called *ha-adam*, “the man” – a word that appears 21 times [3x7] in this early narrative. Not until he confers on the woman a proper name does he acquire one himself, Adam).

With the appearance of proper names, the concept of person is born. A noun designates a class, a group of things linked by common characteristics. Nouns speak of sameness and therefore substitutability. If we lose a belt, we can buy another. If our car is stolen we can replace it. “Belt” and “car” are nouns, in

both cases objects defined by their function.

A name is different. It refers not to a class or group of things but to an individual in their individuality. The primary bearer of a name is a person. Only by extension do we give names to non-persons for which we have special affection – a pet, for example. The concepts of “name” and “person” are intimately linked. We cannot have one without the other. The single most important ethical truth about persons is that none is substitutable for any other. As persons, we are unique. “When a human being makes many coins in the same mint,” said the Sages, “they all come out alike. [By contrast,] G-d makes every human being in the same image, His image, and they are all different.”

This is what gives human life its dignity and sanctity. Without it, we would not know love – for love in its primary sense is always directed to a person: to this man, that woman, this child, in their uniqueness. One who truly loves does not love abstractly. The lover in The Song of Songs never tires of describing his beloved, her hair, her cheeks, her eyes, her mouth, the things that make her what she is and not woman-in-general.

This is also what gives human love its particular pathos and vulnerability. We know that, like us, our beloved will eventually grow old and die, and that they can never be replaced. If we knew we would never die, we would need no intimations of eternity. But because we know we will one day die, one of the greatest things that can happen to us is the moment beyond time (the one we know we will never forget) when two souls touch and between them form a bridge over the abyss of mortality. That is what *Shir HaShirim* means when it says, “Love is as strong as death, its passion as unyielding as the grave” (the idea Dylan Thomas translated into the words, “Though lovers be lost, love shall not; And death shall have no dominion”).

At another and more general level, this is what gives human life its sanctity. “A single life,” said the Sages, “is like a universe.” However lifelike robots may one

day become, there will always be this fundamental difference between a machine and a person. Machines can be replaced. Persons cannot.

The moment when Adam turned to his wife and gave her a proper name, Chava, was a turning point in the history of civilisation. It was then that G-d robed the couple in garments of light. For it is only when we relate to one another as persons possessed of non-negotiable dignity, that we respond to the “image of G-d” in the other. In a sense the whole of Judaism – or at least *mitzvot bein adam le-chave-ro*, “the commands between us and our fellow human beings” – is an extended commentary to this idea. The rules of justice, mercy, charity, compassion, regard for the poor, love for the neighbour and the stranger, delicacy of speech and sensitivity to the easily injured feelings of others, are all variants on the theme of respect for the human other as an image and likeness of the Divine Other.

The idea goes deeper still. There is an intimate connection between the way we relate to other people and the way we relate to G-d – and this, too, is expressed in the difference between a noun and a name.

Though G-d has many descriptions, two are primary: *Elokim* and the four-letter name we may not pronounce, known generally as Hashem. The Sages distinguished them by saying that *Elokim* refers to Divine justice, Hashem to Divine compassion. The eleventh-century poet and philosopher Judah Halevi made a different distinction. The word *E-l* was generally used by pagans to signify a god, by which they meant, a force of nature (the sun, the storm, the earth, the sea, and the many other deities worshipped in ancient times). Monotheism was and is the insistence that none of these forces or powers represents ultimate reality. Each is only a segment of it. The One G-d is the totality of all powers. That is represented by the word *Elokim*. It is a collective noun, meaning, “the force of forces.” *Elokim* is G-d as we encounter Him in nature, in the vastness and intricacy of creation.

Hashem, by contrast, is not a noun but

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a name. It refers to G-d not as a power, or even the totality of all powers, but as a person, a "Thou." Hashem is the One who speaks to us and to whom we speak, who loves us as a person loves, who hears our prayers, forgives our failures, gives us strength in times of crisis, and teaches us the path of life. In one of the most profound insights in the history of Jewish thought, Halevi taught that the difference between *Elokim* and Hashem is the difference between the G-d of Aristotle and the G-d of Abraham.

A philosopher can come to the realisation that the universe has an author, a creator, a first cause, a "prime mover." But only a prophet (or a child of Abraham and the nation of prophets) can relate to G-d as a person. Hashem is G-d as we encounter Him not in creation but revelation.

If we now turn to the biblical text, we see a remarkable phenomenon. In Bereishit 1, G-d is described as *Elokim*. In chapters 2 and 3, He is called *Hashem-Elokim*. In chapter 4, for the first time He is called Hashem alone. Something changes in the course of these chapters: not G-d (who does not change) but the human perception of G-d.

In the first chapter, which speaks about the birth of the universe and the slow emergence of order from chaos, man is part of nature. That is the (partial) truth in the discovery that we share much of our DNA with other life forms. It is also

why G-d is described as *Elokim*, the author of nature. In chapters 2 and 3, man begins to use language. He becomes, in the words of the Targum, "a speaking being." G-d brings the various forms of life to him "to see what he would name them, and whatever the man called each living thing, that was its name." But thus far he only uses nouns, first for the animals, and then for his wife, whom he calls *ishah*, "woman." He has moved from nature to culture (of which language is the first step), but he has not yet understood the concept of a person. It is only after he gives his wife a proper name that the Torah uses the word Hashem alone. It is only after he has become aware of his wife as a person that he is capable of understanding G-d as a person.

Judaism was much more than the discovery of monotheism, that there is only one G-d. That idea is contained in the word *Elokim*. It was also the discovery that G-d is a person - that the fact that we are persons, with loves, fears, hopes and dreams, is not an accidental by-product of evolution (as some neo-Darwinians claim) but is an echo of the ultimate reality of the cosmos. We are not gene-producing machines but persons, each of us unique, irreplaceable, here because G-d wanted us to be. That is the world-transforming concept of Hashem - and it was only when Adam responded to Eve as a person that he could respond to G-d as a person. That is why the commands between us and G-d are inseparable from

the commands between us and our fellow human beings.

Now we understand that extraordinary sequence of three verses. Discovering his mortality, Adam knew that he could only live on through his children, born through an act of love. That was when he realised that immortality cannot be achieved by one alone, but only by the union of two. For the first time he looked on his wife as a person in her own right, and expressed this by giving her a proper name. Having done this, he was able to experience G-d through His proper name, Hashem. At that moment humanity ceased to be a mere biological species and became homo religiosus, man-in-search-of-G-d who meets Hashem, G-d-in-search-of-man. That is the profound message of the first three chapters of Bereishit, a story about language, relationships, and what it is to be a person.

Judaism is the story of how the love we feel for another person leads to the love of G-d, and robes us in garments of light.

AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- Why must understanding the dignity of the other as a person precede the ability to have a personal relationship with G-d?
- How does having children help with the feeling of vulnerability that comes from mortality, and provide a sense of immortality?

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in Be'eri. And for the mother whom I helped bring new life into the world. Then I go back home, to finish the cooking for Shabbat."

"Va'omar lach, bedamayich chayi, va'omar lach, bedamayich chayi. And I said to you: In your blood, live. And I said to you: In your blood, live."

■ ■ ■

Don't miss it: "Bereishit... In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth."

You've known these words by heart since kindergarten. But this morning, we begin again and it's an opportunity to add a few minutes of meaning and holiness to our day.

Immediately after Simchat Torah, we begin again with the most basic cycle of Jewish learning: the weekly Torah portion. We open with the first of the Five Books of the Torah, *Bereishit*, and its first *parasha*, which bears the same name.

The *parasha* is read in *shul* every Shabbat morning, but throughout the week, Jews around the world, of every age and at every stage of life, traditionally prepare for it and study it.

The *parasha* is divided into seven sections, one for each day of the week. It is customary to study each section together with the commentary of Rashi, the Torah's best-known commentator. In

this way, each week we can complete the entire *parasha*, and over the course of the year, the entire Torah.

You can study the weekly *parasha* on your own, with your spouse, with your parents, with your children, or with your grandparents. You can even suggest studying with a study partner, from outside your immediate circle.

You can buy a *Chumash* with Rashi's commentary, or use any of the many resources available online. The main thing is simply to give it a try - and discover just how relevant the Torah is, and how directly it speaks about us and to us.

Wind, Fire, and Earth



Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau
Former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel

We are beginning a new cycle of the Five Books of the Torah, with *Parashat Bereishit*. “In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth.” The first chapter of Genesis is the first chapter of the entire *Tanakh*, and it tells the story of the creation of the world during the six days of creation.

On the sixth day, after the animals of the land had also been created, and the entire world existed in its forms of inanimate matter, vegetation, and living creatures, the time comes for the crown jewel of creation: *Hamedaber*, the speaker, the human being.

“And G-d said, ‘Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.’” “According to our image, according to our likeness” – is this repetition? And to whom is G-d speaking when He says, “Let us make man,” using the plural? Then the verse says, “And G-d created man in His image” – “created” is in the singular. “In the image of G-d He created him” – again, “created” is singular. “Male and female He

created them” – once again, the language is plural. “And the Lord G-d formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” All of creation was brought into being by One and Only, and there is none besides Him. So why does He say, in the plural, “Let us make man”?

The Ramban explains that the body was formed from the earth, from the inanimate world. The spirit – “and He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” – comes from the Creator. This is the soul, the *neshamah*, a word connected to breathing (*neshima*).

And G-d says to the earth – which was already created on the second day, when we learned that there are essentially heavens and earth, and on the third day that there is dry land and sea. The earth already exists. “And G-d said to the earth, ‘Let us make man.’”

“From you I will take the material, the body, and this is *b’tzalmeinu* – ‘in our image.’” Think of a *matzlema* (camera): it photographs only the body. Not emotion,

not thoughts – it is only something physical. “According to our likeness” – *d’mut* is something spiritual. “Let us make man – you and I – in our image, according to our likeness.”

“And the Lord G-d formed man from the dust of the earth.” The name Adam indicates his origin: *adamah*, earth. “And He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” Whoever breathes, breathes something of himself into another. After this, man is called “according to our likeness.”

And Isaiah says: Adam, from *adameh L’elyon*, similar to the Mighty One. There is *adam-adamah* (earth), and *adam-adameh* (similar). That is the partnership. G-d says to the earth: “Let us make man. You provide the material, and I provide the spirit.”

“According to our image” – this is what you contribute. “According to our likeness” – this is what I am meant to contribute.

And this is the crown jewel of creation.



MIZRACHI



SHAGRIRIM BALEV

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That it was Good



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

The Torah's description of Creation includes multiple repetitions of the phrase, "And Hashem saw that it was good" (e.g., *Bereishis* 1:10). The Ramban (1:4) wonders what this phrase could mean in relation to Hashem's creations. When a human being sets out to construct something with a vision or blueprint of the final product, once the construction is complete, he is able to say whether the final product met his expectations or not. However, when Hashem creates something, the final product is exactly the way He intended it to be. If Hashem had desired an "average" world, that is how the world would have been. Since Hashem desired a beautiful world, the resultant creation "was good." What, then, is added by the *passuk*, "And Hashem saw that it was good"?

The Ramban explains that the phrase "that it was good" carries with it the connotation of *kiyum* (permanence). Since nothing at all existed prior to Creation, the status quo of everything in the world was a state of nothingness. Even once Hashem created something, after a split second, it should have reverted back to its original state of nonexistence. The only reason that anything in the world continues to exist is that Hashem continuously wills its existence, thereby defying its natural state. If Hashem were to remove His continuous will from any item, it would revert back to a state of nothingness. This is the meaning of the phrase "Who renews every day continuously the act of Creation."

The Ba'al HaTanya elaborates on this theme with a *maschal*. When Hashem desired to split the *Yam Suf*, He used the *ruach* (wind) as a barrier to the flowing waters. Had Hashem interrupted that *ruach*, the waters would have resumed their original positions and flooded those passing through the *Yam Suf*. The same is true with any one of Hashem's creations and with the entire universe in general. As

the *passuk* in *Tehillim* (119:89) states, "Forever Hashem Your word stands firm in the heavens." All of creation has a merely dependent existence. Only Hashem Himself has an independent existence. This is the significance of the *passuk* in *Yirmiyah* "But Hashem, G-d, is True." The meaning is not that Hashem does not deal dishonestly, but that only Hashem has a "true" independent existence.

The Ba'al HaTanya explains that this understanding forms the basis of a logical proof against heretics who argue that while Hashem created the world, He left it alone to run its course according to the physical laws of nature that He had created.

Such an approach could only be envisioned in the realm of human construction or creation. When a human builds a table or a building, he is merely taking previously existing raw materials and rearranging them to form the final product. Therefore, the table or building will continue to exist even after the builder has died or has left the project to move on to a different one.

However, in the case of Hashem's creation, in which the created item has only a dependent existence reliant on the continuous will of Hashem, it would be impossible to imagine a situation in which the Creator left His Creation alone. Hashem must have a constant *yedi'ah* (knowledge) of and involvement in the world's current affairs, for absent Hashem's Will, all of Creation would instantaneously cease to exist.

Therefore, concludes the Ramban, וירא, א-לקים כי טוב should not be understood as a judgement or appraisal of what had been created. It is an additional Divine command representing the fact that Hashem sees fit to allow all that He originally created to continue to exist. This command, in fact, has continued from the very beginning of time up until the present.

There is a related interpretation of the *Ari z"l* on the *passuk*, "For not by bread alone does man live, but rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of Hashem does man live" (*Devarim* 8:3). Just as the world was originally created through ten Divine utterances so too the true *chiyus* (life force) within each and every object or being is due to the *devar Hashem* contained within it. Thus, the *passuk* means, "For not through the physical component of the bread alone, but through its *chelek ruchni* (spiritual dimension), a result of the *devar Hashem* at the time of Creation that continues until today, is Man nourished."

This innate *devar Hashem* is what the *mekubbalim* call sparks of holiness, which are present within every object and which cause every object to yearn to be involved in the service of Hashem. When an object is elevated through use for *mitzvah* observance, its purpose in creation has been fulfilled. This is why, the *mekubbalim* explain, *Klal Yisrael* travels throughout the world during *galus* – in order to gather and "fix" these sparks of holiness throughout their travels. These sparks are considered to be trapped within their host objects, waiting to be released, at which point those objects will realize their purpose in Creation.

The story is told of one of the Gerrer Rebbes that he advised a *sofer* to endeavor to use, in the making of *tefillin* and *mezuzos*, the hide of a kosher animal that died a natural death, thereby rendering it a *neveilah* and thus inedible. The Rebbe argued that a kosher animal that underwent a proper *shechitah* has already experienced its *tikkun* (correction), as a *berachah* had been recited over its *shechitah* and its meat will nourish those who perform *mitzvos*. In contrast, the *neveilos*, which have not yet been able to play any role in the service of Hashem, are in need of a *tikkun* and should be used for *mitzvah* purposes.

A Good Heart in a Difficult World



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman

Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

As we prepare for Shabbos Parshas Beraishis, we hope to see the *Middas Hadin* dissipate and the *Middas Harachamim* come upon us, and upon *Klal Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael* and here. Let us look in the *parsha* and see what in the *parsha* we can take for our current situation. At the very end of the *parsha* in 6:5-6 we read “And Hashem saw that the evil of man was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all day long. And Hashem regretted that He had made man on the earth, and He was pained to His heart.” An incredible *posuk*. As if *kavayochel* the *Ribbono Shel Olam* regretted having created Adam. Why? Because he saw “the evil of man was great in the earth.”

It definitely was a time of *Middas Hadin* because the *Mabul* was coming. This *posuk* which says, “And Hashem regretted that He had made man on the earth, and He was pained to His heart” would seem to be an obvious source for the words of Beis Shammai which we have in the first *perek* of *Eiruv* 13b: “It is better for a person not to have been created than to have been created.” The Maharsha says that this idea is related to the fact that in this world there are more *mitzvos lo sasei* than *mitzvos ase*.

There are more *lavin*, more opportunities to fall and to stumble, more opportunities for failure than there are opportunities for success. Wherever you go there is a *lo sasei*, there are issues all around you. How many *mitzvos ase* are there that apply every single day *biz'man hazeh*? About ten. If a person is old and doesn't have parents, then there are nine. *Middas Harachamim* says that HKB”H gives you credit for a *machshava tovah*, if the *machshava* is good then that counts too. This doesn't mean a thought that I might do something good. It means a *ratzon*, a desire to do something good. That counts for something.

So in the *posuk* we see, “And Hashem saw that the evil was great in the earth” – there are more opportunities for failure in this world. Hashem created us in a world that there are more opportunities for failure. What about *machshava tovah*? “And every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all day long.” The *posuk* is telling us something. It is something difficult but which has in it a hint of *nechama*. Hashem saw that people are failures, full of bad desires. “And Hashem regretted.” The Torah is telling us that even if a person is not successful in serving HKB”H, if the *Machshevos Libo* are *Tov Kol Hayom*, if a person wants to be better, he has *machshovos* and *retzonos*, then it is good. It is only a problem when you have the double problem – that people are failing more than they are succeeding and have bad desires. What a place to find some *nechama*, some opportunity.

That means that *kavana* in *Shemoneh Esrei* is difficult. “The evil of man was great in the earth” – how can it be that during a time of such tragedies and challenges, do we have problems having *kavana*? Let's say that is called “that the evil of man was great in the earth.” But *l'chol hapachos* at least when you start and you say, “Hashem, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Your praise,” you say Hashem let me have an opportunity to *daven* to you. I want to *daven* to you. And at the end you say, “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before You.” At the end you say – Hashem, *oy vei*, I finished *Shemoneh Esrei*, what is going on? But at least I said the words. Let my words count and the thoughts of my heart. I have issues in my heart that I am worried about. If you have *kavana* in the beginning and in the end, then at least the “inclination of the thoughts of his heart” is *l'tov*.

What brings all this to mind is something that happened many years ago. Rav Pam coached me in how to deal with the psychology of *Bnei Torah*. *Yeshiva Bochrim*. It came to a point where some of the issues were difficult and he advised me to call Reb Yaakov Greenwald. Reb Yaakov Greenwald was a *tzaddik* of a *Yid*, a psychologist, a *Talmid Chochom* in Monsey who had access to the Steipler and was taught by him. Virtually all of the Steipler's letters regarding Psychology were written to Rav Yaakov Greenwald.

He taught me that when *Yeshivaleit*, almost anybody, feels like a failure it is because the opportunities for failure are more than the opportunity for success. Because people are over a *lo sasei*. Somebody is challenged because he doesn't have *kavana*, he is challenged that he can't stay away from certain things that are not good for him. What is the *yeshua*? The *yeshua* is that a person has to take not only the *mitzvos ase* and make them feel good, but the *lo saseis*, too.

What I mean to say is that if a person is challenged by a certain *aveira* and he succeeds for a limited amount of time to avoid that *aveira*, he has to learn to feel good about himself. He has to learn that that is positive. That that is something. That is something to build on. Too many people, when they stay away from an *aveira*, feel – okay now I am normal. And when they stumble, they feel that they are not normal. He said – no! If you had two straight *Shemoneh Esreis* where you had *kavana* in the first *beracha*, which is good, and then you stumbled, then you start a new streak to see if you can do it again. “And Hashem saw that the evil of man was great in the earth.” We feel that HKB”H is looking at the world in such a way.

Shared Love Unites



Rabbi Shalom Rosner

Rosh Beit Midrash, Machon Lev International program

על־כֵּן יַעֲזֹב־אִישׁ אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד: (בראשית ב:כד)

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife, and they shall become **one flesh**. (Bereshit 2:24)

The Torah tells us that man and woman become one – והיו לבשר אחד. How are we to understand that phrase?

Rashi – Child

Rashi cites a *gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 58) that suggests that the fetus is formed by two individuals, and through the birth of a child their flesh becomes one. The child essentially is conceived through the father and mother and the result is one entity, or individual, with characteristics of both parents. This is what is meant by a woman and man becoming one – through the birth of a child.

Ramban – Close Relationship

The Ramban has an issue with Rashi's explanation. Animals also give birth to offspring and it would seem that the Torah is seeking to distinguish between humans and other species when highlighting that man and woman become one. Therefore, the Ramban offers an alternative interpretation of the *pasuk*. In contrast to animals that mate with any female and establish

no long-term attachment to their partner, humans develop a lasting relationship and cling to each other. The relationship between man and women exceeds a cursory temporary attraction. Between them develops a bond that is much deeper than a mere physical connection. That relationship fuses them into one being. It is the **close relationship** that creates the bond between them.

Rav Soloveitchik – Child Connects Parents

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (*Masoret HaRav*) creatively blends both interpretations to offer his perspective on marriage. To love means to share an identity, a common destiny. In the Rav's words: *If the lover and the beloved are united, then two persons who are in love with a third are also united... the link of hearts is stronger than the link of minds.* The love between a husband and wife is strengthened and deepened with the birth of a child. Two individuals who exhibit unconditional love for a child create a strong bond between each other. Together

they focus on creating the proper environment for their child; together they nurture that child and share concerns and aspirations. This establishes a strong emotional connection that unites them. It is important to develop a strong relationship as a husband and wife and not just as a father and mother, but co-parenting facilitates the strengthening of this bond.

Love of Torah – Unites

The Rav extends this idea to Torah. We all aspire to be *Bnei Torah*. The “children of Torah.” G-d loves Torah and offered this precious gift to us. Just as a husband and wife strengthen their bond through their love and affection toward their child, so too, *Am Yisrael* as G-d's child, strengthen their connection to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* through the joint love of Torah.

As we begin the new cycle of Torah reading, may we cherish the messages portrayed in each *parsha*. May our allegiance, admiration, commitment and love for Hashem continue to grow and flourish through our study of Torah.

Answer to the Parsha Riddle for V'Zot Habracha (last week)

The blessing for Binyamin (33:12):

לְבִנְיָמִן אָמַר יִדְיָהּ ה' יִשְׁכֵּן לְבֵטֶחַ עָלָיו חֲפָף עָלָיו
כָּל־הַיּוֹם וּבֵין כְּתָפָיו שָׁכֵן

The blessings given to the tribes all begin with the letter *vav* (ו) except for the tribes of Reuven and Binyamin. Whilst the absence of the *vav* in the case of Reuven's blessing is understandable, being the first of the tribes to be blessed, the absence of the *vav* as a connecting letter in the case of Binyamin needs explanation.

Rashi, in his commentary on this verse, notes that Binyamin, despite being the youngest of the tribes, gets his blessing right after Levi's blessing, ahead of the other older tribes, because of the similarity with the blessing for

Levi. Levi's blessing has to do with the service of *korbanot* in the *Beit HaMikdash* and Binyamin's blessing is about the location of the *Beit HaMikdash* in his territory.

Maskil LeDavid, in his commentary on Rashi, explains that Rashi was concerned with the absence of the letter *vav* at the start of Binyamin's blessing. He therefore explains that the blessings of Levi and Binyamin were so similar that the Torah deleted the letter *vav* to show that the blessings for Levi and Binyamin were really one long blessing.

Rabbeinu Bechaye explains that the blessing for Binyamin alludes to the three *Batei HaMikdash* that have been/ will be in the history of *Bnei Yisrael*.

1. The expression “יִשְׁכֵּן לְבֵטֶחַ” – He will dwell securely” alludes to the first *Beit HaMikdash* where the *Shechinah* dwelt inside, the word שָׁכַן having the same root as יִשְׁכֵּן.

2. The expression “חֲפָף עָלָיו” – He hovers over him” alludes to the second *Beit HaMikdash*, where the *Shechinah* was hovering over it, rather than dwelling in it, as evidenced by the absence of the miracles that only occurred in the first *Beit HaMikdash*.

3. The expression “וּבֵין כְּתָפָיו שָׁכֵן” – And He dwells between his shoulders” alludes to the third *Beit HaMikdash* where the *Shechinah* will return to its full glory and dwell inside it, the word שָׁכַן having the same root as יִשְׁכֵּן.

Seeing the Good



Michal Horowitz

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Baruch she'he'chi'yanu v'ki'yi'manu v'hi'giyanu l'zman ha'zeh.

אֲשֶׁרֵינוּ מְהֵרָה יִשְׁכַּחַנו וְיָמָה נָעִים גּוֹרְלָנוּ
– Happy are we! How good is our portion, and how pleasant is our lot.

Unlike other *limudim*, the *limud* of Torah never ceases, is never exhausted, depleted or diminished! Hence, on Simchas Torah, Chassan Torah is followed by Chassan Bereishis (when we read the first perek [chapter] of Sefer Bereishis). Just as the last words of Chumash are heard: *And for all the strong hand, and all the great awesomeness, that Moses did before the eyes of all Israel* (Devarim 34:12); The first words of Chumash follow: *In the beginning Elokim created the heavens and the earth* (Bereishis 1:1).

This Shabbos is Shabbos Parshas Bereishis, which spans from Creation through the ten generations from Adam to Noach. The parsha begins before time as we know it and ends with "And Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem" (ibid.,6:8).

The first chapter of Bereishis details the account of Creation. In the beginning, there was nothing: *And the earth was chaos and void, and darkness over the surface of the deep, and the spirit of Elokim was hovering over the face of the water* (ibid.,1:2). On each of the six days of Creation, another element of our world was created, until finally the world was in order, each element existing according to its kind. When Hashem stopped creating, the *pasuk* tells us: *And Elokim saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good, and it was evening and it was morning, the sixth day* (ibid.,v.31). After creating, Hashem looked at His handiwork (*keviyachol*) and He declared that it was very good. He was pleased with the world that He fashioned, and taken in its totality, it was not simply 'tov,' it was 'tov me'od.' And yet, when we look at each day of Creation, it is apparent from the *pasukim*

that something actually went "wrong" on each day.

Rav Yaakov Bender, *shlita*, quoting HaRav Avrohom Pam, *zt'l*, explains as follows: "From the reading of the *pesukim*, we see that Hashem was pleased with His world... and yet, simply reading the *pesukim* with the *peirush* of Rashi, we see the full story:

"On the first day, the light He created proved too strong for mankind to endure, and Hashem had to put it away for the future. On the second day, there was a clash between the upper and lower waters, each one wanting to be close to the King... On the third day, the trees made a calculation that caused them to disregard Hashem's commandment: Instead of their bark having the taste of the fruit they produced, only the fruit itself had that taste. On the fourth day, the moon contested the fact that both it and the sun had the same role, and so Hashem diminished its size, the sun remaining superior. On the fifth day, the *livyasan* Hashem created was far too massive and might have destroyed the world. So Hashem preserved it for the *tzadikim le'asid lavo*, in the future to come. On the sixth day, man was created, the pinnacle of all creation. And on that same day... man sinned, bringing darkness into the world.

"And it is of this world, in which there was disagreement and discord, in which Hashem had to reassess and reconsider, that Hashem said it was very good. And [this world] is considered not just good, but very good" (A Heart for Another, Rabbi Yaakov Bender, Artscroll Mesorah, p.63-63).

This is an incredible insight from the *Melamed Torah l'Amo Yisrael* – the One Who teaches Torah to His nation Israel. So often, in life, we invest effort in a certain area, we have high hopes and fervent prayers for success, we believe the path

before us will be smooth and 'good,' we do not anticipate 'speed bumps' on the road, we believe that we will merit to see that the works of our hand are "very good."

And yet... Often, our plans are thwarted, situations change, our plans for good may become – in our frail and mortal eyes – dismal and very "not good."

But as long as we have put forth our best effort as *ovdei Hashem*, planning, producing, working, investing effort and going forward *al pi Torah v'halacha*, the end result is not in our hands (cf. *Mishnah Avos* 2:16 – לֹא עֲלֶיךָ הַמְלָאכָה לְגַמֵּר, וְלֹא אַתָּה בֶּן חוֹרִין לְבָטֹל – מְמַנָּה). Hashem is teaching us that when the end result is not as we planned, or hoped, there is still much to be thankful for, and we must train ourselves to see that "behold, it is very good."

In the words of Rav Yaakov Bender, "And in this *parashah*, the first one of all, we are being told the secret to success in any area. Keep going. Do not become dissuaded or discouraged by the inevitable mistakes or miscalculations. There will always be impediments, so the response is to resolve them and keep going... Our children stumble and fall. We stumble and fall. It happens. What matters is that we don't let it hinder us, that we don't get bogged down by guilt and despair. In the way He created His world, the RS"O taught us how to react to disappointment: It happened, and now we move on" (A Heart for Another, p.63,65).

May we merit to serve Hashem as best we can, contributing to the well-being of our families, our nation, and our Land. May we merit that the work of our hands always be blessed by the goodwill of HKB"H, and may we merit to always see – and understand – that all that He bestows upon us, is indeed, very good.

The Two Stories of Creation



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag

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The Torah's First Story

What may be the Torah's message in telling man that the creation of nature was a willful act of G-d?

In his daily life, man encounters a constant 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. Nor, can man avoid nature, rather 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 G-ds – a rain G-d, a sun G-d, a fertility G-d, war G-ds, etc. – as ancient man believed. Nature was attributed to a pantheon of G-ds, 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 G-d at all.

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

Man – In Perek Aleph

Note that this is G-d'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 urvu"], 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 to describe the 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 G-d'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 G-d, i.e., he possesses a spiritual potential, unlike any other form of nature.

Perek Aleph teaches man to recognize that his nature to dominate all other living things is also an act of G-d's creation. However, he must ask himself, "Towards what purpose?" Did G-d simply create man, or does He continue to have a relationship with His creation? Is the fate of man out of His control, or does a connection exist between man's deeds and G-d's "hashgacha" (providence) over him?

The answer to this question lies in **Perek Bet** !

Perek Bet – Man in Gan Eden

Perek Bet presents the story of creation from a totally different perspective. Although it opens with a *pasuk* which connects these two stories, it continues by describing man in an environment which is totally different than that of **Perek Aleph** . In **Perek Bet** , man is the focal point of the entire creation process. Almost every act taken by G-d is for the sake of man:

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

In contrast to *Perek Aleph*, where man's job is to dominate G-d's creation, in *Perek Bet* man must be obedient and work for G-d, taking care of the Garden: "And G-d took man and placed him in Gan Eden - **l'ovdah u'l'shomrah** – to work in it and guard it." Most significantly, in **Perek Bet** man enters into a relationship with G-d that contains **reward** and **punishment** , i.e., he is now responsible for his actions. For the first time in Chumash, we find that G-d **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** ."

G-d's Name in **Perek Bet** – **Hashem Elokim** (better known as "shem **havaya** ") – reflects this very concept. The shem **havaya** comes from the shoshon (root) – "l'hiyot" (to be, i.e., to be present). This Name stresses that Gan Eden is an environment in which man can recognize G-d's **presence** , thus enabling the possibility of a relationship.

Should man obey G-d, he can remain in the Garden, enjoying a close relationship with G-d. 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 G-d is tantamount to death.

In the Gan Eden environment, man is confronted with a conflict between his "taava" (desire) and his obligation to obey G-d. 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 G-d, he is banished from the Garden.

A Dual Existence

From **Perek Aleph** , we learn that G-d is indeed the Creator of nature, yet that

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Bereshit- Connecting the Last Verse of the Torah with the First Verse



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The Sages teach us that there is profound significance not only in the words of the Torah themselves, but also in the juxtaposition between different verses. When we study the Torah, we must examine not only the meaning of each verse, but also the reason why verses appear next to one another.

Additionally, our tradition teaches us that an important connection exists between the final verse of the Torah – “and for all the great wonders and all the mighty hand that Moshe performed in the view of all Israel” – and the first verse of the Torah (imprecisely translated, “In the beginning, G-d created heaven and earth”). This is reflected in the customary Torah reading on Simhat Torah. Immediately after completing the final *parasha* of the Torah, even before we recite the half-Kaddish which is normally recited after the Torah reading, we read the first chapter of the Torah. This custom demonstrates that the first verse of the Torah immediately follows the last; the two are considered as though they are written in juxtaposition to one another. It thus stands to reason that the two are closely connected to one another – just as there is a close connection between all pairs of adjacent verses in the Torah.

The great *sadik*, Rabbi Eliyahu Hakohen of Izmir, Turkey, composed an entire work called *Semuchin La'ad* to explain the connection between adjacent verses in the Torah. In this work he also offers several insights into the connection between the final verse of the Torah and the first of the Torah. We present here just a few of the approaches he presents.

Firstly, the final verse of the Torah speaks of the great miracles of the Exodus, which occurred “in the view of all Israel,” in the presence of all *Beneh Yisrael*, who all saw firsthand G-d's unlimited power over the

natural forces. These events proved that it was G-d who created the universe. Nobody existed at the time of creation to testify that G-d is the Creator. It was when G-d performed the public wonders and miracles of *Yesi'at Misrayim* that it became clear beyond doubt that He created the natural world, and thus exerts full authority over them. Thus, the final verse of the Torah, which speaks of the miracles that were done “in the view of all Israel,” leads directly to the Torah's first verse, which tells of the world's creation.

Another approach relates to *Beneh Yisrael's* fears after the death of Moshe Rabbenu. The final verses of the Torah emphasize Moshe's singular stature, that there was never again a prophet of his caliber, in terms of his closeness to G-d and the miracles he performed for *Beneh Yisrael*. Understandably, *Beneh Yisrael* were concerned about how they and the Torah would continue after his death. He was the great leader, who rescued them from Egypt, brought them the Torah, and prayed to G-d on their behalf. How would they endure in his absence? The answer to that question is the first verse of the Torah: “*Bereshit Bara Elokim Et Ha'shamayim Ve'et Ha'aretz.*” The Sages, as Rashi cites in his commentary to this verse, explain the word “*Bereshit*” to mean “for ‘Reshit’” – meaning, the world was created for the purpose of that which is called “*Reshit*” (“first”). Several things in the world are called “the first,” including the Torah, *Beneh Yisrael*, and *Teruma* (the mandatory gifts to the *Kohanim*). The world was created for *Am Yisrael*, specifically, so that they would study Torah and involve themselves in acts of kindness, as represented by *Teruma*.

This is the response to *Beneh Yisrael's* concerns after Moshe's death. The world's

existence, and *Beneh Yisrael's* survival, does not depend upon any single individual – not even on Moshe Rabbenu! The world was created for the sake of Torah and acts of kindness, and so by involving ourselves in these and other *Misvot*, we guarantee our continued survival and the survival of the world generally.

An additional point of connection between the Torah's first and final verses emerges from Rashi's commentary to the final words of the Torah – “in the view of all Israel.” Rashi writes that this refers specifically to Moshe's act of breaking the *Luhot*, the stone tablets which he had brought down from Mount Sinai, upon seeing *Beneh Yisrael* worshipping the golden calf. The *Midrash Kohelet* comments that at that moment when Moshe shattered the *Luhot*, the phenomenon of “*Shichehat Ha'Torah*” – forgetting Torah knowledge – descended into the world. Before Moshe broke the tablets, Torah knowledge was permanent; any material a person studied was retained permanently, forever. It was only once Moshe broke the tablets in response to the sin of the golden calf that *Beneh Yisrael* became subject to forgetfulness, and did not automatically retain all Torah knowledge that they had absorbed.

Interestingly enough, the Talmud teaches that G-d applauded Moshe for shattering the *Luhot*. Even though this act had the effect of causing people to forget their Torah knowledge, it earned G-d's endorsement, so-to-speak, and He even announced to Moshe, “*Yiyashar Kohacha She'shibarta*” – meaning, “*Hazak U'baruch*” for breaking the tablets!

The reason is that by breaking the tablets, Moshe ensured that *Beneh Yisrael* would have to diligently apply themselves to master the Torah. Now that we are subject to forgetfulness, we must constantly

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Awake, But Are We Seeing?



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There is an ancient custom to connect the end of the Torah, “There has not arisen again in Israel a prophet like Moshe... before the eyes of all Israel” (*Devarim* 34:10, 12), with its beginning, “In the beginning of G-d’s creation...” (*Bereishis* 1:1). By connecting the end to the beginning, we create a circle, just as we do on Simchas Torah when we dance in circles and immediately begin reading the Torah again.

The Kotzker Rebbe, zy’a, points out something striking about the creation of Adam. The Torah says, “And Hashem caused a deep sleep to fall upon man...” (*Bereishis* 2:21), but it never tells us that Adam woke up. Adam was created with extraordinary clarity and awareness, yet after his “sleep,” he never fully regained that original state of consciousness. The Kotzker teaches that this sleep represents the lack of clarity with which humanity struggles. In every generation, our task is to **wake ourselves up**.

Rav Shimon Schwab, zt’l, helps us understand this idea through the morning brachah: “Blessed is the One Who... removes sleep from my eyes and slumber from my eyelids.” Rav Schwab asks: If this refers simply to physical sleep, why do we say it only after already thanking Hashem for opening our eyes and returning our souls? And why does the brachah immediately continue by asking Hashem to “accustom us to Your Torah and attach us to Your *mitzvos*”? Finally, why does it conclude by thanking Hashem for the special kindness He bestows upon “His nation, Israel,” when waking up is something experienced by all people?

The answer is that “removing sleep from my eyes” does not primarily refer to physical sleep. We are thanking Hashem for awakening us from the deeper sleep that afflicts humanity – the spiritual blindness

that prevents us from recognizing the reality and purpose of our lives.

This explains the continuation of the *brachah*. Torah and *mitzvos* awaken us to who we are and why we were created. They pull away the mask of distraction and remind us that life has a Divine purpose. This is the unique kindness Hashem bestowed upon the Jewish people: He gave us Torah so that we could see beyond the surface of the world.

Why, then, do we specifically ask Hashem to remove sleep from our **eyes**? In *U’va L’Tziyon*, we ask to “live to see and take possession of good and blessing.” What does it mean to see goodness rather than merely possess it? We are asking that our eyes not be blinded to the blessings already present in our lives.

Rabbi Binyomin explains the words “And G-d opened her [Hagar’s] eyes” (*Bereishis* 21:19) with the teaching of *Bereishis Rabbah*: “All people are considered blind until Hashem illuminates their eyes.” Our greatest danger is not simply lacking blessings, but failing to recognize them. We ask Hashem to open our eyes – to see the good, understand our purpose, and recognize His presence in our lives.

This is also the connection between the end and beginning of the Torah. Moshe revealed the Torah “before the eyes of all Israel.” His greatest gift was to open our eyes to the truth revealed at the beginning of the Torah: **Hashem created the world, He created us, and we are here for a purpose**. Every morning, we thank Hashem for the ability to wake up to that reality and ask that we not fall back asleep into the confusion and busyness of the world.

The Baal Shem Tov, zy’a, experienced this idea personally as a young boy. As an orphan growing up in the small village of Okop, he attended a poor *cheder* with a

harsh and unkind rebbe. The rebbe’s home was miserable, and his frequent anger and conflicts with his wife deeply disturbed the sensitive young Yisroel.

One day, unable to bear it any longer, Yisroel skipped school and went into the woods to *daven*. He cried out to Hashem, “My mother and father have left me; now Hashem, gather me up!” Suddenly, a stranger appeared and said, “Srulik, I want to give you a *brachah* that you should have eyes to see.” Yisroel answered, “Amen,” and the man disappeared. Yisroel believed the man was Eliyahu HaNavi.

When he returned to *cheder*, everything looked different. The *rebbe*’s anger no longer appeared to him simply as cruelty; he could see the shame and hardship behind it. When the rebbe fought with his wife, Yisroel could see the difficult circumstances that had caused them to lose sight of one another. Nothing around him had changed – **but his eyes had changed**.

May Hashem also grant us eyes to see the truth of the world around us and the truth about ourselves – that we are here for a purpose. May we merit to continually wake up to a recognition of the reality of what we are living for. And as it says in the continuation of the line quoted earlier in *U’va L’Tziyon*, “May it be Your will... that we live to see and possess good and blessing in the years of the times of *Moshiach* and the life of the World to Come.”

The Day Aesthetics Replaced Ethics



Rabbi YY Jacobson

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The Brit, French and Russian

A Brit, a Frenchman and a Russian are viewing a painting of Adam and Eve frolicking in the Garden of Eden. "Look at their reserve, their calm," muses the Brit. "They must be British."

"Nonsense," the Frenchman disagrees. "They're beautiful; they're romantic, and they are enjoying life. They are French."

"No clothes, no shelter," the Russian points out, "they have only an apple to eat, and they're being told this is paradise. They are Russian."

A Good Sin?

A defining moment in human history takes place in this week's Torah portion – the opening of the entire Bible – when Eve and Adam consume fruit from the "tree of knowledge of good and bad." This was a betrayal of G-d's commandment to them, "From the tree of knowledge you should not eat, for on the day you eat from it you will die."

At the beginning of his work "The Guide for the Perplexed," Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon, Maimonides (1135-1204), one of the greatest philosophers and personalities in Jewish history, raises an "extraordinary question that a learned man asked me some years ago."

On the one hand, the Torah relates that the consequences of eating the fruit of the tree were cataclysmic in their negative effect: Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, and death and pain became the plight of human life on earth.

Yet on the other hand it seems that as a result of this forbidden meal a great benefit was bestowed on the human race. Since this tree was defined as "the tree of knowledge of good and bad," by consuming its fruit, Adam and Eve actually acquired unprecedented awareness and knowledge of "good and bad." This, indeed, served as the chief argument employed by the serpent to entice Eve to eat the fruit – "G-d knows that on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like G-d, knowing good and bad." The vision of the serpent actually materialized: following the eating of the tree, "G-d said, 'man has now become like the Unique One among us, knowing good and bad.'"

In that case, asks Maimonides, it means that the sin committed by Eve and Adam was a tremendous blessing, not a curse. It liberated them from the status of mere animals acting in response to instinct. Now they became rational, discerning creatures who could discern good from evil and live a life in accordance with that knowledge and wisdom.

Good vs. True

Upon deeper reflection, however, Maimonides demonstrates the negative effects that came about as a result of eating of the "tree of knowledge." I believe that this explanation of Maimonides bears special relevance to our highly sophisticated and knowledgeable generation, when, as one philosopher put it, people are reading more and more about less and less.

Before the sin, in the Garden of Eden, there was only truth and the opposite of truth.

After Adam ate from the tree, the result was "pleasurable" and "not pleasurable" – "Good" or "Bad." This helps us understand the three stages of dealing with addiction. This class also has an explanation of the Chassidic view on *tznius*.

The partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge transformed the vocabulary of the human race. Prior to the sin of the tree, the prism used by man to classify cravings, events and ideas was whether they were false or true. If they were true he embraced them; if they were false, he rejected them.

In the aftermath of the sin, a paradigm shift occurred in the psyche of man: Now the primary barometer of the significance of things became dependent upon them being bad or good, not true or false.

A good business, good food, a good speech, a good school, a good day do not necessarily mean a truthful business, healthy food, an honest speech, a moral school and an honest day. We often gravitate and pursue that which looks and feels good, even though it may be wrong and false.

If Adam had not eaten the metamorphosing fruit, the primary question in life would have been, "Am I doing the right thing?" Now, in the post-consumption era, the defining question has become, "Am I doing the comfortable thing?"

Our job in this world is to reverse the process of sacrificing ethics for the sake of aesthetics. We need to restore the vocabulary of humanity to its original form.

Before you make any decision in your life, ask not "Is this the comfortable path?" Instead ask, "Is this the right path?"

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review the material; we have to learn throughout our lives in order to possess Torah knowledge. There is no possibility of laziness, of excusing oneself from learning by claiming that he already knows what he needs to know. The reality of forgetting requires even the greatest and most brilliant scholars to constantly review, to constantly work to absorb and retain Torah knowledge.

This constitutes yet another point of connection between the Torah's final verse – which refers to the breaking of the *Luhot* – and the beginning of the Torah. It is because of the breaking of the Tablets that we must always return to the beginning of the *Humash*, year in, and year out. The reality of "*Shichehat HaTorah*" is the reason why we begin the Torah anew every year – as we must constantly review in order to retain our knowledge.

Torah is a lifelong pursuit. We are never excused from studying, because no matter how much we learn, we must review the material. The connection between the last verse of the Torah and the first verse thus reminds us of our obligation to continue learning throughout our lives, to make Torah study a lifelong commitment which we must work to fulfill each and every day of our lives.

Bereishis: Believe We Can Fix



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A well-to-do business man brought a swath of expensive material to a tailor and was fitted for a new pair of pants. When he returned to the tailor a week later, the pants were not yet ready. He came back another week later, and still, the pants weren't done. Week after week the scene repeated itself, until finally, after six weeks, the pants were done.

Though the customer was quite frustrated, when he tried them on, the fit was perfect, the tailor had done an excellent, professional job. Satisfied with the final product, he still couldn't resist giving a little *shtuch*, a parting jibe to the tailor:

"You know," he remarked, "it took G-d only six days to create the entire world... and it took you six weeks to make just one pair of pants!"

"Ahhhh...." said the tailor. "But look at this pair of pants — and look at the world!"

■ ■ ■

"Hashem took Man, *vayanicheihu*, 'and placed him' in the *Gan Eden l'ovda u-l'shomra*, to work and to guard it" (*Bereishis*, 2:15). Chazal explain that this duality is a reference to the categories of positive commandments (*l'ovda*) and negative commandments (*l'shomra*) that humanity would eventually receive as guidance for creating and safeguarding the world. *Lovda u-l'shomra* are also commandments related to "working for" and "keeping" Shabbos. We are meant to "work" for six days in preparation for the seventh day. When Shabbos arrives, we are instructed to rest, thereby "guarding," or being "*shomer*" Shabbos.

Rashi describes Hashem introducing Adam *haRishon* to these responsibilities, "enticing him *b'dvarim na'im*, with pleasant words." This implies that mankind needs some prodding and encouragement to accept the Divine challenge to work and safeguard this world. Indeed, without perceiving any Divine encouragement, it's possible to see work as a curse to be disdained, cruel punishment and a

necessary evil, or at least an unfortunate inconvenience.

However, if we understand that we are honored above all creatures to work for the Creator, we can proactively embrace our toil as the fulfillment of a greater Divine plan. When we internalize the fact that Hashem's intention is to engage us as "partners" in Creation, that we are to sustain the world together, not only is our job bearable, but we can be highly motivated to succeed. As empowered "shareholders" in *Olam haZeh*, this world, we will naturally take full responsibility for it.

■ ■ ■

Rav Zelik Epstein, *zt'l*, the wise Rosh Yeshiva of Sha'ar HaTorah in Queens, NY offered a parable relating to how we see our relationship to Torah and *Yidishkeit*. Imagine the difference between two apartment buildings: one managed by the owner, the other by a hired superintendent. While both managers may be capable of doing the job to protect and maintain the buildings, there is a clear difference in how they will respond when a problem arises. No matter how careful and attentive the hired superintendent may be, his response is as an employee. While he may fulfil his professional responsibilities completely, the job is not personal.

The owner however, is vested in the long term wellbeing of the building; it is actually his. Taking care of an electrical problem or plumbing issue is way beyond simply fulfilling his responsibility to the tenants. *Es iz nit genug tzu zein nahr 'shomerim' oif der Torah*, "It is not sufficient to be 'superintendents' of Torah;" *mir darf zein baalei batim oif der Torah*, "we need to feel as though we are 'owners' of the Torah."

It is not enough for us to learn, live, or even dance with Torah. Even taking responsibility and protecting the honor of Torah does not fulfill our obligation. *Ki heim chayeinu*, "Torah is our life and the length of our days." When we stood at *Har Sinai* and proclaimed, *Na'aseh V'nishmah*, "We will do and we will hear," we

actually committed to being part-owners, *baalei-batim* over Torah.

As with Torah, so it is regarding our place and role in this world. We are not just employed as "superintendents." We are also personally vested as partners in sustaining Creation:

"And G-d said, '*Na'aseh Adam*, let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness, and they shall rule over all the earth...'" (1:26)

■ ■ ■

The great Tosher Rebbe, Rebbe Meshulam Feish HaLevy Lowy, *zy'a*, once had the opportunity to complete the writing of a *Sefer Torah*. The scribe and Chasidim gathered around the *Tzadik* to watch which letters the Rebbe would choose, and to observe his *hanhagah*, the holy way that he would fulfill the *mitzvah*.

The Rebbe looked at the words of the last *pasuk* in the Torah: "And by all the strong hand and awesome power *asher asah Moshe*, that Moshe 'had done', *l'eini kol Yisrael* before the eyes of all of Israel" (*Devarim*, 34:12). When he raised his hand and filled in the letters of the word *asah*, "had done", the Rebbe repeatedly whispered the words of our *Sedra*, *Asher bara Elokim la'asos*, "which G-d created to do." This is a reference to Hashem creating the world in order for man "to do" – to work, guard, to create and sustain.

May our return to *Sefer Bereishis* empower us with the confidence that we have the wherewithal, the ability and materials, to be Hashem's partners in creating and repairing the world. This new year, may we rise to the challenge of being Jews and human beings: *l'ovda u-l'shomrah*, to work for and defend humanity – to fulfil the reason for G-d's creation of this world: *la'asos*, "to do."

Our world needs quite a mending, and it could use a good tailor. Let's get to work!

■ ■ ■

Excerpt from newly released
Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah, (Mosaica Press, Elul 5786)

Juggling Jealousy

Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

In Parashat Bereisheet we learn of the sacrifice Kayin offers to Hashem. His brother Hevel follows suit but becomes despondent when his sacrifice is not accepted and, out of apparent jealousy, kills Kayin. Every story in Torah is multi-dimensional and replete with significant and relevant lessons for our lives. Each incident has nuances that speak volumes to direct our own behaviors and choices. What can we learn here?

“Ve’raisi ani et kol ha’amal ve’et kol kisharon ha’maaseh ki hi kinat ish mei-re’iehu gam zeh hevel – And I saw all the toil and all the excellence of work, which is a man’s envy of his friend; this too is vanity” (Kohelet 4:4). Rabbeinu Bechaya homilectically explains the verse to teach that any type of jealousy, whether of possession, wisdom or anything else, is wrong, such was the sin of Hevel. Jealousy prompted Hevel to bring his offering; this led him to hatred and ultimately his death. Chazal learn from the words *“gam hu – he too” (Bereisheet 4:4)*, that Hevel followed his brother’s initiative and did not bring his offering out of his own desire.

Thus, both brothers were motivated by feelings of jealousy, which escalated to

feelings of hatred, and ended in fratricide. In both cases there was potential for spiritual growth and refinement but unfortunately, it went awry.

What is a healthy, positive *“kinat sofrim”*? Rav Kestenbaum in *Olam Hamidot* teaches that when one wishes to emulate another and not to imitate them, it can be the greatest motivator for spiritual development and elevation. For example, if one sees his friend heavily involved in doing chesed daily, one can contemplate how to realistically add chesed into his day. The world does not need us to clone or duplicate the deeds of others, it needs us to figure out how to capitalize on our uniqueness to improve ourselves and the circumstances of those around us.

What can we do practically to minimize unhealthy jealousy? Rav Tuvia Weiss, z”l, emphasizes the importance of love. When there is no love, each person feels that the other is taking from him and reducing his assets, breeding feelings of envy. With love, there is always room for another. The Chatam Sofer explains how it could be that no one ever said, *“it is too crowded to sleep in Yerushalayim [at aliya le’re-gel]” (Avot 5:7)*. Even if reality dictated that

Yerushalayim was jam-packed and even cramped, the people never complained since feelings of love among brethren created a spirit of expansiveness.

Rav Kestenbaum adds that if someone is jealous of another person, he ought to be jealous of the whole package. While some people may have areas of their lives or material possessions that may be enviable, we all know that there are likely many other things that they have that we wouldn’t wish for ourselves. The key is to deepen our *emunah*, to know that Hashem has arranged everything to the exact degree and proportion that we need to lead successful lives of meaning and purpose. When we focus on appreciating what we have, rather than looking at what others have, we will feel greater love and enhanced fulfillment.

The story of Kayin and Hevel is the story of human existence. Two people who are envious of each other for different reasons are all too familiar. Let us take inspiration from this story to appreciate what we have and use our G-d-given gifts to best serve our Creator with sublimity and ennoblement.

Continued from page 20

recognition does not necessarily imply that man can develop a personal relationship with Him. The environment created in **Perek Bet**, although described in physical terms, is of a more spiritual nature, for in it, G-d has created everything specifically for man. However, he must obey G-d 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 G-d 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 G-d’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: “There is a great need to begin the Torah with the story of Creation, for it is the *“shores ha’emunah,”* the very root of our belief in G-d.”

Understanding man’s potential to develop a relationship with G-d 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.

We Were in Gan Eden, and Now Our Hearts Are Wounded



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

On the morning of Simchat Torah, outside the synagogue, I saw them approaching from a distance – four beautiful young women. They stopped beside me and shyly asked, “When do they say Yizkor here?” I said, “Very soon.” Then I asked, “What, all of you?”

They nodded with sad smiles.

Two of them had come to remember their fathers, who had been killed in the war. One had come to remember her brother, who had fallen. And the last had come to remember her sister, who had been murdered at the Nova festival.

I asked them, “How do you carry these two opposites – Yizkor and Simchat Torah?”

One of them answered me: “This is what saves me! It comforts me so much that there is also a collective joy for my people on this day. And in general, Torah is the only thing that has brought me joy during this difficult period. Only Torah has connected me to the larger story.”

The five of us stood there, embracing one another like the five books of the Torah, in a strange *hakafah* such as could exist only among this remarkable people.

This week, when I taught introductions written by different Torah commentators to their commentaries, we saw together a recurring theme among all of them: the desire to find comfort in every story and every *mitzvah* contained in the Torah.

For example, in the introduction of the Ramban to his commentary on the Torah:

“And now, know and see what I shall answer those who ask me why I have written a commentary on the Torah. I will follow the practice of the early commentators, to put at ease the

minds of students, weary from exile and suffering, who read these portions on Shabbat and festivals, and to draw their hearts with some simple explanations and pleasant words for those who hear them and those who understand their deeper meaning...”

Similarly, in the introduction of Rabbi Ovadiah Sforno to his commentary on the Torah:

“The wonders of His Torah illuminate the eyes of all through its stories and its order... in telling of the kindness of the One Above, who brought salvation after absolute despair.”

So too, Rabbeinu Yaakov ben the Rosh writes:

“I eat [of Torah], and it becomes for me a restorer of the soul and an opener of the eyes; to hear its teachings, it has opened my ears. And Jacob’s spirit came alive, and he was granted a double portion.”

And the Kli Yakar writes:

“For many are the poor and afflicted of His people, scattered throughout all the corners of the earth and across distant seas, going from one calamity to another. For many days Israel has been in the furnace of suffering, which refines and purifies us from our dross. And though, with our limited understanding, we do not know when the end of wonders will come, G-d knows. He intended it for good, and surely the Lord will fulfill His good word!”

And the Or HaChaim, in his introduction to his commentary, writes:

“And I am in the midst of a sea of troubles, yet I have saved my soul, and I considered it worthwhile to die

through Torah. I gave my heart, my eyes, and my understanding to the Or HaChaim... For in addition to the needs of the community and the burden of those in need, there is a need for intellectual insight to nourish the souls of the righteous and good who are poor. I therefore set aside a small amount of time for this *mitzvah*, to explain a few kernels from the words of the living G-d...”

According to all of these commentators, the Torah commentary they wrote was a source of comfort for themselves and for their people in moments of crisis. Their very act of interpreting the Torah was itself an act of charity and kindness toward the Jewish people – no less!

Shabbat Bereishit begins the *Chumash* with great celebration, but it will tell us about the expulsion from Gan Eden, the first murder, a relationship that breaks apart, G-d’s sorrow – and then, His consolation.

Long before the *mitzvot* that will appear only in the Book of *Shemot*, G-d gives us the story.

The great story: we were in Gan Eden, and now our hearts are wounded.

But it is a story that is familiar and known.

And we are part of this great story. We will interpret it in light of ourselves and all that has happened to us. And we will read the Torah alongside the prayer of Yizkor:

“Remember the covenant of the fathers with their children.”

And perhaps this alone will comfort us in all that we do and in the sorrow of our hands.

Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin

balashon.com

Author of the book *Kohelet: A Map to Eden* (Maggid)

In *Parashat Bereshit*, the descendants of Kayin are listed by name and by the skills associated with their households.

...וְיֹבֵל... אָבִי כָל-תֹּפֶשׂ כְּנֹר וְעֹגֶב

"And the name of his brother was Yuval; he was the ancestor of all who play the lyre and the pipe." (*Bereshit* 4:21)

The phrase כְּנֹר וְעֹגֶב – "lyre and pipe" – names music through two instruments, one stringed and one wind. The כְּנֹר, the only string instrument mentioned in the Torah, is generally translated as a lyre or lute, and sometimes as a harp. However, נֶבֶל is more commonly the Hebrew word rendered as "harp." In Modern Hebrew, כְּנֹר means violin or fiddle.

The word has a broader history around the name כְּנֹרֶת. In the *Tanakh*, the northern

lake known as the Sea of Galilee is called כְּנֹרֶת, יָם-כְּנֹרֶת, or simply כְּנֹרֶת. There was also a Canaanite fortified city named כְּנֹרֶת in the territory of Naftali, and the city may have given its name to the lake. Many connect כְּנֹרֶת with כְּנֹר, due to the lake's lyre-like shape.

The second instrument, עֹגֶב, is usually translated "flute" or "pipe." Later Hebrew also uses עֹגֶב for "organ." The word is often connected with the root עגב, meaning "to love" or "desire," so עֹגֶב may originally have meant something like an "instrument of love," named for the effect of its sound.

That same root appears much later in the history of the Hebrew word for tomato. In 1886, Rabbi Yechiel Michel Pines coined עֹגֶבֶת, and his son-in-law Dr. David Yellin helped promote it. They preferred a Hebrew formation over בִּדְיוֹרָה, the word

avored by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, which was borrowed from Arabic but did not ultimately have a Semitic origin. They shaped the new Hebrew word around the European idea of the tomato as a "love apple." The form later developed into the Modern Hebrew עֲגֵבָנִיָּה.

Onkelos translates כְּנֹר וְעֹגֶב as כְּנֹרָא וְאַבוּבָא. The first word is straightforward – he rendered כְּנֹר as the Aramaic כְּנֹרָא. The second word, אַבוּבָא, means a pipe, flute, or reed instrument. It is usually connected with נבב, the root behind words for "hole" and "hollow," which fits a reed or pipe instrument. As Aramaic influence grew in the Second Temple period, the cognate אַבוּבָא seems to have replaced עֹגֶב in Hebrew usage. It appears in the *Mishnah* (*Arachin* 2:3) and in Modern Hebrew אַבוּבָא means "oboe," probably helped by the sound resemblance between אַבוּבָא and "oboe."

Answer to the Parsha Riddle (from page 11)

בְּשָׂגָם "Because of this too"

This word appears in the following verse (6:3) and never again in all of *Tanach*.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לֹא-יָדֹון רוּחִי בָאָדָם לְעֹלָם בְּשָׂגָם הוּא בָּשָׂר וְהָיוּ יָמֵי מַאֲהָ וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה (ו:ג)

Hashem said, "My spirit will not continue to deliberate over humanity forever, because of this too, that they are mere flesh. They will have 120 years (to repent)."

Rashi comments that the word is the same as בְּשָׂגָם – that is to say: because this quality is also in him, i.e., that he is only flesh, and yet he does not humble himself before Me; what would he do if he were of fire or of some other resisting matter!

The Midrash in Bereishit Rabbah 26:6 quotes Rabbi Hanina bar Pappa who says that even Noach, who survived the flood, was not worthy enough on his own to be saved, but rather, *Hakadosh*

Baruch Hu foresaw that Moshe Rabbenu was destined to descend from him, as it is stated: "Because of this, too [בְּשָׂגָם]" – this is an allusion to Moshe, as the numerical value of this word 345 [בְּשָׂגָם] is the same numerical value as that word [מֹשֶׁה].

The *Chachomim* derive this (connection to Moshe) from the ending of the verse: "His days will be one hundred and twenty years" – and Moshe lived for one hundred and twenty years.

The answer to last week's riddle is on page 18.



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