

# Musings on Parshas Bereishis—2020

## Overview

- + Introduction to Torah
- + A New Beginning
- + Creation: Making Something from Nothing
- + *“Bereshis barah Elokim”*
- + Science and Creation
- + How Old is the Universe?
- + *“It is Not Good That Man Should Be Alone”*
- + Gender Equality at Creation
- + *“Therefore, a man ‘yaa’zov’ his father and mother, and cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”*
- + Eve and the Serpent in the Garden of Eden
- + The Serpent
- + Understanding the Story of Adam and Eve
- + Kayin and Hevel
- + Kayin Never Accepts Responsibility for His Action
- + The Mark of Kayin
- + A Preview of History
- + Human Psychological Truths

## Introduction to Torah

**Torah is a book of *Nevu’a* (prophecy)**, explains RABBI MENACHEM LEIBTAG, -- not a book of history, or philosophy or science or architecture. The root-word (“*niv*” =lips) relates to speech and spokesmen.

The Torah is a...

- + Communication from God to Man, delivered by His spokesman, the prophet
- + Manual of moral and religious lessons sometimes presented subtly rather than explicitly
- + Unified document with its own inner structure and its own rhetorical force

The goal is for each of us to engage the world behaving ethically. Our nation's purpose is to make God's presence visible. *"The Jewish task is not to fear the real world, but to enter and transform it."*

The message often requires a critical reading of the text; an understanding of rules of analysis; and the tools to determine and define the flow of themes.

One important way that the Torah conveys its message is through the structure of paragraphs ("*parshios*"). There are two types of *parshios*:

- *Ptuchos* (open) when a gap of blank spaces exists to the end of the column on the final line of the paragraph. The next paragraph starts at the beginning of the next line.
- *Stumos* (closed) when there is a gap of at least nine spaces after which the next Parsha starts on the same line.

A *Ptucha* indicates a major change of topic while a *Stumah* suggests a subtler change.

According to the Jewish Encyclopedia "The division [of the Torah] into chapters was employed first in the Vulgate [Latin version of the Bible adopted as the official text for the Roman Catholic Church], by STEPHEN LANGTON, Archbishop of Canterbury (d. 1228). *It was adopted by Jewish scholars for purposes of ... and was introduced into the printed editions of the Hebrew text, from the Bomberg Bible of 1521 downward.*"

In Israel, the Torah was divided into 154 sections so that it could be read aloud in weekly worship over the course of three years. In Babylonia, it was divided into 53 or 54 sections (*parashas ha-shavua*) to allow for the completion of a yearly cycle by reading of one *parshah* every Shabbos.

## **A New Beginning**

RABBI NATHAN LOPES CARDOZO examines the danger of stagnation in Torah study, of being tied to only the one interpretation that has been repeated so often that it does not seem to leave room for an alternate, fresh understanding. "The call for new interpretations, and not just repeating what we or others have said, is fundamental to genuine Torah learning" writes RABBI CARDOZO, citing RABBI

**ELIEZER ASHKENAZI** (1513-1586) who understood the verse “*And not with you alone did I establish a Covenant*” to mean that “*each one of us, our children and grandchildren, until the conclusion of all generations...are duty-bound to examine the secrets of the Torah on our own...Just as our forebears did not wish to indiscriminately accept the truth from those who preceded them...it is valuable for us ...to investigate the meaning of the Torah in accordance with our own mind’s understanding”.*

We are starting a new Torah reading and learning cycle now as if we are reading the Torah from start for the first time, filled with a sense of excitement at exploring something new (or re-discovering something once studied but by now forgotten a year later); seeking to develop new understanding; “rediscovering it as never before”. It is in this way, concludes **RABBI CARDOZO**, that the poetry of the Torah can remain fresh and can amaze the reader with its multiple levels of understanding.

## **Creation: Something from Nothing**

**RAMBAN**, clearly ahead of his time, believed that before the physical universe came into existence there was nothingness until suddenly, *Bereishis*, there appeared **A TINY SPECK THE SIZE OF A GRAIN OF MUSTARD** (packed with unlimited heat and density). That minuscule “substance-less substance” was the raw material that God expanded out into matter that cooled, condensed, congealed, coalesced, and expanded to become the Solar System. **ALBERT EINSTEIN** explained that **energy** (**RAMBAN**’s “substance-less substance”) is the force that can convert into matter (“Big Bang Theory”). **Mass–energy equivalence** is the principle that anything having mass has an equivalent amount of energy and vice versa. Mass has an equivalent energy ( $E$ ) which can be calculated as mass ( $m$ ) multiplied by the speed of light squared ( $c^2$ ). Similarly, energy has an equivalent mass ( $m$ ) which can be calculated as energy ( $E$ ) divided by the speed of light squared.

In the Torah, each day of creation begins with the expression “*and God [Elokem] said*” and each day something new was created that did not exist the day before. In the Torah, God is referred to by many different names. The *Elokem* name is used to communicate His Universal Justice, Strictness and Power. Biblical scholar **ROBERT ALTER** perceives that this is the name that summons things into being from a lofty distance. According to the **NETZIV**, it was the name He was known by to ancient Mankind.

The Torah informs us that, contrary to the belief of pagans, **NATURE IS A WILLFUL CREATION BY GOD** and that each of the precise events necessary to build a universe and its inhabitants were not accidental occurrences but, rather, willful creative acts of God.

## **“Bereshis barah Elokim”**

These three opening words of the Torah are traditionally translated “*In the beginning, God created*”, which focuses on God’s unique ability to create something out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). The Hebrew word “*barah*” communicates this idea. Others have argued that the more proper translation is “**When God began to create**” which places greater emphasis on the nature of God’s interaction with the universe He created. Both translations are possible notes RABBI GUNTHER PLAUT, “*but we cannot be sure that this difference is more than stylistic*”.

The opening word, “*Bereshis*” has as its root word “*rosh*” (“head”), meaning “brain” or “intelligence”. The Hebrew prefix “*bais*” can mean “with” or “utilizing”. Understood this way, the Torah is informing us that **God utilized His infinite, unfathomable intelligence, and imagination to create our universe.** [Note: **Manya Berenholz** sees symmetry between the creation of the universe and the birth/creation of a newborn. During childbirth it is the back of the baby’s head (wherein the brain is found) that emerges first as it enters the world as a new, human creation. Conceptually, this is similar to God’s “head/intelligence” being the start of creation of new life i.e., the universe.]

According to RAV SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH the root “*rosh*” is related to other roots that communicate some type of movement both emotional (a feeling; an internal stirring) and physical (quaking, noisy, shaking type of activity).

Accordingly, “*Bereshis*” more precisely means a beginning with motion, a start of activity. The word “*barah*” is related to root-words that mean “blossoming”; “fleeing”; “loosening”; and “emerging or freeing from constraints”. **THE TWO-WORD PHRASE COMMUNICATES A WAKING; A QUAKING; AND AN EMERGENCE FROM NOTHINGNESS.**



There are several explanations for why the Torah starts with a large letter *beis*:

- To illustrate that the world is not random, but the creation of a creator. The letter has two protrusions; the one pointed up provides the answer to the question of **who** its creator was
- To highlight the huge importance of the *parsha* and the Torah at the very beginning
- The letter is closed at the sides but open in the front, warning us that we are not to investigate what is above, what is below, what came before and what will come after. Rather, be concerned with continuation of events since the day the world was created.

**RABBI J.S. DIAMOND** in his book, *Scribal Secrets*, notes that the letter *beis*, when vocalized, means “house”. The creation built a house for Mankind. **The enlarged *beis* emphasizes that the future of Mankind is to be built around home and family.**

The Septuagint, the translation of the Torah into Greek, was completed in the third century B.C.E. The name derives from the Latin word *septuaginta*, which means 70-- the number of Jewish scholars who assembled to translate the Torah into the Greek language. Greek began to supplant Hebrew as the language most commonly spoken by the Jewish people during the Hellenistic Period. Miraculously, even though these 70 scholars worked independently, their translations were identical.

They each translated “*Bereshis barah Elokim...*” to mean “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*”. This was especially important to reject any possible misleading, false translations such as “*An entity named ‘Bereshis’ created Elokim who in turn created the heavens and the earth*”.

## **Science and Creation**

The most important message to be derived from the poetic account of creation ***is not how*** God created the world [since the Torah is not meant to be a scientific treatise] ***but that there exists a God who is a Supreme Infinite Intelligence that created a***

**universe with Mankind as its leader on Earth.** Man, the goal and crown of creation, is tasked with being ethical and productive and creative. That his uniqueness vis a vis even the highest form of animal life, and his endowment with God-like abilities and potential was worthy of a special divine act is captured by God's lofty words, "*Let us make a man in our image*". The Torah takes issue with those who maintain that evolution is a completely random process and that intelligence is an accident. There is a God that exists who created and directed.

**RAMBAM 's view is that not every statement in Genesis is meant literally.** It is his opinion that one is obligated to understand Torah in a way that is compatible with the current scientific findings. ***If science and Torah are misaligned, it was either because science was not understood, or the Torah was misinterpreted.*** If science proved a point that did not contradict any fundamentals of faith, then the finding should be accepted, and scripture should be interpreted accordingly. ***"The account given in scripture is not, as is generally believed, intended to be in all its parts literal"***, particularly the text from the beginning to the account of the sixth day of creation. For **RAMBAM the six days represent a conceptual rather than historical account of creation.**

Some traditional Torah scholars (including **RASHI**) insist that the creation took place in six days, as stated. But it can be argued that the six days of creation were not the 24-hour days but were poetic references to prolonged periods of time, each of which could have been billions of years long. Thus understood, the Torah is describing how life emerged gradually over eons as simple life forms gradually morphed into more complex life forms. Adam is described as having been created from the dust of the earth. What is meant is *not a scientific detail* of the formation of human beings but **a poetic way of encapsulating the very long process beginning with simple cells found in dust and ultimately evolving over a very long period into a complex talking, thinking human being.** Concludes **RABBI J.H. HERTZ**: "*The Biblical account itself gives expression to the same general truth of gradual ascent from amorphous chaos to order, from inorganic to organic, from lifeless matter to vegetable, animal and man; insisting, however, that each stage is no product of chance, but is an act of Divine will, realizing the Divine purpose, and receiving the seal of divine approval.*"

**RAV AVRAHAM ISSAC KOOK**, the mystical first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine, saw in evolutionary theory support for the Kabbalistic concepts of the unity of life and the progressive unfolding of history. Furthermore, he reasoned that scientific ideas which seem to conflict with the Torah need not necessarily be opposed but can serve

as stimuli to delve more deeply into the Torah and discover more profound meaning in it.

The Torah consists of eternal truths that are valid for all time. Scientific knowledge throughout the ages has been used to provide insights along with new interpretations of the Torah text. Recent scientific discoveries, data and theories challenge us to reconcile with the Torah text and to be comfortable with interpreting the text figuratively when a literal interpretation gives rise to serious difficulties.

In his writings, **PROFESSOR NATHAN AVIEZER**, an Orthodox professor of Physics at Bar Ilan University, presents prevailing scientific theories and demonstrates that they are consistent with the text. *“Maintaining one’s belief in God and accepting the truth of the Bible do not require one to abandon rational thinking...science has become an important tool for understanding many biblical passages as well as for deepening and strengthening one’s faith in God.”* [Note: Thanks to **Rikki Zibbit** for introducing me to **PROFESSOR AVIEZER**’s writings. I cite below his ideas and insights.]

A starting point is recognizing that a “day” in the text means a specific phase or a period in the development of the Universe (rather than a period of 24 hours). Such a viewpoint has already been discussed in the Talmud. After an extensive study, **RABBI ELI MUNK** (cited by **PROFESSOR AVIEZER**) concluded that *“There is no consensus of traditional opinions about the definition of ‘day’ in the Seven Days of the Beginning”*

Also, to be noted is the Anthropic Principle which states that the universe “appears as if it were designed to permit the existence and welfare of mankind”.

There exists a connection between Mankind and distant stars; without them life would be impossible. This is because complex chemical elements necessary for life form in the blazing interior of stars. When a star explodes (*supernova explosion*) *“it spews these chemicals in outer space where they condense to form the planets, mountains, water, air and the tissue of our bodies”*. Like a child that requires parents for existence, Mankind’s existence depends on the entire universe. We truly are children of the Universe.

## Day One

<u>TORAH TEXT</u>	<u>SCIENCE</u>
<p>“<i>And the world was Tohu Vavohu</i>” (desolate). RAV DOVID HOFFMAN interprets this to mean that there was an infinitesimal nucleus of matter enveloped by something referred to as <i>Tehom</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Light is created in an amorphous, shapeless primordial mass amidst the prevailing chaos, desolation, and darkness</p> <p>Separation of Light [order; optimism] and Darkness [turmoil, pessimism]</p> <p>God names the time for Light “<i>day</i>” and names the time for Darkness “<i>night</i>”</p> <p>Light of orderliness shines through a chaotic and directionless universe as God begins to focus on the planet earth</p> <p>“<i>And there was evening and there was morning, yom echad</i> [one day].” [The NETZIV cites the BAAL HAMAOR’s explanation that when there was evening in one part of the world, there was morning in another part.] Use of cardinal number (day 1), unlike subsequent days when ordinal number (second, third) is used</p> <p>Perhaps “<i>yom echad</i>” underscores <b>how God became one</b> with the universe, particularly planet earth; He was deeply intertwined with His creation.</p>	<p>The phrase “<i>heaven and earth</i>” is better understood as the universe or cosmos in the sense of everything above and everything below</p> <p>The “Big Bang Theory” explains the beginning of the universe: a primeval fireball, an intense concentration of pure energy <i>appeared out of nowhere</i></p> <p>The very hot fireball cooled enough for the charged ions of the plasma that it contained to combine and form atoms and then molecules. The fireball expanded and cooled</p> <p>At that point in time, matter and energy came into existence. The universe was dark because of the plasma. When the plasma transformed into atoms, it caused the electromagnetic radiation of the fireball to decouple and shine freely throughout space (“<i>Let there be light</i>”).</p> <p><b>Once changed into matter, time “grabbed hold” (i.e., was created).</b> Science cannot explain <i>why</i> the sudden appearance of the fireball that signaled the creation of the universe, but the Torah can and does... “<i>Bereshis barah Elokim</i>”</p>

## Second day

<u>TORAH TEXT</u>	<u>SCIENCE</u>
<p>Separation of waters from initial primordial wet mass into two separate entities. This was a metaphysical, not geographic, division according to <b>RAV ADIN STEINSALTZ</b></p> <p>Creation of <i>rakiya</i> (firmament) to divide water above [the <u>atmosphere</u> surrounding the globe, according to <b>MALBIM</b> and others] from water below <i>Rakiya</i> is named “<i>shamayim</i>” [sky], a contraction of the two words “<i>sham</i>” and “<i>mayim</i>” [ i.e., “<i>in the place that there is water</i>”]</p> <p>The life water cycle structure is established. Water from earth rises, turns to mist, and soars heavenward, where it converts to rain that then pours down to nourish the soil</p> <p>The Hebrew word “<u>v’yaas</u>” [“and He made”], used here for the first time, means <u>creation from existing material</u></p>	<p>Almost everywhere in the solar system there exist vast quantities of ice. The further out, the more ice</p> <p>The principal source of water in outer space is the comets; a small comet contains billions of tons of ice...there are hundreds of billions of comets at the outer edge of the solar system – the Oort Reservoir, named after the Dutch astronomer who discovered it</p> <p>A vast cloud of gas and dust (primordial nebula) collapsed, by force of gravity, to form the sun.</p> <p>As it collapsed it heated up. “<i>The condensation of the solar nebula thus transformed a giant cloud of gas into remarkable array of planetary bodies, separated by vast empty spaces, that constitutes our solar system...</i></p> <p><i>‘the waters which were above the heaven’ may be understood to refer to this <u>ice which is found in remote comets</u> and, in the outer planets, and in their moons...this distant ice is separated from terrestrial waters (the waters which were below the heaven) by the vast regions of outer space (“the heaven”)</i></p> <p><b><i>In the formation of the solar system, the heaven (outer space) did indeed separate the various sources of ice and water</i></b></p> <p><u>For scientists, the planetary formation was the result of a highly unlikely series of events, a fortunate coincidence of nature</u></p> <p><u>For believes in the Torah it is a conscious act of God</u></p>

## Third day

<u>TORAH TEXT</u>	<u>SCIENCE</u>
<p>Waters below the sky gather and are called <i>seas</i> (including discrete bodies of water like lakes). The dry land beneath is exposed and is called <i>eretz</i> (land)</p> <p>This combination of land and seas represents the beginning of a fully formed earth: <i>“And God saw that it was good”</i></p> <p>After two days of focusing on metaphysics and physics, the Torah now focuses on biology. Vegetation is commanded to sprout. There is to be growth and proliferation. The grass has a kind of “vegetative soul”, in that soon-to-be created higher life forms will depend on it for survival. Vegetation and fruit-bearing trees will yield seed. <i>They become “the foundation and source of life, namely the ability to tend to its own survival, to grow and to multiply”</i> (RAY STEINSALTZ)</p> <p>The phrase <i>“it was good”</i> appears twice because on this day the land was exposed, and life emerged.</p>	<p>Some 30% of the surface of the earth is dry land <u>now</u>. Half a billion years ago, during the Devonian period, there was a lot more very warm water spread out over the earth’s surface. During the following Permian period, the earth experienced one of the most severe ice ages as the climate cooled dramatically.</p> <p>The formation of huge polar ice caps absorbed large amounts of sea water (around the South Pole); the sea level dropped dramatically; and large new land masses appeared as the seas receded.</p> <p><u>The period also experienced the mass extinction of as many of 90% of all living species.</u></p> <p>But at the same time there was an <u>extraordinary proliferation of plant life</u>. This fits neatly with the Torah description of gathering seas and the beginning of plant life</p> <p>Equally noteworthy is that the Earth alone among the planets of the solar system can support human life because it is located at the precise distance in an extremely narrow zone from the sun. Mars is too far, and Venus is too near.</p> <p><u>Science attributes the precision to accidental occurrences. The Torah points to God.</u></p>

## Fourth Day

<u>TORAH TEXT</u>	<u>SCIENCE</u>
<p>The structure and order of the universe continues with the introduction of new light sources</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Division of day and night</p> <p>The light will to come from permanent placement and unending movement of sun, moon, stars in the sky to measure time and divide it into segments: <i>“...for signs and appointed times...to give light on the land...and to rule over day and night”</i></p> <p>Creation of two great lights: the greater one, the sun, to rule the day and the moon to rule the night</p>	<p>The moon’s gravitational pull, causes the earth to experience secondary motions</p> <p>Over the last million years the planet experienced ten ice ages. 18,000 years ago, the earth experienced a savage ice age which began to subside after 8,000 years, when temperatures began to rise.</p> <p>It is believed that the ice ages were caused by small changes in the tilt of the earth’s axis and the geometry of the earth’s orbit around the sun.</p> <p>The <i>apparent</i> sizes (i.e., to an observer on earth) of the sun and moon are the same, as is evident in a total solar eclipse.</p> <p>When the solar system was formed on the second day of creation, a day had fewer than 24 hours and a year had many more 365 days.</p> <p>It is the moon’s gravitational attraction that is responsible for the 24-hour day and the 365-day year as well as for the present-day mild climate.</p> <p>The <i>“two large luminaries”</i> in the Torah may refer to the sun and moon as seen in their <i>apparent</i> sizes.</p> <p>The Torah’s words are that the moon, among other astronomical bodies determine <i>“the seasons, the days and the years”</i>.</p> <p>Scientists believe that our unique moon was formed from remnants of a collision between a planetary body and earth—an event that could only occur if there existed a confluence of very precise conditions.</p>

## Fifth day

<u>TORAH TEXT</u>	<u>SCIENCE</u>
<p>Creation of all living things that crawl, live in water or fly</p> <p>Creation of large, mysterious sea monsters</p> <p>First-time-ever blessing to fish and fowl to be fruitful and multiply by instilling within them the urge and the search for a mate</p>	<p>Darwin's theory of evolution maintains that evolution works in small cumulative steps over long periods of time. But those predicted transitional forms have never been found. Moreover, fossil records show that <b>species appear (and disappear) suddenly and hardly evolve at all</b>. We now know that dinosaurs and other animal species disappeared suddenly and theorize that the mass extinctions were caused by meteors that took place over a relatively short time.</p> <p>Modern man appeared suddenly out of nowhere some 10,000 years ago without any of the characteristics of its predecessor Neanderthal Man who existed for some 65,000 years and showed no evidence of change over that time.</p> <p>In the Torah, the expression "<i>God created</i>" means made something completely new either physically or conceptually (<i>i.e. Life</i>). Animal life itself came into being, initially as marine species with which the waters swarmed. "<i>God made</i>" the land animals can be understood as making something complex from something simple: the formation of (more complex) terrestrial species from early marine species.</p> <p>The discovery of ancient rocks containing fossils of the earliest living organisms "<i>supports the idea that the first living organisms appeared suddenly, virtually as soon as the earth had cooled sufficiently to enable life to exist</i>".</p> <p>We now know that the basis of all living organisms is the cell, which contains nucleic acids (DNA and RNA); proteins; and enzymes which together allow the cell to exist and to reproduce. Inanimate objects contain none of these so are unable to be</p>

	<p>thought of as living. There is no scientific explanation for the origin of life from inanimate material. But there is a Torah explanation. The Torah's use of "<i>God created</i>" means that God transformed available inanimate matter into living organisms.</p> <p>As mentioned, scientific research has concluded that there was a sudden appearance of a wide variety of animals (during the Cambrian period)—and not a gradual evolution as was thought earlier by some. Insects, the largest by far class living things experienced a population explosion during the Paleozoic era, based on evidence from fossils.</p>
--	---

## Sixth day

<u>TORAH TEXT</u>	<u>SCIENCE</u>
<p>Creation of land animals and beasts and creeping creatures, each to procreate with its own kind (<i>"I'minah"</i>) and to not crossbreed</p> <p>Creation of a unique entity named Man in the mold of God [<i>"b'tzelem elokim"</i>] whose essence will be <b>some</b> characteristics that are <b>like</b> those of God (SHADAL).</p> <p>The Hebrew word <i>tzelem</i> contains the root word <i>tzayl</i>, a root word meaning shadow, perhaps suggesting the Man was created in God's "shadow" i.e., an infinitesimal resemblance to the infinite intelligence and creativity and power that we refer to as God. There is symmetry in God's universe. God utilized His infinite intellect/wisdom <i>in the beginning</i> to create a purposeful, ordered universe out of the unstructured and chaotic. Similarly, but on a much smaller scale, <i>the beginning of life</i> for a newborn baby emerging from the birth canal is the back of the fetus' head, crowning, the part that contains its brain, source of intelligence/wisdom and creativity.</p> <p>Although Man's body was formed from the "dust of the earth", God imbues him (<i>"vayivrah"</i>) with a new life force called a soul (RADAK). Man is to be endowed with...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability to think and to choose</li> <li>• Free will</li> <li>• Imagination and Speech</li> <li>• The competence to rule</li> <li>• Intellectual curiosity</li> <li>• Conscience—only man deals with moral problems</li> <li>• Blessings to be fruitful, to multiply, and to <i>"have dominion over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky"</i> -- but not over other human beings, without their consent</li> </ul>	<p>Fossil data show that Modern Man appeared suddenly some 40,000 years ago and has existed without change until the present time. Science has no explanation for the 1) enormous difference in accomplishments of Modern Man and his predecessor Neanderthal nor 2) why the latter disappeared suddenly. Both species were similar physically and anatomically. Both have comparable intellectual and behavioral capacities</p> <p>About 10,000 year ago there was an explosion in Modern man's technological, artistic, and cultural revolutions. No one really knows why this was or what triggered it.</p> <p>But the Torah indicates that this was the hand of God:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That <i>"man was created in the image of God"</i> may be interpreted to mean, that he was endowed with unique mental and spiritual capabilities.</li> <li>• <i>"And God created Man"</i> can be interpreted to mean that Mankind (and not just one individual) was the object of God's blessings and creativity.</li> <li>• When God instructs man to <i>"fill the land and subdue it"</i> He is urging man to utilize his God-given talents to create and build a progressive society .The result was the aforementioned explosion in technical, artistic and cultural advances.</li> </ul>

## Seventh day

- ❖ **GOD COMPLETES** creation. Going forward the universe will continue to exist according to the determined order
- ❖ **GOD CEASES** from His work and blesses and sanctifies the day

## How Old is the Universe?

DR. GERALD SCHROEDER, the noted physicist, helps us understand how the universe may be **simultaneously young** (according to Jewish tradition, 5700+ years and created in six days, as described in the Torah) **and old** (15 billion years, based on data from the Hubble telescope).

Words appearing in the Torah can have a multitude of meanings. The Talmud explains that the Hebrew word *choshech* usually means darkness (absence of light) but can also mean **BLACK FIRE, A KIND OF ENERGY** that is so powerful that one cannot see it. **MAIMONIDES** notes that *mayim*, whose usual definition is water, **CAN ALSO REFER TO BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE UNIVERSE.**

**RAMBAN** observes that the word *erev*, evening, also can mean mixture/disorder/lack of clarity and the word *boker* (morning) also is related to *bikoret* which means orderly and able to be discerned. *Erev* and *boker* are opposites, the former meaning chaos and the latter meaning order. “*Vayehi Erev, Vayehi Boker Yom Echad*” (“*there was evening and there was morning day one*”) means **THERE WAS A COSMIC CHANGE UNDERWAY ON DAY ONE, A FLOW FROM DISORDER TO ORDER, THAT WAS PRECIPITATED BY SOME FORM OF GUIDING SYSTEM (GOD) BECAUSE WITHOUT AN EXOGENOUS FORCE, ORDER ALWAYS DEGRADES INTO CHAOS.** **RAMBAN** further explained that on Day One, time itself was created—a theory that some 800 years later was validated by **ALBERT EINSTEIN** in his Theory of Relativity.

**ALBERT EINSTEIN postulated that time is a dimension, and the flow of time is relative to location.** A minute on the moon goes faster than a minute on the earth; a minute on the sun goes slower. Our biology is in synch with local time so on the moon our hearts would beat faster, and oranges would take a shorter time to ripen. Time on far off planets goes by much faster than on Earth so that if one were looking down from a planet to Earth, the perception of time would be that everything was moving rapidly (because in one of the planet-minutes hundreds of thousands of earth-minutes would

pass). If one is looking up from Earth it takes hundreds of thousands of Earth-minutes for a few planet-minutes to pass, giving the perception that planet time is moving slowly.

The Torah describes creation as Day One (rather than the First Day) because it is looking forward from the beginning. By the time Adam was created, six days had passed. DR. SCHROEDER reconciles this with scientific measurements of the universe being some 15 billion years old by analyzing how the 15 billion years would be perceived from the beginning looking forward. Imagine that at the beginning of time there was a force at the outer end of the universe that sent a blast of light (pulse) to Earth every second. Light travels 300 million meters per second so these pulses arrived on Earth some billions of years later. As the universe stretches, the space between pulses is stretching and it is taking these light blasts longer to reach Earth.

Modern science has calculated that there is a million million (1 with 12 zeros after it) relationship between time as it existed near its beginning and time today. The information about the universe's creation in six days as presented in the Torah (*"in the beginning"*) and emanating from just outside the universe (before it was created) would be received on Earth after six million million days. The age of the universe can be calculated by dividing these six million million days by 365. Every time the universe doubles, the perception of time is cut in half but as the universe gets bigger the doubling time gets longer.

The first Biblical day that lasted 24 hours from the "beginning of time" perspective lasted eight billion years from "our" perspective. The second Biblical day lasted half the previous day from our perspective, or two billion years. Day three of 24 hours equates to two billion years (half the previous day); the fourth day equates to one billion years and the fifth and sixth days equate to one-half and one quarter billion years, respectively. The six days of creation from God's "beginning of time" perspective together equate to an age for the universe of 15 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  billion years from our perspective!

### **"It is Not Good That Man Should Be Alone"**

Virtually every item in the step-by-step account of the Creation was deemed by God to be good. So was the totality of the Creation with its structural harmony, about which the Torah states *"God saw all that He had made and behold it was very good"*. [Only day two makes no mention of the word "good" (*"tov"*) because, according to RASHI, the

work begun that day was not completed until the following day. Day three repeats the word “good” twice.]

Only the creation of Man makes no mention of this Divine satisfaction because it is only Man that has the free choice to act in a way that is either good or is bad. Because human conduct is not preordained, God could not conclude in advance that Man was or would be good. (Later at the end of the parsha we read how God saw/perceived/realized that Man’s behavior and thoughts had turned evil.)

Immediately after Man’s creation God emphatically pronounced Man’s being alone as undesirable:

- The **SAGES** of the Talmud thought that loneliness is not good for one’s mental health, noting that *“a life without a wife is devoid of joy, blessing and wellbeing”*.
- Other scholars thought that as a practical matter, a bachelor could not fend for himself. A division of labor and a partnership were necessary.
- **SEFORNO** elaborates that without this division of labor Man would be so preoccupied with his daily physical needs that he would not be able to realize his full spiritual aspirations.
- **RASHI** reasons that were man alone, it might be thought that two deities ruled the entire universe—partner-less Man in the “lower” world and partner-less God in the “upper” world (heavens).
- **AKEDAT YITZCHAK** thinks the introduction of a special relationship built on love and of helping one another further distinguishes the human couple from members of the animal kingdom.
- **SHADAL**’s view is that God purposely allowed Man to be alone for a brief time so that once he would meet Woman, he would be so connected to her and would realize that something important had been lacking without her.

Because it was not His original purpose to allow Man to remain alone, God announces the urgent need to *“eesa lo ayzer k’negdo”* (“I will make a helper [or sustainer] for him”). But, notes **NECHAMA LEIBOWITZ**, the introduction of Woman with her differing features does not in and of itself guarantee a good situation, **unless the two opposite personalities merge into a unified whole. “If they do not show themselves worthy the result will be disharmony—a clash of opposites.”**

## Gender Equality at Creation

The Torah contains two creation accounts.

In the first, man and woman are equal in that they share their defining characteristic, the image of God: “So God created humanity in his image, in the image of God He created it; **male and female he created them**...When God created Human, he made it in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them. And he blessed them and called them ‘Human’ when they were created.” **The original Adam was a male and female composite that was only separated later.** RAV HIRSCH expounded this verse unequivocally in support of **the fundamental equality of men and women**, “Although all living creatures were created in both sexes, this is only stressed at human beings to lay down the fact that both sexes were created equally, directly by G-d, and in equal likeness to Him.”

But in the second account it seems (on the surface) that woman was created not as an equal but only as a subordinate helper עזר כנגדו (“help mate opposite him” or “helper corresponding to him”).

DR. RAANAN EICHLER notes that while the word עזר could mean helper, there are several places in the Torah where the word means, “savior”, “deliverer”, or “rescuer”, **almost always referring to God, when He saves the subject from danger.** Here the עזר that God created in the form of Woman was **to protect Man from the peril of loneliness.** The word כנגדו usually translated as “opposite to him” is better translated “**equivalent** to him.” “Indeed, this is what כנגד means in later Rabbinic Hebrew, as in ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולם, ‘Torah study is **equivalent** to all of them’”. Woman is of equal rank to Man.

Furthermore, the part of Man’s body that Woman was created from, צלע (*tsela*) has been uncritically defined as “rib”. “But the preponderance of evidence suggests that the meaning of *tsela* in our account is “side” or “flank.” **Elsewhere in the Bible, it almost always refers to a side – of a hill, of a building, or of an object. Nowhere in the Bible does it refer to an anatomical rib.**”

**The original human was created as two-sided, two-faced entity with both male and female characteristics. The *tsela* was taken from one of the original sides.** In the second creation account, one sex was created first (male) then the second (but equal) one (woman) was formed by removing one of his sides.

PROFESSOR RABBI TAMARA ESKENAZI offers an alternate approach to the importance of an equal partner. Partnership is not about evading loneliness but about our ability to exist and to flourish as humans by engaging with others. **WE EACH NEED TO HAVE A PARTNER WITH WHOM WE CAN INTERACT; WHO CAN TAKE A STAND; AND NOT MERELY ECHO OUR VIEWS.**

RABBI DAVID FOHRMAN views the word *koneh* when used in connection with man-woman relationship NOT as acquisition or Ownership or control but as **Completion.**

**“Therefore, a man ‘yaa’zov’ his father and mother, and cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”**

The Torah had just described how God had taken one of Adam’s sides; built it into a woman; then brought her to Adam, whose response was *“this shall be called ‘ishah’(woman) because she was taken from ‘ish’(man).*

The word **yaa’zov** is translated “to leave” and the meaning of the verse is that after marriage a man shall leave/abandon his parents and strike out on his own and set up a new home with his new wife. But how does this advice--assumed to be a general teaching based on the narrative and not Adam’s words-- follow logically from the previous statements (*“therefore”*) since Adam had no biological parents to leave?

To better understand this verse, some propose an alternate definition of **yaa’zov**. In many places in Tanach the word means...

- **Helping to reposition** the load on a donkey’s back (*azov t’azov*) belonging to your kinsman to set *it right* thereby correcting a situation deemed unfortunate
- **Restoring**

Furthermore, modern scholars have discovered cognates to the root-word in other ancient languages that mean “to assist”, “to uphold”, and “to help”. Therefore, proposes PROFESSOR ZIONY ZEVIT, the verse is better translated ***“Therefore, a man strengthens/supports/helps his father and mother even as he develops a different, new relationship of clinging to his woman/wife and they become one flesh”***. God had acted like a good father to Adam, bringing him into the world, providing sustenance and giving him employment in the garden. Now He has provided a wife for him. **Therefore**, God (like any parent) expects his “son” [and Mankind] to be both caring, responsible, and loyal to Him while simultaneously clinging to his spouse.

The Hebrew text word for “cling” is *davaak*, a word in modern Hebrew that means “glue” and may also be related to the word for connector and to the word for honey

("d'vaash"). **Ira Schmookler** speculates that the Torah is underscoring that the desired, ultimate marital relationship is one imbued with sticking-togetherness, close connections, and sweetness.

## **Eve and the Serpent in the Garden of Eden**

Mankind's first directive from God was: *"You may eat **freely** of **every** tree in the Garden, but you shall not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil."* **NECHAMA LEIBOWITZ** comments that the doubling of the verb in Hebrew shows the wide freedom of choice given to Man.

*"And the Serpent was cunning, more than all the beasts in the field..."* This embodiment of the evil inclination instigated a magnification and exaggeration of the stringency of the prohibition designed to convince the listener to give in to temptation.

Using half-truths, the Serpent asks innocently, *"af ki amar elokim lo souchlu mekol eitz hagan" --"Is it really true that God said that you should not eat from every tree in the Garden" [or "Even if God said such a thing, what of it?"]*. Eve weakly protests that, *"we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden"* in words that do not fully communicate the broad freedom God granted. She then explains *"but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the Garden God has said you shall neither eat nor touch lest you die"*. This statement makes it seem like this tree was the only one that mattered, located in the midst (middle) rather than simply a tree. Also, God never said the tree could not be touched. Furthermore, notes **RABBI BENNO JACOB, THROUGH HER WORDING EVE TRANSFORMS WHAT WAS A MORAL CONNECTION BETWEEN SIN AND PUNISHMENT INTO A MECHANICAL CAUSE AND EFFECT.**

The Serpent, casting doubts on the seriousness of God's restriction, responds *"you shall not surely die"*; the threatened punishment will never come to pass. Furthermore, says the Serpent to Eve, the prohibition was not meant for your benefit, only for God's because He knows that when you eat the fruit of this tree, *"you will be like gods, knowing good and evil"*.

Eve had been avoiding this special tree. But now, curiosity gets the better of her and she allows herself to be seduced by the Serpent's words. She becomes less fearful and begins to sense how pleasant and desirous the tree is. No inhibitions remain and she eats the fruit and gives it to her husband Adam to eat. Even before God confronts them, **THE COMMISSION OF SIN CAUSES GUILT AND CREATES THE URGE TO**

**FLEE AND TO HIDE.** States the Midrash, “*Before a man sins, he inspires fear and awe, and creatures are afraid of him. Once he has sinned, he is given up to fear and awe and is frightened of others.*” Such is the power of guilt that even the rustling of leaves reminds the sinner of his wrongdoings.

**BENNO JACOB** points out that in contrast to His questioning of Adam and Eve, God does not query the serpent about *its* behavior because the serpent has no moral personality. The snake always crawled but its punishment for having pulled Man down into the dust is that its means of locomotion would be perceived as a curse. Because it dragged Man down, it was now destined to continue to slither in the dirt and be the object of man’s hatred.

God spares Eve any punishment for her actions because she is already “cursed” (menstruation?) with childbirth labor pains and with her psychological makeup of attraction to-- and dependency on-- her mate who will dominate her (**BENNO JACOB**). Eve now realizes that this will be a permanent biological/emotional state. Others explain that by influencing Adam so negatively, **Eve failed in her role as an equal, assisting partner. Her punishment for trying to dominate Adam was that she lost her status as an equal and, henceforth, she would be dependent on a mate who would dominate her.** She would have to submit sexually to man and then experience the pain of the resulting childbirth (**CHIZKUNI**).

Adam failed to heed God’s single commandment not to **eat** from the tree. Therefore, his future **eating**/food source will come about only after his sweat-of-the-brow arduous work in fields that will also yield thorns and thistles. **Man’s “return to the earth” (death) is not a punishment for his behavior but a statement of the reality of ultimate return of all living things to their source.** Others explain that Adam’s primary responsibility was to rule over the land and its plant and animal life. Instead, he let his desire for plant (fruit) and the influences of an animal (serpent) overtake him, creating a hierarchical imbalance. Therefore, his punishment was that the land would rule over him—only through sweat and toil would the land produce and at the end of Adam’s life the land would consume him.

## **The Serpent**

- ❖ Some commentators equate the snake with the ***Yetzer Hara—the self-destructive tendencies to move away from God.***
- ❖ **SHADAL** thinks the **serpent is really the thoughts in Eve’s mind** after she saw the snake eat and not die.

- ❖ BENNO JACOB'S approach is that "**thoughts of man are put in the mouth of an animal as they come from the beast in man**". The serpent is described as *arum* which means subtle or sly but also means naked.
- ❖ Some psychologists think that the Torah is describing **the sexual awakening as two humans mature from childlike behavior to adults**, a view reinforced by the talk about touching and eating-- words also associated with the sensual. [Note: The adjective *arum* used to describe the Serpent links to the immediately preceding verse which states that both Adam and Eve were naked (*arumim*) and were not ashamed]. The woman tries to deny her sexuality, but the natural urge embodied in phallic-like serpent is too overwhelming to ignore.

## **Understanding the Story of Adam and Eve**

RABBI MARC ANGEL proposes viewing the story not in terms of sin and punishment, but as "***a fundamental transition in the nature of humanity***". Initially, Adam and Eve's basic needs were provided for them without work or planning. Like animals they "grazed" without self-consciousness of their nakedness or awareness of their mortality. But after eating the fruit of the forbidden tree they "awoke" and became conscious of their nakedness and their ultimate mortality.

Eating the fruit was an essential step in their evolution and their development of human consciousness and awareness of surrounding reality. Instead of pleading for mercy after being informed of the consequences of their behavior, "*Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.*" There was no reversion to the former state of pre-consciousness. Adam recognized that Eve was "*to be the matriarch of a new progeny of human beings, who lived with all the strengths and weaknesses of being mortal.*"

Once they realized the reality of death, God placed *cheruvim* to prevent them from eating of the tree of life (not previously prohibited to them) to prevent their retrogression to an unrealistic, seemingly eternal utopian life. [Note: RABBI ANGEL speculates that the reason God prohibited eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge was because He wanted them to "*develop their human consciousness in a slower, more organic way*" so as to be "*better prepared to handle the challenges of being mortal human beings*".] Later listing of the genealogy between Adam and Noah concludes everyone's length of life with the phrase "*and he died*" perhaps to drive

home the point that, like Adam, no one lives forever, and that death is the final part of the life process.

RABBI JONATHAN SACKS' analysis builds on the ideas of anthropologist RUTH BENEDICT whose insight is that there are some cultures that are built on shame in which the highest value is honor and other cultures built on guilt in which the highest value is righteousness. Because shame results from not living up to others' expectations, its societies are other-directed. They are usually *visual* in nature, having to do with how one appears (or imagines appearing) to others. Shame prompts one to want to hide or to disappear or to be somewhere else. Guilt-based societies are inner-directed and reflect the feeling of failure to do what our own conscience demands. In these societies' conscience (failure to *listen*) accompanies us wherever we go.

**The Adam and Eve saga is all about the visual-- appearances, shame, vision and sight:** "...God knows that on the day you eat from it, your **eyes** will be opened...the **eyes** of both of them were opened...the woman **saw** that the tree was good to eat and **desirable to the eyes.**" Shame is the key emotion. After eating they were ashamed and tried to hide.

But in Judaism God is **heard, never seen.** Adam and Eve "**heard** God's voice..." In replying to God Adam says, "**I heard** your voice". **THEIR SIN WAS IN FOLLOWING THEIR EYES INSTEAD OF THEIR EARS.** They concentrated on the *visual* appeal instead of *listening* to God's command not to eat. "Seeing" is not only the visual but also about gaining insight and understanding. Shame cultures create social conformity and a fear of losing honor and face should others see one behaving in ways that are at variance with the group. **By not conforming to what the masses do, Judaism is a kind of living protest the herd instinct.** The Patriarch Avraham was the world's first iconoclast (both literally and figuratively). "**The ethic of Judaism is not a matter of appearances, of honor and shame. It is a matter of hearing and heeding the voice of God in the depths of the soul.**"

RABBI SACKS concludes that the Adam and Eve story contains a profound message about the way we should live. They chose to follow their eyes (the tree and the fruit) instead of their ears (God's command) and felt shame, not guilt, and the inevitable consequence. But **Judaism is about listening and not about seeing:** "*Shema Yisroel*" ("**Listen**, Israel"). God teaches Elijah the prophet that He is not in the whirlwind, the earthquake, or the fire but in "*the still, small voice*".

We can find Jewish spirituality by **listening** to the song of Nature; to the poetry and music of prayer and the Psalms; to the poetry and truth of God's words in the Torah; and to the words of those we love and who love us.

## Kayin and Hevel

In this story the Torah, for the first time, consistently employs the Essence name of God (the yud, hay, vav, hay) possibly because it stresses core and essential Truths of human existence:

- Divine mercy is critical to the formation and development of family
- His mercy serves as a role model for human interaction
- Inherent in the human condition are sibling rivalry and other (sometimes unconscious) aggressive emotions that drive behavior

Kayin's name is based on Eve's statement that "*I **have gained** (kaneese—which sounds like Kayin) a male child (or man) **with the help of God**" (or "**from** God"). Her praise for God may have reflected her gratitude for a long-awaited pregnancy and birth or may reflect her relief that the intimacy with her husband did not cause her own death as she had feared all along.*

Regarding Eve's second son, the Torah simply states that "*she then bore his brother Hevel*" without offering any explanation for the name. It sounds like the name was already chosen by someone else even before the birth. Hevel means breath or vapor, something fleeting.

Did Eve favor her first born and ignore child number two? Did her enthusiasm and gratitude to God lessen once she gave birth a second time and realized that childbirth was not a Divine phenomenon but a natural event? Or is this the Torah's way of letting us know in advance that the second child's life would be like a fleeting breath (i.e., that he would die prematurely)?

Kayin follows in the footsteps of his farmer father Adam--despite being fully aware that farming would be hard and often unfruitful ("*kotz vedardar tatzmeach lach*") -- and decides on his own to bring a Thanksgiving offering to God. Hevel follows suit and brings an offering.

The text states that God "*accepted Hevel and his offering*" but "*did not accept Kayin and his offering*" --but does not state explicitly *how* the brothers knew who is offering was favored. RASHI thinks that a fire came down from heaven and burned Hevel's offering. We are not informed **why** it was favored or the time gap between the offerings. RASHI speculates that Kayin took inferior grain from public lands. This required no exertion of effort on his part. Hevel, on the other hand, spent time raising

and preparing to bring an animal offering from the finest of his flock. That the text states the name of the brother first and then adds “*and his offering*” suggests that it may have been the *intent* of each brother that God responded to and not the quality of the offering itself.

It is possible the offerings took place simultaneously. When he sees his younger brother not only copying but also outdoing him (by bringing prime meat from the higher life form of animals), **Kayin becomes enraged and, I think, is convinced that God will not accept his offering.** (Note: Hevel, by his display of one-upmanship, may be provoking Kayin, thereby fanning the flames of jealousy and rivalry.) This assumed conclusion amplifies Kayin's existing, already-intense sibling rivalry and brings on feelings of depression, inferiority, and hopelessness.

Kayin is deeply pained and embarrassed. God acknowledges the enormity of Kayin's rage--and confirms that these emotions could completely swallow him up and destroy him--but also informs Kayin that he [Mankind] can confront and control these raging emotions. (Today this might involve undergoing psychoanalysis.)

Some have speculated that Kayin was jealous of his younger brother's financial success so decided to outdo him by being the first to publicly demonstrate his devotion to God. Perhaps his inner rage and resentment towards God for allowing this situation to exist manifest itself in his self-defeating decision to bring an offering of lesser quality.

God attempts to soften Kayin's feelings of rejection and embarrassment with the words “*Lama Chara lach*” (“*why are you so upset?*”) SFORNO thinks this means that God is asking Kayin why he is dwelling on the past and not focusing on how to deal with his issues. **Even if one errs, there exists an inner power to change, to be forgiven and to feel uplifted.** One who does not make the effort, however, will be overwhelmed with a deadening existence.

“*Kayin told it to his brother Hevel and when they were in the field Kayin rose up against his brother Hevel and killed him.*” The text makes no mention of what they were talking about. A Midrash cites three opinions:

One view is that they **decided to divide the world** with one taking the lands and the other taking the movables. Soon one said, “*You are standing on my land-- get off!*” and the other responded “*The clothes you are wearing are mine-- take them off!*” During this heated exchange, an enraged Kayin rose and killed his brother.

- R. JOSHUA OF SAKHNIN in the name of R. LEVI said that they agreed to divide material positions equally but argued about **on whose property the Temple**

**should be built.** The ""field" referred to in "*And when they were in the field*" is the Temple, as it is written "*Zion shall be plowed as a field*". In the heat of the argument, Kayin rose and murdered Hevel.

- **YEHUDA BAR AMI** said: **They were arguing over Eve.**

The first opinion maintains **that killings and war are fought over economic issues**, over material wealth. R' JOSHUA, holds that **bloodshed is prompted by religious and ideological conflict**. RABBI YEHUDA contends that **Mankind's deadly quarrels are rooted in sexual passion**.

## **Kayin Never Accepts Responsibility for His Action**

God asks Kayin "*ayay Hevel acheycha*" (*where is your brother Hevel*)? The use of the Hebrew word "*ayay*" communicates an effort on God's part to engage Kayin in conversation and give him a chance to confess his guilt. Using an alternate word for "where", "*ayfo*", would have communicated a harsh, demanding tone.

Kayin defiantly responds "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" After God confronts him with the horror of what he has done ("*Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the soil*"), He tells him that he "*will be cursed by the soil that gaped with its mouth to take your brother's blood...the soil will no longer give you its strength...you will be a restless wanderer on the Earth.*" The negativity created by this act of murder poisoned the land for Kayin.

Although God never warned Kayin that murder is prohibited, this precept is inherent in the common sense of every normal person reasons **IBN EZRA**. Kayin, likely racked with guilt, **imagines** that he is deserving of and/or expecting even more suffering. He grumbles to God that "*My punishment is too great to bear... I must hide from your presence... I will be a wanderer [depressed and alone] in the land [unable to settle or fearful of settling in any one place] and whoever finds me will kill me*" [his guilt prompted him to voice this fear, even though it was not included in God's stated punishment].

Kayin's worry that *whoever finds me will kill me* suggests that there were many people alive. But according to the Torah's account, only Adam, Eve and Kayin were alive then! **RABBI JOSEPH TELUSHKIN** considers *the possibility that other humans were also*

*created even though the Torah makes no mention of them. The Torah's focus is on recounting the lineage from Adam to Noah to Avraham that led to the creation of the Israelite nation.*

The Midrash illustrates Kayin's [and Mankind's] attempted denial of responsibility and his attempt to shift the blame elsewhere. Following are some of Kayin's words to God: *"Am I my brother's keeper...**You** are the keeper of all creatures yet you seek him at my hand...I slayed him because you created in me the evil inclination...It was **You** who killed him for had you accepted my sacrifice the same as his, I would not have been jealous of him."*

**RABBI BEREL WEIN** notes *"that the Torah emphasizes the resilience of human beings that has marked the trajectory of civilization from the beginning of time until today. Kayin, despite his great crime, ends up building cities and fathering generations. And in the midst of all of the evil and wicked people, there do appear righteous personalities who point to a better future and to a more noble society. It is not the numerical superiority of evil people that determines the course of human events but rather it is that the dearth of good people who are willing to proclaim goodness as a way of life that determines the eventual fate of society."*

## **The Mark of Kayin**

The Torah states that *"Vaysem Hashem **L**'Kayin ous levelti hachos oso call motzo."* The Gutnick edition translation of this phrase is: *"God placed His Holy Name as a mark inscribed on Kayin's forehead so that he should not be killed by anyone who would find him".* The *kind* of sign is not specified by the text. **PROFESSOR JAMES KUGEL** cites some who think that a letter of the alphabet was engraved on his forehead. Others speculate that it was a pair of ferocious looking animal horns that might scare off any potential attacker.

**ROBERT ALTER** explains that this is a mark of **protection**, not a stigma or mark of shame as the conventional use of the expression *"mark of Cain"* indicates. [Note: God provides Kayin the murderer with protection that Kayin failed to provide to his brother. Perhaps embedded in this story is the ethical concept *imitatio dei* –that in our lives we must imitate God in expressing kindness/protection to one another no matter the circumstances.]

SHADAL, perhaps bothered by the textual use of L'Kayin (**for** Kayin) and not B'Kayin (**on** Kayin), concludes that God did *not* place a sign ON his body, but assured Kayin that no one would harm him.

RAV SADYA GAON understands this to mean that *God designated a restricted geographic area for Kayin* where he would be protected from anyone seeking to harm him (like Cities of Refuge).

BENNO JACOB argues that linguistically a “sign” indicates a foretold event. God informs Kayin that he will not be slain “*but will eventually die only after seven--either generations or misfortunes*”.

“*Then Cain went away from the presence of God and dwelt in the land of Nod, East of Eden.*” God told Kayin he would be a “*na vanad*” (wanderer) yet, ironically, he settles in a land with a name that sounds like his punishment.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **A Preview of History**

The Parsha begins with creation, hope and optimism but ends with despair, hopelessness and gloom. The creation of the world and Mankind is followed by Man's early life experiences and conflicts and concludes with the rise (and then fall) of civilization. Humankind experiences a downward moral spiral.

NECHAMA LEIBOWITZ writes that “***The Torah is concerned with the prototype of Mankind; the workings of sin, the temptation leading thereto, and consequences proceeding therefrom recorded here, have a universal timeless application... The Torah shows us how civilization and economic progress brought with them four-step erosion in human behavior to the point where Mankind's very existence was endangered.***”

### **Step #1: Adam, the first man, is also the first sinner.**

He was commanded,

“... *Of every tree in the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shall not eat of it; for in the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die.*”

The Midrash elaborates: "*RABBI PINCHAS BEN YAIR* stated: Before Adam partook of this tree it was simply called 'tree' just like the others. But as soon as he ate, thereby transgressing the decree of THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE, it was called the 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil'. Why did God command Adam to eat of all the trees of the garden except one? So that Adam should constantly remember his Creator and be conscious of the yolk of God who created him." **THE ONE COMMANDMENT THAT ADAM RECEIVED WAS DESIGNED TO HELP HIM MAINTAIN A PERSPECTIVE ON HIS POSITION IN THE UNIVERSE WHEN HE WAS THE ONLY HUMAN BEING.** Adam needed to know that there was a master over him. Adam's sin, therefore, was a private matter between himself and God wherein **HE ACTED AS IF HE WERE THE MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE AND COULD DO WHATEVER HE WANTED WITHOUT LIMITATIONS OR RESTRICTIONS.**

## **Step #2: One human's cold-blooded murder of another.**

The Torah states "...Kayin brought an offering to God of the fruit of the ground... and Hevel also brought of the firstlings of his flock and from the choicest. And the God had respect unto Hevel and to his offering; but unto Kayin and his offering He showed no respect. And Kayin became very angry and depressed. And God said to Kayin, 'Why are you annoyed and why has your countenance fallen? Surely, if you improve yourself you will be forgiven. Kayin spoke with his brother, Hevel (when they were in the field) then rose up against his brother, Hevel and killed him.'"

According to some, Hevel's offerings were accepted by God because they were brought from the best and finest. This contrasts with Kayin who brought crops that grew on public land and, according to RASHI, were of an inferior quality. Kayin became enraged when his offering was rejected. God tried telling him not to indulge in self-pity and reminding him that his situation could be changed dramatically for the better if he would only improve his attitude and behavior. **HIS~ AND ALL MANKIND'S~ SALVATION COMES FROM WITHIN.** But Kayin was not to be placated. Instead, he strikes up a conversation with his brother, Hevel, out in the fields, away from home and kills him in cold blood.

***The story of Kayin and Hevel may be viewed as the story of Mankind and civilization. It is Man's underlying (sometimes unconscious) aggressive, murderous drives and conflicts that precipitate wars and bloodshed.***

### **Step #3: Advances in technology bring violence**

Lemech, a direct descendant of Kayin, sires a son, Tuval-Kayin, who becomes a forger of brass and iron armaments. Lemech boasts of his ability to employ these deadly weapons to lord over his fellow man and to commit indiscriminate murder.

While Kayin's behavior was dictated by sibling rivalry and jealousy, the transgressions of Lemech are rooted in the sinister attitude that **ABSOLUTE POWER MAKES RIGHT, AND THAT ONE TYRANT CAN BULLY SOCIETY.**

### **Step #4: Crimes committed by groups of individuals in power ("the sons of the princes and judges") who enslave their fellow men.**

The Torah describes how *"they took for themselves wives from whomever they chose"* thereby destroying the social order. Their abuse of their power and position prompted God to re-examine His decision to create Man.

**THIS TORAH DESCRIPTION OF HOW HISTORY WOULD BE SHAPED BY HUMAN AGGRESSIVENESS GIVES US A CHANCE TO LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND REFLECT ON OUR BEHAVIOR, FRAILTIES, AND CONFLICTS. UNDERSTANDING, SELF-EXAMINATION, AND REFLECTION PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CHANGE FOR THE BETTER.**

RABBI BEREL WEIN writes about a tendency to look at the narrative that appears in this first portion of the Torah as being a description of the past -- the story of the beginnings of creation, the planet and universe and of the story of civilization. But it is just as importantly a description of our present world and society. Human rivalries and disagreements often lead to murder and then to deep regret. The animalistic nature of humans leads them to sin and depravity. The intellectual freedom and curiosity built into us by the fruit of the tree of wisdom leads to experimentation with strange ideas and to idolatry. As the population of the world increases, so does technology and ordered society. But deep within the original generations of humans lies a persistent and debilitating unhappiness. Humans are not satisfied because they have been driven out of paradise and find their way back there only to be barred by heavenly forces beyond their control. They search for all sorts of detours and untraveled roads to return to where their soul wishes to lead them. And this has been the history of human civilization from its onset until today. Among the things that we can learn from The Torah narrative are...

- Murder and violence provide no solution to any of the problems that beset human beings
- False ideologies and man-made gods are of little value and, in fact, are counterproductive to human welfare, as the long run of civilized history makes abundantly clear.
- Following our animalistic instincts can only bring us farther away from where our pure soul longs to be
- Temptations will always exist; we are in one way or another doomed to fall and make mistakes.
- Through our actions and ideologies, weaknesses, and sins, we have the power to destroy our world and to bring untold tragedy and despair

On the positive side, we have enormous qualities of greatness built within us. We can conduct conversations with our Creator and are equipped to rise above the physical and intellectual challenges that surround us. We are the masters of our destiny and the shapers of our world.

## **Torah Presents Human Psychological Truths**

- ✚ Limit-setting for children is healthy--The Father God instructs his “offspring” to not eat from only one tree in a Garden of Eden filled with many delicious choices. The restriction reminds the child of the reality of his dependence on the parent
- ✚ Children disobeying their parents—Eve lusted for the one forbidden fruit and tested/defied God, her “father”
- ✚ People wracked with guilt . . .
  - Become fearful-- after eating from the forbidden fruit, Adam is frightened by the mere rustling of leaves in the Garden
  - Try to hide (“*man and his wife hid themselves*”)
  - Feel exposed (Adam says “*...and I was afraid because I was naked*” –bare and fearful his misdeed was uncovered)
  - Blame others and avoid responsibility:
    - Adam: “*The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate*”
    - Eve: “*the serpent beguiled me, and I ate*”
    - Kayin: “*I slayed him because you [God]created in me the evil inclination*”

The hissing Serpent, the *nachash*, (derived from a Hebrew root-word meaning *whisper*) may represent Eve's *yetzer hara*, her "evil inclination", her (unconscious) aggressive and potentially self-destructive behavior. Her dialogue with the *nachash* can be understood as a peek into her mental process of coping with competing desires, much as Bilaam's *braying* donkey may have been a projective identification on Bilaam's part, employing words and dialogue that reflected his anger and internal struggle over going to curse the Israelites.

**The Torah message is that there are consequences for all of us when we fail to defeat temptation in our lives.**

Rabbi H.L. Berenholz, C.F.A.