



# הַמִּזְרָחִי

# HAMIZRACHI

## PARSHA WEEKLY

PARSHAT BEREISHIT 5783 • 2022



### ISRAEL Parsha Picture

בְּרֵאשִׁית, בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים,  
אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ:  
בראשית א:א

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# Thieves, Colonialists and Occupiers

## The Challenge and The Solution



**Rabbi Doron Perez**  
Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

The opening statement of the greatest biblical super commentator, Rashi, is nothing short of remarkable.

It is spectacularly relevant and critical to one of the greatest issues facing the Jewish world today – the incessant delegitimization of Israel and the right of the Jewish People to an independent sovereign state.

### Breaking His Own Rules

What is so unusual about Rashi's first commentary is that it deviates from his own stated methodology for his biblical commentary. Rashi explicitly states that his aim is to explain the literal reading of the text (Pshat) and only uses Rabbinic commentary (Midrash) in order to address a particular difficulty in the **literal** textual reading.<sup>1</sup>

Here though, in his very opening comment, he immediately breaks his own rule. He cites a Rabbinic commentary – which in fact is a hybrid of two different Midrashim – which in **no** way relates to any difficulty in the literal reading of the text. Rather, it is a general metaphysical-philosophical reflection!

How can this anomaly be explained especially as his opening comment?

It seems that Rashi is engaging in a type of introductory insight – a **fundamental principle** about Chumash in general and the book of Bereishit in particular.

### A Pertinent Paradigm for the Ages

“Rabbi Yitzchak said, “The Torah ought to have begun (with the verse) “This month

shall be to you...” which is the first Commandment that Israel was commanded. For what reason did it begin with ‘Bereishit’?... So that if the nations of the world will say to Israel, ‘You are bandits, for you conquered the lands of the seven nations,’ Israel will say to them, ‘The whole earth belongs to the Holy One, Blessed is He; He created it and He gave it to the one found proper in His eyes. By His wish He gave it to them, and by His wish He took it from them and gave it to us.’” (Rashi, Bereishit 1:1)

Already a thousand years ago, Rashi highlights one of history's mind-boggling ironies – the very people, the Jews, who have the strongest, longest and deepest connection to any tract of land on earth, are the ones whose right to the land is constantly undermined. The Seven Canaanite nations had been extinct for over 1500 years prior to Rashi's time, yet somehow the Jewish people are accused of stealing land from a long-extinct people.

Perhaps this remarkable insight of Rashi was influenced by the tragedy of Jewish life of his time. He lived and wrote his commentary at the very time of the First Crusade (1096-1099) when Pope Urban II declared a Holy War and called upon Christian knights to conquer Jerusalem from the Muslims. Bloody battles were fought between Christendom and Islam over the Holy Land, while the Jewish people in exile, whose Divine and historical right to this very Holy Land were completely disregarded and trampled upon. To make matters worse, on their way to the Holy Land, the Crusaders committed cruel massacres of the Jews, (which became

known as the Rhineland massacres or the Pogrom of 1096). They murdered up to 12,000 Jews and destroyed their communities in Speyer, Worms, Mainz and Cologne. Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlap, the great student of Rav Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook, points out that Rashi is highlighting a truism of human history – that **every time** the Jewish people wish to return to their land, the nations will **always** raise this outrageous claim that the Jewish people are robbers who have stolen the land from others (Mei Marom, Bereishit).

### Disingenuity

Lo and behold, almost prophetically, Rashi's assessment of this outlandish claim reared its ugly head once again. Amazingly, the Jewish people who have only one land they have ever called their own – Israel – are now branded as colonialists and expansionist land thieves – You Robbers!

Consistently this claim is now made directly proportional to the success of the Zionist movement and the State of Israel. Professor Benny Morris, a renowned expert in the Israeli-Arab conflict, points out two historic facts which to my mind highlight just how peculiar and idiosyncratic these claims are. Firstly, he states: "... Neither before the 12th-century defeat of the Crusaders at the hands of the Muslim General Saladin nor after it was Palestine administered or recognized as a distinct and separate province by **any** (my emphasis) of its Muslim rulers."

Secondly, the appearance of an independent Palestinian Arab national entity didn't exist all before 1920: "...1920 was to prove crucial in the emergence of a separate Palestinian Arab national movement and a decisive moment in the evolving Zionist-Arab conflict" (Benny Morris, 1948, pgs 2 and 10).

Somehow, neither of these fundamental truths have deterred Israel bashers from the bizarre and crude claim of – "You Robbers!"

### A Divine Right

What is the answer to this claim?

Although the Jewish people have an unparalleled historical, legal and moral right to the land of Israel, Rashi, quoting

the Sages, argues that our right is first and foremost a **Divine right**. This is the salient response to this perverse claim.

For this reason, the Torah, which is primarily a manual of spiritual and moral conduct, does not begin with the first Mitzvah – the required action. The first commandment given to the Jewish people as a collective does not appear until the 12th chapter of Exodus, a full 61 chapters into the Torah – after the entire Book of Bereishit and the first 11 chapters of Exodus! The Torah recounts many other things - creation, the lives of the founding fathers and mothers of the Jewish people, and the servitude and redemption from Egypt. Why is this long historical account and narrative of human and Jewish history necessary?

The answer is that the focus of these 61 chapters is to emphasize the Divine and inalienable right of the Jewish people to this specific land.

The account of creation in the first chapters of the book establishes Hashem's absolute ownership of the world and thus His jurisdiction to decide which land belongs to whom. Thereafter, with the introduction of Abraham, the Book of Bereishit focuses almost entirely on Hashem's connection between the chosenness of the Jewish people and their connection to the land. The spiritual mission of Abraham is inextricably linked to the Land from the very beginning of Parashat Lech Lecha, and appears at every important point in the book. G-d makes two distinct and dramatic covenants with the Land, promising him that his children will receive an 'eternal inheritance' (the Covenants of the Pieces in chapter 15 and the Covenant of Circumcision in chapter 17), repeating the promise later to Isaac (Bereishit 26:2-4) and Jacob (Bereishit 35:12). Jacob makes Joseph swear to bury him in the tomb of his fathers in the land, even though this compromises him as viceroy of Egypt (Bereishit 47:29-31), and the Book of Bereishit counterintuitively ends with Joseph promising his family to bury him in the land of his fathers despite his meteoric success in Egypt. The Book of Exodus makes it clear that the goal of the miraculous redemption from Egypt is to

ultimately bring the Children of Israel to the land that G-d had sworn to give them (Exodus 6:8).

### A Shift in Diplomacy

One of Israel's greatest diplomats in the first decades of the State, Rabbi Dr. Yaakov Herzog, famously said that Rashi's commentary is not only an intellectual commentary but also the strongest diplomatic argument he has ever encountered:

"In the final analysis the problem comes down to the question of right...it goes back to the problem raised by Rashi in his commentary in the first chapter of Genesis. If the nations of the world say to the Jews, You are robbers; you have stolen this land – then the Jews can reply 'In the beginning, G-d created the heaven and the earth – all the earth is the Lord's and He gave this land to Israel.' It all seems unpolitical and irrational, what I am telling you, but I, who has been engaged in foreign affairs for 20 years, am more convinced today than ever before that this is the key to everything." (A People that Dwells Alone, pg 55)

Finally, Rabbi Charlap points out an important insight. He says that the verse Rashi quotes from Psalm 111 says, "The power of His actions has revealed to His people" – the Jewish people. If this teaching is addressed specifically to the Jews and not to the rest of the world, how can this claim be convincing?

The answer seems to be that if the Jewish people themselves rally first and foremost around their unequivocal Divine right to the land and are clear about it, the way will be paved for convincing the rest of the world. If we do not have clarity in our own hearts and minds, we will not be able to convince others.

May we be blessed with the clarity and conviction of our unique Divinely granted spiritual and moral mission and the inextricable link that the land of Israel plays in the drama of Jewish destiny.

#### 1. Rashi to Bereishit 3:8

יש מדרשי אגדה רבים וכבר סדרום רבותינו על מכונם בבראשית רבה ובשאר מדרשות, ואני לא באתי אלא לפשוטו של מקרא ולאגדה המיישבת דברי המקרא דבר דבור על אופניו



PIRKEI AVOT

# Food For Thought



**Rabbi Reuven Taragin**  
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רבי חנינא בן תרדיון אומה, שנים שישבו ויאין ביניהן דברי תורה, הרי זה מושב לצים, שנאמר (תהלים א) ובמושב לצים לא ישב. אבל שנים שישבו וישבו ביניהם דברי תורה, שכינה שרויה ביניהם, שנאמר (מלאכי ג) אז נדברו ויראי ה' איש אל רעהו ויקשב ה' וישמע ויכתב ספר זכרון לפניו ליראי ה' ולחשבי שמו. אין לי אלא שנים, מנין שאפלו אחד שישב ועוסק בתורה, שהקדוש ברוך הוא קובע לו שכר, שנאמר (איכה ג) ישב ביד ידים כי נטל עליו: (אבות ג:ב)  
רבי שמעון אומר, שלשה שאכלו על שלחן אחד ולא אמרו עליו דברי תורה, כאילו אכלו מזבחי מתים, שנאמר (ישעיה כח) כי כל שלחנות מלאו קיא צאה בלי מקום. אבל שלשה שאכלו על שלחן אחד ואמרו עליו דברי תורה, כאילו אכלו משלחנו של מקום ברוך הוא, שנאמר (יחזקאל מא) וידבר אלי זה השלחן אשר לפני ה': (אבות ג:ג)

## Sitting and Eating

Right after quoting Rebbi Chanina ben Tradyon's statement about the importance of sharing Torah with those we sit with, the third perek of Avot quotes Rebbi Shimon who emphasizes the need to share Torah with those we eat a meal with. What is the relationship between these two statements? Does sharing Torah at a meal have additional significance?<sup>1</sup>

## What We Are Sustaining

The Chasid Yavetz explains that sharing Torah at meals is uniquely important because it defines and expresses how we view our lives. Man, like animal, needs to eat in order to stay alive. That having been said, obviously, our existence means more than that of animals. This distinction needs to be expressed when we are engaged in sustaining our lives.

The Netziv observes that, as opposed to other living beings who were described as "alive" as soon as Hashem created them, Adam HaRishon is described as alive only after Hashem added his soul.<sup>2</sup> In his commentary to Sefer Devarim,<sup>3</sup> the Netziv uses this idea to explain why the Torah links our lives to *mitzvah* observance. For a human being, and especially for a Jew, life is only significant when it is infused with *mitzvah* observance.

Onkelos makes this point in a very subtle, but powerful, way. The Torah writes that man lives not off bread, but, rather, through the word of G-d.<sup>4</sup> Whereas the

Torah uses the same word "yichyeh" to describe man's survival off both food and the word of God, Onkelos uses a different word to describe the latter – "chaye'ei" as opposed to "mitkayem."<sup>5</sup> Though we can survive off bread, we only truly live when we involve G-d in our lives.

This also explains Rebbi Akiva's famous comparison of a Jew's need for Torah to a fish's dependency upon water.<sup>6</sup> Though a person can survive physically without Torah, their true life is lost without it. This is why *reshaim*, even when they are alive, are considered dead: their lives mean nothing more than their physical existence.<sup>7</sup>

A lack of this perspective can allow the pursuit of food and survival to cloud our judgment.

When considering whether to trade his "bechor" rights for a pot of stew, Eisav reasoned that, as he would die in any case, he had no need to be the "bechor."<sup>8</sup> When tired and hungry, we are anxious to revive and sustain ourselves with food. This anxiety can cause us to lose sight of the bigger picture and purpose of our lives, eating like animals rather than as humans.

The Kuzari famously explains that this is the purpose of the berachot we recite before and after eating.<sup>9</sup> A *beracha* expresses our appreciation of the special significance sustaining our lives (as opposed to those of animals) has. In our Mishnah, Rebbi Shimon teaches us that we should express this appreciation not

only by thanking Hashem for our food, but also by putting the meaningful content of our lives – Torah learning – at the table. By sharing Torah, we express our belief that the lives we sustain by eating matter because of the Torah we learn and the mitzvot we fulfill.

## We Are Why We Eat

Rebbi Shimon adds that those who do not share Torah at meals are considered to be eating from "zivchei meitim."<sup>10</sup> The Chasid Yavetz explains this term as referring not to the state of the food (which is, of course, dead), but to the status of the consumer. Because a person who does not include Torah as part of their meal is not alive, he is considered to be eating a meal that belongs to the dead. Though the food he eats sustains his physical life, he is, in actuality, considered dead.

## Elevating Our Meals

In contrast, Rebbi Shimon adds that one who shares Torah at a meal is considered to be eating from G-d's table. A Torah context elevates a meal to the point where we are considered to be eating from no less than Hashem's table.

Rav J. B. Soloveitchik expressed a similar idea:<sup>11</sup> "Transforming an animal need into an act of worship is a uniquely Jewish idea. The table is referred to in our tradition as an altar, and meals which are associated with religious observances are called *se'udot mitzvah*." Rav Soloveitchik spoke of a *seudat mitzvah* – a meal eaten

Continued on page 7

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

# Bereishit: Creation and Covenant



**Rabbanit Shani Taragin**

Educational Director, World Mizrahi

The opening haftarah of Sefer Bereishit (Yeshayahu 42:5-21/-43:10), is taken from the context of prophecies of consolation found in Sefer Yeshayahu (chapters 40-66) and is a wonderful example of a prophecy reflecting commentary of themes found in the Torah. Through appreciating Yeshayahu's poetry and historical context, we may extrapolate exegesis and messages relevant today as well. The opening pasuk of the haftarah already reveals the skillful employment of keywords from the story of Creation in Parashat Bereishit.

"So says **the El, Hashem, Creator of the heavens**<sup>[Borei hashamayim]</sup>, who stretched them out and He Who spread forth <sup>[roka]</sup>the earth <sup>[ha-aretz]</sup> and that which comes out from it, Who gives a soul <sup>[neshama]</sup> to the people upon it, And spirit <sup>[ruach]</sup> to those who walk on it." (42:5)

The prophet reminds us of keywords from the parasha of Creation and simultaneously incorporates commentary. In contrast with the biblical description, the utterance precedes the subject, hinting that each act of creation was preceded by an utterance of *Elokim*. In addition, here Yeshayahu describes G-d not only as One who created but as "borei (creator)," in the present tense, as "He renews daily, always, the acts of creation." In a dynamic creation, cataclysms and reversals are possible as well – "I will destroy mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation... and I will dry up the pools" (42:15), hinting at Hashem's "regret" over the creation found at the end of the parasha, "I shall wipe out man whom I have created... both man and beast and creeping things and the birds of the air..." (Bereishit 6:7).

Perhaps this is why the prophet describes G-d as "He who gives a *neshama* to the people", describing the spiritual nature

of G-d's creation of man in the parasha, accompanied with the purpose and responsibility – "to serve and protect" (Bereishit 2:15). It is up to man to maintain the physical creation through living up to his spiritual purpose; Man's actions have the power to affect the fate of humanity and all of creation. Chapters 41-44 in particular of Sefer Yeshayahu are replete with the theme of Am Yisrael being chosen to **serve** Hashem, reminding and inspiring the nation that they were chosen to serve G-d in the Land of Israel just like man was created to serve G-d in the Garden of Eden.

Both man (in the parasha) and the nation (in the haftarah) are punished with exile. Man is banished from the Garden of Eden due to his sinful behavior, and the nation of Israel is likewise expelled from its land:

"This is a people robbed and spoiled... they are for a prey and no-one delivers them..." (42:22) "Who gave Yaakov for spoil... was it not God, against Whom we have sinned... and we did not listen to His Torah." (24)

However, while in the parasha man remains in his exile as God placed the *keruvim* to guard the path of return to Gan Eden, the prophecy speaks of return and redemption:

"... from the east I shall bring your seed and from the west I shall gather you. I shall say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back; bring My sons from afar..." (43:5-6)

This message is critical during the time period of Babylonian exile addressed by Yeshayahu. The destruction of the Beit HaMikdash and the banishment from the Land of Israel could lead many to the conclusion that God had abandoned His people and the special covenant with His nation had been broken. Yeshayahu counters these mistaken conclusions by

explaining creation as the beginning of a trajectory toward ultimate redemption:

"I shall give you for a **covenant of the people, for a light of the nations**; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison and those that sit in darkness from the jail." (42:6-7)

The Navi encourages the people to return by first assuring them that G-d has been protecting them throughout exile. He then explains why Hashem is redeeming them – in order that they may be a light to other nations, to help them see and serve G-d as the purpose of creation. Redemption is comparable to the primordial act of creation; it is like the original creation of light in the world. Through this parallel the Navi wants Am Yisrael to appreciate and remember why they were chosen – to serve Hashem through following the Torah, thus becoming a light and inspiration to other nations.

There are two principal customs with regard to the conclusion of this haftarah. Sefardim conclude with 42:21, while the Ashkenazi custom includes chapter 43 until verse 10, respectively emphasizing two different messages. Sefaradim conclude with the words, "G-d wishes, for His righteousness' sake, to magnify Torah and to make it glorious." (42:21) This underscores the midrashic commentary – "Bereishit – for the sake of Torah, which is called 'reishit...'" The world was created for the sake of Torah, the eternal testimony of G-d as Creator. According to Ashkenazi custom, the haftarah concludes with a reference to human witnesses: "You are My witnesses, promises G-d..." (43:10). All of creation testifies to the Creator, but Am Yisrael are chosen for a particular mission – to be aware of man's responsibility and destiny; to be witnesses "that I am He; before Me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after Me" and therefore to serve Him faithfully.

# Halachic Q&A



## Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council  
Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

### Question: Do I need to dry my hands after washing for bread?

Answer: Rebbe Abahu teaches in Sotah 4b that eating bread without drying hands is like eating impure bread. Rashi explains that the prohibition stems from the fact that it is gross to eat bread with wet hands. "Impure" in this context means disgusting.

The Or Zaruah, however, believes that the prohibition is really because of impurity. The *nafka minah* (practical difference) between the two opinions would be one whose hands are wet after being in the mikvah. The hands are certainly not impure, but it may still be gross to eat bread with wet hands.

The Shulchan Aruch (158:12) paskins that the issue is because of impurity, and once your hands are washed with a *revi'it* of water (like we generally wash our hands) they are pure. The Mishneh Berurah writes in accordance with the Maharshah, who paskins that one needs to dry their hands even after washing with a *revi'it* of water. Aruch Hashulchan writes this as well. Therefore, one should dry their hands before eating bread.

In a situation when it is needed, one can rely on the Shulchan Aruch and eat with wet hands after washing with a *revi'it* of water.

### Question: Is there an issue with drying hands on clothing?

Answer: The Tashbetz Katan writes a list of things which cause a person to forget, and one of them is drying hands with clothing. While it is unclear exactly what the source is for this ruling, the Gemara in Horayot 13b does list certain things which cause forgetfulness.

Therefore, if one has the ability to wait, the better option would be to air-dry your hands and not use clothing (however, Shulchan Aruch Harav and others believe that one needs to actually dry hands on something and air-drying is not sufficient).

The Pri Megadim discusses whether or not the Tashbetz's ruling applies only to outer layers of clothing or also to unexposed layers. The other poskim who quote the ruling do not make a distinction.

Nevertheless, in a situation where there is no towel for drying and one cannot wait to hand dry, it is best to dry hands with an unexposed layer of clothing (such as part of the shirt that is tucked in) than to eat with wet hands.

If you do have enough paper/tissue to dry a few fingers, you can dry those and eat bread using those fingers (usually thumb and pointer finger would be easiest). This would be the best option of all.

### Question: If I washed my hands for netilat yadayim and then touched somebody else, do I need to wash again?

Answer: The Gemara in Chulin (106a) explains that the Chachamim enacted that people's hands are considered impure before eating bread and that we need to wash hands to remove the impurity. The Shulchan Aruch (OC 162:4) writes that if somebody washes his hands and – while still wet – touches somebody else's unwashed hands, the one who washed must wash again. There are a few important exceptions. There is only a need to rewash if you touch somebody's unwashed hands, but if you touch an object or even a person but not their hands, you do not need to rewash.

Additionally, once a person has dried his hands, even if he touches somebody else's hands that are not washed, he does not need to wash his hands again (Mishna Berurah 162:66).

Another important note: Many people are careful not to speak between drying hands and the blessing of "hamotzi," but are not careful about staying quiet between the washing and the drying. In fact, interruptions between the washing and the drying are prohibited, as many poskim believe the mitzvah of netilat yadayim is only completed with the drying. On the other hand, remaining quiet between drying hands and hamotzi is a minhag we follow to be extra careful but it is not strictly prohibited. A 3-year-old girl once asked me whether she could suck her thumb after netilat yadayim. Based on what we have said, this is permissible after drying her hands.

### Question: If my commander calls me after I wash my hands but before hamotzi, can I respond?

Answer: Ideally we do not speak at all between washing hands and hamotzi. However, when there is a need, one can speak after making the bracha of netilat yadayim (Mishneh Berurah 165:6, Aruch Hashulchan). Therefore, seemingly one could answer to the commander. However, it is best to tell commanders in advance that you do not speak in between washing hands and hamotzi. If you did not tell them in advance, you could respond "We are not allowed to speak right now in between washing and hamotzi," and that way the next time the commander will understand.

● *Translated from Hebrew and abbreviated by Yaakov Panitch.*



# תקציר פרשת בראשית

הרבנית שרון רימון  
Tanach teacher and author



הרי שבריאיתו לטובה, ואם יקלקל מעשיו בריאתו אינה לטובה.

**פרשת בראשית, המתארת את ראשית האנושות, מעמידה את המורכבות הזו כבר עם בריאת האדם, ומשאירה בחלל העולם את השאלה האם ייאמר על בריאת האדם "כי טוב".**

למרבה האכזבה, מיד לאחר הבריאה, האנושות סוטה מיעודה ברצף של חטאים, ובעקבותיהם מתעצב ה' אל ליבו, ולכאורה המסקנה היא 'ורא ה' כי לא טוב', וה' מחליט למחות את האדם.

אולם, מיד לאחר תיאור האכזבה אומרת התורה "ונח מצא חן בעיני ה'" (ו', ח) – די היה במציאת גרעין טוב שנשאר באנושות כדי לתת תקווה ואמון באנושות שתצליח להגיע ליעודה ולהפך את המסקנה ל"כי טוב". בשביל האפשרות הזו שווה להמשיך לקיים את המין האנושי.

שאלת הבחירה עומדת לפתחו של כל אדם בכל עת, ובבחירתו הוא מכריע האם חלילה ייאמר עליו "וינחם ה' כי עשה את האדם בארץ ויתעצב אל לבו" (ו', ו) או "וירא אלהים... ונהה טוב מאד" (א', לא).

המורכבות שביצירת האדם היא-היא גדולתו של האדם ועוצמתו הייחודית, שבשבילה ה' מעוניין בקיום האדם בעולם: דווקא היצר הרע הוא המאפשר יצירה, בניין, שכלול והתקדמות. קיום העולם התלוי ביצרו של האדם אינו מתמצה רק בקיום המין האנושי ע"י פריה ורבייה, אלא כל קיומו של העולם ושכלולו על ידי האדם תלויים ביצרו ובכוחו בחירתו. כאשר האדם, בעל הבחירה, ובעל היצר הרע, בוחר לעשות את רצון ה', ולבנות את העולם מתוך קדושה, זה "טוב מאד". כך יש לעשיית רצון ה' עוצמה מיוחדת, שלשמה נברא האדם – "לתקן עולם במלכות ש-די".

הקב"ה אמנם מחליט לברוא את האדם, אך ברקע עומדת ההתלבטות האם טוב לברוא אדם או לא. ההתייעצות עם המלאכים משמעותה הדגשת מורכבות האדם והחידוש האדיר שבבריאתו על פני שאר הברואים – העובדה שנברא בעולם כוח יוצר, שבכוחו לפעול בעולם ולהיטיב עמו, אך יחד עם זאת בכוחו לפעול לרע, בניגוד לשאר הברואים שאינם בעלי בחירה ואינם בעלי יכולת להיטיב או להרע. אולי זאת הסיבה לכך שלאחר בריאת האדם לא נאמר "ורא כי טוב", בניגוד לשאר הברואים. בבריאת האדם אי אפשר עדיין לדעת האם "כי טוב", מפני שהדבר תלוי בבחירתו של האדם: אם ייטיב מעשיו

ריאתו של האדם מהווה את גולת הכותרת של בריאת העולם, וניכר שהיא מיוחדת משאר הבריאה: האדם נברא עפר מן האדמה אך ה' נפח בו נשמת חיים; האדם נברא בצלם אלקים; האדם קיבל תפקיד מיוחד של שלטון על העולם.

אף לשון התיאור של בריאת האדם מיוחדת, ונאמרה בלשון רבים: "ויאמר אלהים נעשה אדם" – כביכול היה לקב"ה שותף בבריאת האדם. המדרש (בבראשית רבה פרשה ח) מסביר, שה' ברא מלאכים והתייעץ איתם לגבי בריאת האדם. חלק מהמלאכים התנגדו לבריאה והציגו את חסרונות האדם, וחלקם תמכו בבריאת האדם בגלל מעלתו וגדולתו.

**הדיון עם המלאכים המתואר במדרש מבטא את הרעיון שבריאת האדם איננה דבר מובן מאליו, אלא הושקעה בו מחשבה, ואפילו התלבטות, האמנם ראוי לברוא יצור כזה או לא.**

נראה ששורש ההתלבטות נעוץ במורכבותו של האדם מחומר ("עפר מן האדמה") ומרוח ("ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים"), ובהיותו בעל בחירה חופשית, ומשום כך גם בעל יכולת להיטיב ולשפר את העולם מצד אחד, אך מצד שני ביכולתו גם לקלקל את העולם ולהחריבו.

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as part of a *mitzvah*. Rabbi Shimon teaches us that even regular meals eaten as part of our daily lives can be elevated — by sharing Torah at them.

We live in a world that sees food, along with sexuality, as goals to focus upon instead of as means of survival. This expresses and reinforces a lack of appreciation of life's deeper meaning and purpose. Let's make sure to share Torah over meals in order to define our lives. May doing so give us entry to Hashem's table!

1. See Rabbeinu Yonah, who seems to understand the two Mishnayot as making similar statements. The *Milei D'Avot* commentary, on the other hand, seems to argue that there is something uniquely significant to learning Torah while we are eating, beyond the first Mishnah's discussion of sharing Torah as part of interacting with others generally.
2. Ha'emek Davar to Sefer Bereishit 2:7, d.h. *vayehi ha'adam l'nefesh chayah*.
3. For example, Ha'emek Davar to Devarim 4:1.
4. Devarim 8:3: *ki lo al halechem levado yichye ha'adam, ki al kol matzo pi Hashem yichye ha'adam*.
5. Targum Onkelos to Devarim 8:3. Note that there are differences between different editions.
6. Masechet Brachot 61a.
7. Many places, especially Midrash Tanchuma to Devarim 7.
8. Bereishit 25:32.
9. Sefer HaKuzari 3:1-30.
10. Rashi and the Rambam (Peirush HaMishnayot to Masechet Avot 3:3) understand this as a reference to korbanot of Avodah Zarah, which are referred to this way in Tehilim: "*Vayitzamdu l'Baal Peor, vayochlu zivchei meitim*." The Machzor Vitri explains that since the table is considered a *mizbei'ach*, if we're not mentioning words of Torah when we eat, it is automatically Avodah Zarah — as it is not Avodat Hashem.
11. Reflections of the Rav, pg. 214.

# To Choose Properly



**Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir**  
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

It is written in the book “Netivot Shalom” that every person needs to read the Torah as if it was written about him. In other words, we do not read parashat Bereishit as history, as something that happened long ago, but rather as something that is happening now.

As we read about the creation of the universe and the creation of man, we too are created – anew. In fact, all of the universe is being renewed. This Shabbat is called “Shabbat Bereishit” and sets a precedent for the whole year. Therefore, there is significance in the way we behave this Shabbat since that behavior predicts how will we conduct ourselves throughout the year 5783, whose creation is occurring and whose character is being formed now.

And with the creation of the first couple, Adam and Eve, the concept of a man and a woman sharing their lives together came into being. At weddings, during the sheva berachot under the chuppah, we bless the couple that they should be as joyful as Adam and Eve were “in the Garden of Eden of old.” What is the meaning of this blessing? For Adam, there was only one woman in the entire universe. For Eve, there was only one man in the entire universe. Although there are billions of people on earth today, we still bless the couple that they too will feel that they are meant for each other and for no one else.

And then the snake arrives. Every couple and its own snake. Every person has a snake waiting in ambush for him or her. We need to learn about the first sin in order to derive lessons from it and to be aware of its consequences, so as not to destroy our Garden of Eden.

So too regarding what follows, when Cain murders Abel and asks, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” This is not something that

happened only once. This continues to happen until today, unfortunately, and the parasha warns us about violence, bloodshed, and the refusal to take responsibility for heinous acts.

All of creation comes to life before us and reading about it can influence and change us for the good.



Educator Chanan Porat z”l once published a book of correspondence between himself and Anat, a resident of Tel Aviv. In one of her letters, Anat quotes from “To Live,” a poem she wrote in which she expresses her desire: “Not to live an ordinary and quiet life. To become acquainted with the beautiful and the ugly. To move between joy and sadness, between despair and hope, to traverse fields of love and of hate, to know the lower and upper worlds, to allow the soul to ascend to heaven and to go down to hell. Simply to live.”

This seems like a lovely wish from a curious soul, but in his return letter, Chanan wrote: “In your poem there is a desire to embrace everything, to taste everything, for otherwise, you will miss – heaven forbid – even one of the experiences of a full life. Yet one of life’s key experiences is missing from the poem: the magnificent challenge that faces and tests a person every day and every hour, the experience of choosing between good and evil, between love and hate, between the upper and the lower worlds. In making such a choice, there is a hidden force like none other. And such a choice cannot accommodate two opposites.

“The reason for living from the Torah’s point of view is not to make an effort to float like a butterfly between one flower and the next, trying to find honey in all the good flowers and the poisonous

flowers too, but rather to gather strength to limit ourselves. ‘Who is strong? The one who subdues his evil inclination.’ (Avot 4:1) This is exactly the test that Adam faced in the Garden of Eden, in parashat Bereishit. He was called upon to exercise free choice and not to eat from one tree in the Garden of Eden. He failed. From that time until today, we need to make amends for his error.”



What was Adam missing? After all, he had everything – a female companion, food, a complete Garden of Eden surrounding him. One Shabbat morning in 2019 at the TBDJ (Tifereth Beth David Jerusalem) congregation in Montreal, Canada, I was given the answer. A daughter was just born to a Bnei Akiva shlichim couple on a mission from Israel. Rabbi Yechezkel Freundlich, the congregation’s rabbi, delivered the following words as he blessed the baby girl: “Ostensibly, Adam was in the perfect situation. Adam and Eve did not lack anything. The entire world was theirs. Despite this, the Torah portion of Bereishit ends in sadness. Humanity failed. How could it happen that Adam and Eve sinned, that they were expelled from the Garden of Eden and that their son Cain murdered Abel, his brother? Indeed, only one thing was missing in their lives: parents. Think about it. We are talking about the only human beings in history who could not look up to the generation of those who came before them and learn from them. All of us need a family legacy that is passed down from one generation to the next. A baby who is born reminds us of this message from Parashat Bereishit: it’s a great privilege to be children who learn from their parents; it’s a great privilege to be parents who teach their children; it’s a great privilege to be a link in the chain of a precious family legacy.”

*Continued on next page*



# For the Shabbat Table



**Rabbi Danny Mirvis**  
Deputy CEO, World Mizrahi  
Rabbi at Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“**A**nd He (Hashem) said, ‘Who told you that you are naked? (‘HaMin Ha’Eitz...’) Did you eat from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?’” (Bereishit 3:11).

Towards the end of Adam’s short-lived stay in Gan Eden, he is reprimanded by Hashem for eating from the tree from which he was commanded not to. According to the Gemara in Chullin, Haman (from the Purim story) can be found in this verse:

“Where is Haman in the Torah? ‘HaMin Ha’Eitz...’ (‘Did you eat from the tree...’)” (Chullin 139b).

The Gemara points out that the Hebrew word “Hamin” (when spelt without vowels) can also be read “Haman”, and this is where Haman can be found in the Torah. At first glance, this play on words makes little sense. What difference does it make to us if Haman’s name appears in the Torah or not? Furthermore, if the Gemara wanted to find Haman in the Torah, there are numerous occasions where the word “HaMan” itself appears,



**Rather than destroy ourselves over what we do not have, we should remember to appreciate the many things we do.**

in reference to the manna which the Israelites ate in the wilderness. Why point to “HaMin” when there are clearer mentions of “HaMan”?

In truth, this Gemara is far more than a play on words. It does not only aim to find Haman’s name in the Torah, but to find his characteristics as well. Haman was a man who had everything going for him. He had power, position, fame, fortune, a large family and was invited to dine with Queen Esther. Nevertheless, in his own words,

“And all of this is worthless to me as long as I see Mordechai the Jew sitting down by the gate of the king” (Esther 5:13).

Everything Haman had was worthless to him because one solitary Jew refused to bow down. Not only did this prevent him from appreciating what he had, but it ultimately led to his downfall.

Where does this quality appear in the Torah? It appears in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Chava were living in paradise. However, rather than appreciate the abundant goodness and blessing of the world they were privileged to inhabit, they lost it all because of one solitary tree – “HaMin Ha’Eitz”.

We should learn from the mistakes of Adam, Chava and Haman. Rather than destroy ourselves over what we do not have, we should remember to appreciate the many things we do.

Shabbat Shalom!

*Continued from previous page*

ולתחיל להפוך אותו לגן עדן. התורה תיתן לנו בהמשך כלים רבים כדי לעדן ולתקן את המציאות. זוהי הסתכלות אחרת לגמרי על חיינו, שיכולה להעניק מוטיבציה גם לשגרה. מה שאנחנו עושים – מכינים כריכים לילדים לבית הספר, נוסעים לעבודה, פוגשים אנשים לאורך היום – כל זה לא נעשה סתם, הוא חלק משליחות.

אבל שימו לב, שאפילו אחרי הגירוש מגן עדן, אחרי החטא והקלקול, נכתב בתורה: “וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ ה' מַגֵּן עֲדָן”. בספר “שפת אמת” נאמר: “וישלחו ה' מגן עדן – הוא לשון שליחות”. נכון, האדם הראשון חטא, אבל הוא גורש מגן עדן אל העולם הזה לא כנקמה, אלא כתיקון. לא כעונש, אלא כשליחות. זוהי משימה. צריך לצאת אל העולם

אחרי החגים יתחדש הכל... שבוע שלם ומלא של עשייה לפנינו. כולנו מלאי תכניות ורעיונות לשנה החדשה, ומצד שני קצת מותשים וחוששים ומוצפים במשימות. הפירוש הבא לפרשת בראשית יכול לתת כוחות: הפרשה מתחילה בחגיגות, בבריאת העולם, אבל לכאורה נגמרת בכישלון. אדם וחווה חוטאים.

# The Art of Listening



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt”l

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

In any case, did not Adam and Eve already have this knowledge *before* eating the fruit, precisely in virtue of being “in the image and likeness of G-d”? Surely this was implied in the very fact that they were commanded by G-d: *Be fruitful and multiply. Have dominion over nature. Do not eat from the tree.* For someone to understand a command, they must know it is good to obey and bad to disobey. So they already had, at least potentially, the knowledge of Good and Evil. What then changed when they ate the fruit? These questions go so deep that they threaten to make the entire narrative incomprehensible.

Maimonides understood this. That is why he turned to this episode at almost the very beginning of *The Guide for the Perplexed* (see Book 1, Chapter 2). His answer though, is perplexing. Before eating the fruit, he says, the first humans knew the difference between truth and falsehood. What they acquired by eating the fruit was knowledge of “things generally accepted.” But what does Maimonides mean by “things generally accepted”? It is generally accepted that murder is evil, and honesty good. Does Maimonides mean that morality is mere convention? Surely not. What he means is that after eating the fruit, the man and woman were embarrassed that they were naked, and

that is a mere matter of social convention because not everyone is embarrassed by nudity. But how can we equate being embarrassed that you are naked with “knowledge of Good and Evil”? It does not seem to be that sort of thing at all. Conventions of dress have more to do with aesthetics than ethics.

It is all very unclear, or at least it was to me until I came across one of the more fascinating moments in the history of the Second World War.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Americans knew they were about to enter a war against a nation, Japan, whose culture they did not understand. So they commissioned one of the great anthropologists of the twentieth century, Ruth Benedict, to explain the Japanese to them, which she did. After the war, she published her ideas in a book, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*.<sup>1</sup> One of her central insights was the difference between shame cultures and guilt cultures. In shame cultures the highest value is *honour*. In guilt cultures it is *righteousness*. Shame is feeling bad that we have failed to live up to the expectations others have of us. Guilt is what we feel when we fail to live up to what our own conscience demands of us. Shame is other-directed. Guilt is inner-directed.

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

go, regardless of whether you are seen by others. Guilt cultures are cultures of the ear, not the eye.

With this contrast in mind, we can now understand the story of the first sin. *It is all about appearances, shame, vision, and the eye.* The serpent says to the woman: “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 Evil.” (Gen. 3:5) That is, in fact, what happens: “*The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked.*” (v. 7) It was the *appearance* of the tree that the Torah emphasises: “The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and *desirable to the eyes*, and that the tree was attractive as a means to gain intelligence.” (v. 6) The key emotion in the story is shame. Before eating the fruit, the couple were “naked, but unashamed.” (2:25) After eating it they feel shame and seek to hide. Every element of the story - the fruit, the tree, the nakedness, the shame - has the visual element typical of a shame culture.

But in Judaism we believe that G-d is *heard* not *seen*. The first humans “*heard G-d's Voice* moving about in the garden with the wind of the day.” (Gen. 3:8) Replying to G-d, the man says, “*I heard Your Voice* in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.” (v. 10) Note the deliberate, even humorous, irony of what the couple did. They heard G-d's Voice in the garden, and they “hid themselves from G-d among the trees of the garden.” (v. 8) But *you can't hide from a voice*. Hiding means trying not to be seen. It is an immediate, intuitive response to shame. But the Torah is the supreme example of a culture of guilt, not shame, and you cannot escape guilt by hiding. Guilt has nothing to do with appearances and everything to do with

conscience, the voice of G-d in the human heart.

The sin of the first humans in the Garden of Eden was that they followed their eyes, not their ears. Their actions were determined by what they saw, the beauty of the tree, not by what they heard, namely the word of G-d commanding them not to eat from it. The result was that *they did indeed acquire a knowledge of Good and Evil, but it was the wrong kind*. They acquired an ethic of shame, not guilt; of appearances not conscience. That, I believe, is what Maimonides meant by his distinction between true-and-false and “things generally accepted.” A guilt ethic is about the inner voice that tells you, “This is right, that is wrong”, as clearly as “This is true, that is false”. But a shame ethic is about social convention. It is a matter of meeting or not meeting the expectations others have of you.

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

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

If Jews had followed the majority, they would have disappeared long ago. In the biblical age they were the only monotheists in a pagan world. For most of the post-biblical age they lived in societies in which they and their faith were shared by only a tiny minority of the population. Judaism is a living protest against the herd instinct. Ours is the dissenting voice in the conversation of humankind.



**Seeing shows us the beauty of the created world, but listening connects us to the soul of another, and sometimes to the soul of the Other, G-d as He speaks to us, calls to us, summoning us to our task in the world.**

Hence the ethic of Judaism is not a matter of appearances, of honour and shame. It is a matter of hearing and heeding the voice of G-d in the depths of the soul.

The drama of Adam and Eve is not about apples or sex or original sin or “the Fall” – interpretations the non-Jewish West has given to it. It is about something deeper. It is about the kind of morality we are called on to live. Are we to be governed by what everyone else does, as if morality were like politics: the will of the majority? Will our emotional horizon be bounded by honour and shame, two profoundly social feelings? Is our key value appearance: how we seem to others? Or is it something else altogether, a willingness to heed the word and will of G-d? Adam and Eve in Eden faced the archetypal human choice between what their eyes saw (the tree and its fruit) and what their ears heard (G-d’s command). Because they chose the first, they felt shame, not guilt. That is one form of “knowledge of Good and Evil”, but from a Jewish perspective, it is the wrong form.

Judaism is a religion of listening, not seeing. That is not to say there are no visual elements in Judaism. There are, but they are not primary. Listening is the sacred task. The most famous command in Judaism is *Shema Yisrael*, “Listen, Israel.” What made Abraham, Moses, and the prophets different from their contemporaries was that they heard the voice that to others was inaudible. In one of the great dramatic scenes of the Bible, G-d teaches Elijah that He is not in the whirlwind, the earthquake, or the fire, but in the “still, small voice.” (I Kings 19:12)

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

If I were asked how to find G-d, I would say: *Learn to listen*. Listen to the song of the universe in the call of birds, the rustle of trees, the crash and heave of the waves. Listen to the poetry of prayer, the music of the Psalms. Listen deeply to those you love and who love you. Listen to the words of G-d in the Torah and hear them speak to you. Listen to the debates of the Sages through the centuries as they tried to hear the texts’ intimations and inflections.

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

Jewish spirituality is the art of listening.<sup>2</sup>

**AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:**

- Can you think of some examples of Jews in history who demonstrated how Judaism is a guilt culture, not a shame culture?
- In what way is listening an important Jewish value?
- What lessons can you learn for your life from the difference between shame and guilt?

1. Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1946).
2. We will discuss the theme of listening in Judaism further in upcoming weeks, particularly when we reach parshat Bamidbar, “The Sound of Silence,” and Parashat Eikev, “The Spirituality of Listening.”



# 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 *mashal*. 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 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.

*Continued on next page*

# From Mundane to Holy



**Rabbi Yisroel Reisman**  
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

**A**s we begin the Torah again from the beginning, we will talk this week about a thought from the days of creation. In Kiddush on Friday night, as we take Shabbas in, Jews all over the world begin with the phrase “יום הששי ויכלו השמים והארץ, וכל צבאם”. That expression is in fact a corruption of the Pesukim, as the first two words are the end of the Pasuk from the 6th day of creation, and the rest of the phrase is the beginning of the Pasuk from the 7th day of creation, Shabbas. When we begin our Shabbas with that phrase, we are in fact cutting two different Pesukim and combining them into one. Even a greater wonderment is the fact that many hints learned out from those first four words of the phrase. We are taught that if you take the first letters of “יום הששי ויכלו השמים” you get Hashem’s name, י-ק-ו-ק. How can this be? These four words are part of two different Pesukim. How can we corrupt the Pesukim by cutting it in the middle, and then even find a hint to Hashem’s name within that corruption?

Before we answer this question, there is another related point from the beginning of the Parsha that requires explanation. We find that חז”ל sometimes use the phrase “שבעת ימי בראשית”, referring to creation as a seven-day period, while sometimes they use the phrase “ששת ימי בראשית”, referring to it as a six-day period. Obviously, we know that the physical

creation happened on the first six days, and then Hashem rested on the 7th day, but it is interesting that חז”ל use both of those expressions. When do we view it as a seven-day creation, and when do we view it a six-day?

The Amshinover Rebbe comments on these Pesukim, and talks about how the goal of a person in this world is to be מוסיף מחול על הקודש, to add from the mundane on to the holy, and thereby to transform the mundane into holy. We know that there is a Halachik concept called חוספת שבת, where we add time from the week on to Shabbas. However, this is not just an incidental part of the Mitzvah, but rather the essence of a person’s task in this world, to make the mundane into holy, exemplified in the concept of adding time from the week on to the day of Shabbas. With this understanding we can answer our original questions. We know that יום הששי is inherently חול, mundane, and we understand that really it is part of the previous Parsha about the 6th day of creation. However, when we get to the next Parsha, the Parsha of Shabbas, we connect it to Shabbas, and make it part of קדושת שבת. We connect “יום הששי” to “ויכלו השמים”, and make it all part of the holiness of the 7th day.

Hashem’s name consists of 4 letters, י-ק-ו-ק. Yet, based on the Pasuk in Parshat Beshalach, חז”ל teach us that in this world we don’t see the קדושה, and therefore

we only see the first two letters, י-ק. “כי-יגד על-כס קה, מלחמה ליקוק, בעמלק-מדור, דר”. Only the first two letters from “יום הששי”. Only once we get to the קדושת השבת, and connect it with the first two letters of “ויכלו השמים”, can we get the whole picture, and see the full name of Hashem, י-ק-ו-ק. This is the explanation as to why we seemingly connect two separate Pesukim into one as we bring in the Shabbas, and how this “new” organization of the Pesukim can give us a hint of Hashem’s name.

Such a lesson is true in all aspects of life. Our goal is to take the spirituality of Shabbas and allow it to seep into the week as well. The more mundane work that we do during the week can be infused with the holiness that we achieve on Shabbas, especially as we begin to take part of that week and add it to Shabbas. When we seamlessly connect Shabbas to the week, we allow the holiness of one to affect the other. When we are מוסיפין מחול על הקודש, starting with Kiddush when we say “יום הששי ויכלו השמים”, we declare that we are connecting the 6 days of creation with the 7th day of creation. We see the שבעת ימי בראשית as ששת ימי בראשית, and we are taking the קדושה of Shabbas and bringing it into the 6 days of the week as well.

● Edited by Jay Eisenstadt and Ari Levine.

*Continued from previous page*

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 nevelah 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.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha.

# The Art of Parenting



**Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis**

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

In Parashat Bereishit we learn how tragedy struck the first family on earth. Adam and Eve were blessed with two children – Cain and Abel. One was murdered and the other was a murderer.

How could this be explained? The world's first experience of parenting was a total disaster. Adam and Eve couldn't blame this on the neighbours, nor on negative peer pressure, nor on the grandparents or on television.

There is a clue as to what went wrong through the exclamation of Eve at the time when the first naturally born child came into this world. She said '*Kaniti Ish Et HaShem*', I have acquired a person with the Lord.

You see, in the same way that God had produced Adam and Eve and they belonged



**We always need to respect their independence and the individuality of each one of our children.**

to Him, Eve felt that she had produced Cain, together with God and therefore he belonged to her. Consequently, Cain was called *Ka-in*, from '*Kaniti Ish*', I have acquired, he was her acquisition, a possession that she believed belonged to her. So he grew up to be a mollycoddled child, a mummy's boy and as a result, he lacked self-confidence and he couldn't handle failure.

So in a situation when Abel's sacrifice was accepted by God and Cain's was not, Cain reacted violently because he couldn't take the situation in which he had failed, while his brother had succeeded.

I believe that there is a very powerful lesson that emerges from here for us. Surely for parents there can be no greater gift on earth than the gift of children. But parents need to remember that we need to love our children, to respect them, to strive to inspire them, to motivate them, to generate the best out of them, but we don't own them. We always need to respect their independence and the individuality of each one of our children. In order to be able parents, we shouldn't raise a son like Cain.

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# Strong Beginnings



**Rabbi Shalom Rosner**  
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

**A**fter the transgression committed by Adam and Chava, each perpetrator is punished. The first punishment is assigned to the nachash (snake). It is destined to slide on its belly and be satiated with dust. There will be hatred between snakes and mankind. Then the Torah uses the following phrase – הוא יִשׁוֹפֵךְ רֹאשׁ וְאַתָּה תִּשׁוּפְנוּ עָקֶב. He will crush your head, and you will bite his heel. Literally this may be understood that man will hit the snake on the head to kill it and the snake will bite man's heel.

The Kli Yakar offers an alternative explanation that is quite appropriate for this time of year. The nachash symbolizes the evil inclination – the satan and the yetzer harah. This pasuk provides us with the strategy to overcome the yetzer harah. When the yetzer harah starts to entice us, he is like a spider web – loose strings through which one can maneuver. If we fight against the evil inclination from the beginning, as the pasuk states: הוא יִשׁוֹפֵךְ רֹאשׁ – then man will be victorious. However, if we enable the yetzer harah to influence us and we follow those temptations day after day, we become entangled in a thick rope from which it is quite difficult to escape. If we wait until later to fight the yetzer harah, it will be difficult for us to overcome – ואתה תִּשׁוּפְנוּ עָקֶב – that is when the “snake” will be victorious.



**As we begin the new year, let's start off on the right foot and immediately take concrete measures to implement all our undertakings.**

This is the secret to overcoming the yetzer harah. We have to prevent its influence from the beginning. Once we are manipulated by the yetzer harah it is much more difficult to overcome. Often people get set in their ways. As we get older it is harder to change. This is who I am!

We are in the period known as “אחרי” – it is a time on the one hand to try to get back to a normal schedule. Yet, it is also a time to reflect on all the items we contemplated on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The behaviors we undertook to improve our actions – both ben adam l'Makom and ben adam l'Chavero. The key to accomplishing our new year resolutions is to begin implementing them immediately. To take control from the start – as the pasuk states: הוא יִשׁוֹפֵךְ רֹאשׁ – man will be victorious if he starts off strong!

In Sefer Shmuel (Shmuel II 7:5) in the middle of the night Hashem appears to

Natan Hanavi and instructs him to immediately inform David Hamelech that he cannot build the Beit Hamikdash. Why did Natan have to share this disturbing news with the king in the middle of the night? Rashi suggests that David Hamelech was a “doer” – “מהיר הוא.” He acts immediately. If Natan would not inform David Hamelech quickly, David Hamelech would likely initiate the construction of the Mikdash that very night.

We need to execute and not just contemplate change. As we begin the new year, let's start off on the right foot and immediately take concrete measures to implement all our undertakings. The longer we wait the less likely we will be able to successfully fulfill our pledges. Strong beginnings lead man to victory!

# Bereishis: Creation and the Middah of Truth



**Michal Horowitz**  
Judaic Studies Teacher

**B**ereishis 5783. The excitement of a new cycle of Torah. New beginnings for the new year. Opportunities to review insights we already know, and *b'ezrat Hashem*, to glean new insights we are not yet familiar with.

*Bereishis*. “In the beginning Elokim created the heavens and the earth” (Bereishis 1:1). In regard to Torah learning, we are never done, and so, as soon as we complete Devarim on *Simchas Torah* morning, we begin Bereishis all over again. “And it was evening, and it was morning, one day” (ibid, v.5).

While the account of Creation is amongst the most – if not *the most* – esoteric parts of Torah, there are certainly many lessons, messages and teachings we can learn and apply to our own lives.

In regard to the creation of man, the pasuk tells us:

“And Elokim said: וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֱדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ – let us make man in our image and in our likeness” (ibid, v.26). Rashi teaches that in His great humility, *keviyachol*, G-d consulted with the heavenly angels before creating man.

A fascinating Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 8:5) provides us with further details:

*Rabbi Simon said: At the time when The Holy One Blessed Be He (HKB”H) created the first man, the heavenly angels formed groups with each other. Some said man should not be created, and some said he should be created. (The angel of) Chessed said that man should be created, for he will do acts of loving-kindness for others. (The angel of) Emes (Truth) said that man should not be created, for man is entirely falsehood. Tzedek (Righteousness) said he should be created, for he will do acts of righteousness. And Shalom (Peace) said he should not be created, for he will be full of quarrel. What did HKB”H do? He took Emes*

*and threw him to the ground... Rav Huna said: While the heavenly angles were arguing with one another, HKB”H created man! He said to them: what are you quarreling for? Man has already been created!*

What was so wrong with what Emes said that it had to be cast down to the ground? “The angel of Emes (Truth) said that man should not be created, for man is entirely falsehood.” What was the root reasoning of his argument that was so perverse it had to be immediately silenced?

Rav Yaakov Bender shlita, Rosh Yeshiva Yeshiva Darchei Torah, provides a beautiful and piercing answer, and he writes, “The *middah* of Emes simply spoke up when it was asked to, offering an opinion (as to why man should not be created). Why did it deserve a punishment for being true to its essential mission of speaking the truth?

“Rav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz z”l (1886-1948) shared a powerful answer.

“Emes argued that the world would not work – that it *could not* work – with man at its center. Man is a creature of *sheker*, deceit and falsehood, Emes proposed, and Creation, as envisioned by the Master of the Universe, could not endure with such a creature at its center.

“This argument – ‘it cannot work’ – is itself *the biggest sheker, falsehood, possible*. To view human beings through eyes shrouded in negativity and pessimism is inherently false, so the *middah* of Emes was not worthy of its own reason for creation!” (Rav Yaakov Bender on Chumash, Artscroll, p.39).

What a tremendous insight. To claim that man is full of *sheker*, that existence cannot work with the grandeur of man at its center, to say “it’s impossible,” to

claim “it won’t happen,” to cry out “man will never succeed!” is in itself the greatest *sheker*, falsehood, there is. To view our fellow human beings – and more specifically – our brethren, with negative eyes and a suspicious heart is unacceptable before the RS”O.

There is a very famous children’s book, “The Little Engine that Could”, originally published in 1930 – almost 100 years ago – whose message rings true even today. It is a book that I used to read to my children when they were young (and I am sure many of you are familiar with it). It is a story about a little train that needed to get over a mountain, and despite any obstacles in her path and opinions to the contrary, her mantra was always, “I think I can, I think I can.” And when she finally got over the mountain, her mantra became, “I thought I could, I thought I could.”

*L’havdil*, this should be our outlook into, first and foremost, our own growth as *ovdei Hashem*, and the lens with which we view – not only ourselves – but those around us. From our children, who struggle mightily in today’s confusing world, to our students, to our friends, spouses and any Jew we encounter.

We must see, and believe, that there is always hope for improvement, room for growth, possibility for change, and reward in the end. With much effort, prayers and tears, and *emunah* in G-d, ourselves and our fellow Jews, we always must live by the belief that “I think I can.” And so, when it came to creation, Emes – who claimed that man was entirely *sheker* and would certainly fail – was cast down.

As we move forward into a new year, let us internalize this message as we forge new paths ahead.



# The Two Stories of Creation



**Rabbi Menachem Leibtag**

Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

## The Torah's First Story

**W**hat 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 u'rvu"], it is also 'natural' for man to dominate his environment; it becomes his natural instinct.

The Torah's use of the verb "bara" at each major stage of creation, and then 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 shorsh (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 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

*Continued on next page*

# Kayin's Mistake



**Rabbi Eli Mansour**

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Parashat Bereshit tells the famous story of Kayin's murder of his brother, Hebel. This story marks the first instance of the age-old question of "Sadik Ve'ra Lo, Rasha Tob Lo" – the suffering of the righteous and the success of the wicked. Hebel did everything right – he brought an offering that G-d found pleasing, testifying to his sincerity and his piety. On the other hand, Kayin's offering was inferior, so it was rejected. Yet, Hebel was killed at a young age, whereas Kayin ended up living a long life, begetting children and producing many offspring. This is a classic, and the earliest example of the quandary of "Sadik Ve'ro," the theological problem of why righteous people suffer and wicked people prosper.

The Arizal (Rav Yishak Luria of Safed, 1534-1572) taught that Hebel was, in fact, rewarded for his piety. The Torah tells that 130 years after Hebel's murder, Hava had another son, whom she named Shet, because she said, "Shat Li Elokim Zera Aher Tahat Hebel" – "G-d gave me different offspring, in place of Hebel" (Bereshit 4:25). The Arizal explained this to mean that Hebel's soul was reincarnated

through Shet. Hebel left this world at a young age, but he returned through Shet. Moreover, the Arizal taught, this soul was reincarnated again several generations later, in Noah.

It turns out, then, that Hebel became the father of all humankind. After all, during the time of Noah, all of humanity was killed by the Flood – except for Noah and his children. And thus, although Kayin lived a long life, all his offspring were eliminated by the Flood, while the soul of Hebel ended up producing all of humanity to this very day.

This teaches us a very powerful lesson. Kayin killed Hebel out of jealousy, unwilling to share this world with his brother. Kayin wanted everything for himself, and he ended up with nothing. He killed his brother so he could take the entire world, and in the end, it was Hebel who had everything.

King Shlomo says at the beginning of Kohelet, "Habel Habalim Amar Kohelet, Habel Habalim Ha'kol Habel" – "Absolute vanity, Kohelet said, absolute vanity; everything is vanity." The word "Kohelet" means "assembly," and Shlomo was known by this name because he would assemble large

groups of people to teach them wisdom. This verse might thus mean that "Kohelet" – the desire to constantly "assemble," and amass property and possessions, is vanity, as evidenced by the fact that "Ha'kol Habel" – Hebel ended up with everything. Although it seemed at first that Kayin succeeded and Hebel was defeated, in the end, Hebel ended up with everything and Kayin ended up with nothing.

Our Sages teach in the Talmud, "A person does not touch that which is designated for his fellow, even a hairsbreadth." We are each given our share in the world, and any efforts to seize somebody else's share will, necessarily, fail. Even if it may seem that we can succeed by seizing that which rightfully belongs to another person, in the long run, such actions are doomed to failure. Let us all feel satisfied and content with our share, with what Hashem has given us, without repeating Kayin's tragic mistake of feeling envious of what other people have. Let us be happy with what we have and also be happy for others, realizing that in the big picture, each and every person always ends up with precisely what Hashem decides he or she should have, no more and no less.

*Continued from previous page*

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 "shoresh 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.



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# Creation – Strictly Speaking



**Rabbi Moshe Weinberger**  
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**T**he tzadikim teach that the introduction to a book is its essence. Yet the Torah, which gives our lives meaning, apparently has no introduction. It simply begins, “In the beginning of G-d’s creation of Heaven and earth.” In order to find the Torah’s introduction, the tzadikim often connect the beginning of the Torah with the end (Devarim 34:12), “and all the strong hand and all the great awe which Moshe did before the eyes of the entire Jewish people.” How are the miracles Moshe performed for the Jewish people an introduction to the Torah?

Why does the Torah use G-d’s name which indicates His attribute of strict justice (אלוקים) in the context of the creation of the world? We know that creation was the ultimate act of kindness, as the pasuk (Tehillim 89:3) says, “The world is built on kindness.” To answer that question, Rashi explains: “In the beginning, it was His intention to create it with His attribute of strict justice. He saw that the world would not endure. He therefore prefaced it with the attribute of mercy and mixed it with the attribute of justice.”

It is difficult to understand G-d’s “initial thought” in this Midrash. How could G-d have thought that the creatures in this lowly world could ever exist in reliance on the strict attribute of justice? We regularly go to great lengths to understand every initial thought expressed in the Gemara even if it is ultimately rejected in the course of the discussion. How can we understand Hashem’s initial thought in this case?

For the vast majority of people, when things are difficult, when G-d’s attribute of strict justice is more revealed, it is very difficult to thrive religiously and

spiritually. Yet Hashem wanted to create the world in this way because the service of those tzadikim who can serve G-d in that way is so precious. The Tanya quotes the pasuk in Tehillim (84:12) to this effect: “A sun and a sheath is Hashem Elokim.” In other words, “Elokim,” G-d’s attribute of strict justice, is a sheath which covers Hashem’s attribute of mercy. Only a small number of tzadikim can successfully serve Hashem despite the difficulties, suffering, and trouble caused by the concealment of G-d’s kindness behind his attribute of strict justice.

This is what amazed Moshe when Hashem showed him the life and death of Rabbi Akiva (Menachos 29b). He saw the awesome level of Rabbi Akiva’s Torah and then witnessed the suffering he endured throughout his life, culminating in the way he was tortured to death by the Romans, after which his flesh was sold in the marketplace. Moshe asked G-d, “This is the Torah and this is its reward?!” But Hashem responded, “Be silent! This is what ascended in thought before me [כך עלה במחשבה לפני].” Hashem’s language here is reminiscent of Rashi’s explanation of how Hashem initially wanted to create the world with strict justice: “עלה במחשבה, it was His intention.” Rabbi Akiva was one of the tzadikim who lived through suffering and concealment, yet was able to see past it and connect to G-dliness on the highest level. He looked past the “sheath” of strict justice and saw G-d’s love. He lived in the ideal dimension of “it was His intention.”

It is ironic that Moshe was so amazed by Rabbi Akiva’s ability to see the face of G-d behind the mask of suffering and strict justice when he himself who attained that level. While Moshe’s soul was pure, as the Midrash quoted by Rashi indicates when it says that Moshe’s home was filled with

light when he was born, we also know from the Degel Machaneh Ephraim, quoting the Baal Shem Tov that Moshe’s physical nature was to be a completely wicked person. Yet Moshe did not allow the coarseness of his physical nature to block his view of G-dliness. He attained the highest possible level of closeness with G-d.

In order to understand how the end of a the Torah is an introduction to the beginning, we must first understand how tzadikim perform miracles. Based on a teaching by the Maharal, we will see that the answer is rooted in this same concept discussed above. The Midrash Shochar Tov on the pasuk (Tehillim 114:3), “The sea saw and fled,” says that the Red Sea split when it saw the coffin of Yosef Hatzadik. Why? The Maharal explains that when Yosef’s physical nature demanded that he sin with the wife of Potifar, Yosef overcame nature and (Bereishis 39:12) “fled outside.” Because the tzadik, Yosef, did not bend to his nature and instead fled, the Red Sea, personifying the forces of nature, was forced to bend to the tzadik and flee.

The name Elokim with which G-d first created the world, connoting G-d’s attribute of strict justice, has the same numerical value as “הטבע, nature.” The natural world created by G-d often acts to conceal G-dliness. But there are tzadikim like Moshe Rabbeinu, Yosef Hatzadik, and Rabbi Akiva who transcend the limitations of nature and live with G-dliness despite the worst suffering and concealment.

The miracles, “all the strong hand and all the great awe which Moshe did before the eyes of the entire Jewish people,” serve as the perfect introduction to the beginning of the Torah because they demonstrate the greatness attained by a

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# The Day Aesthetics Replaced Ethics



**Rabbi YY Jacobson**

TheYeshiva.net

## 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?”

# Bereishis: In His Image



**Rabbi Judah Mischel**

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**R**av Nosson Zvi Finkel, zt'l, the Alter of Slabodka, was an educational pioneer and the primary figure responsible for implementing the *Mussar* revolution in the yeshiva world. He added to the yeshiva curriculum a formal *sefer*, or study session, dedicated to the *avoda* of *mussar* — character development and refinement of *midos*, with an emphasis on *gadlus ha-adam*, the latent potential of every person. This addition reoriented the focus of yeshivos toward personal growth.

Rav Finkel's contributions and legacy were so far reaching that Rav Elazar Shach went as far to say, "Most of the Torah study in the post-war world should be credited to the Alter." Indeed, his top students established and led the yeshivos of Mir, Lakewood, Telz, Torah Vodaath, Chaim Berlin, and Ner Yisrael, among others.

The following anecdotes are found in the biographical work, *HaSaba MiSlobodka*.

In many yeshivos, the prevailing custom is for students to pass before their teachers after Friday Night davening to wish them a "Good Shabbos." It was the Alter's preferred way, however, to pass by the talmidim. Row by row and bench by bench, he would bless each and every individual with a hearty "Good Shabbos."

On Shabbos morning, a group of eager disciples would accompany him home from davening. As they passed by each home of the community, the Alter would call out, "May Hashem bless the Stein Family!" "May the Cohens be *gebentched*!" While passing by the Rosh Yeshiva's home, he would joyfully say, "Good Shabbos, dear Rosh Yeshiva!"

One week, the Rosh Yeshiva was away on a fundraising trip. Everyone knew this, yet as they passed by the home of

the Rosh Yeshiva, the Alter called out with a booming voice, "Good Shabbos, *heiligh* Rosh Yeshiva!" The confusion of the *talmidim* grew when they passed by the home of a local gentile constable. Though the windows were shuttered and no horse was tied to the fence, the Alter called, "Good Morning Sir! Have a wonderful day!"

"Rebbi," the talmidim pleaded, "there's definitely no one home there...?" Reb Nosson Tzvi smiled. "I've never understood why people feel they should only greet and bless others whom they see! Why not bless someone even when you don't see him?"

The *talmidim* related that the holy Alter would sit by the window in his home and shower blessings and prayers on every passerby. More than once he was seen accompanying a Gypsy wagon as it left Slabodka, in respect for the travelers passing through town.



וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ...  
וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ  
בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ..."

And G-d said: 'Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness...

And G-d created man in His own image, in the image of G-d He created him." (1:26-7)

חביב אדם שנברא בצלם. חבה יתרה נודעת לו שנברא בצלם, שנאמר (בראשית ט), כי בצלם אלהים עשה את האדם.

Beloved is man for he was created in the image [of G-d]. Especially beloved is he, for it was made known to him that he had been created in the image [of G-d], as it is said: "for in the image of G-d He made man" (Avos 3:14)

When *Chochmah u'Mussar*, a collection of more than a thousand discourses

and letters of his mentor and colleague, Reb Simcha Zissel Ziv, was about to be published, the Alter sighed deeply. "Oy... and what have I accomplished with my life? I have but one *shmuess*, a single discourse on the topic of Adam and the nature of man. Everything else I have ever said or done revolves around that one *shmuess*..."

This is the teaching, short and sweet, from *Sefer Ohr Hatzafun*, by the Alter of Slabodka:

Adam haRishon, Primordial Man, was formed by Hashem in His *tzelem*, image, and endowed with great spiritual potential. Following his sin and fall from grace, the lofty attributes of man began to degenerate, a process that has continued throughout the generations. Nevertheless, the *tzelem Elokim* remains intact in people, and they always have the ability to express this potential and regain their stature.

If we are aware of the *tzelem* and likeness of the Infinite G-d in others, there is no limit to how well we can treat them. Honoring a person is akin to honoring the Infinite One – no matter how much we honor them, it will never be enough!



The Sefas Emes tells us that the entire goal of the Torah's laws and instructions for living is to uphold and honor the *tzelem Elokim* in human beings. And the *remez* or sacred hint for this is the fact that the word *tzelem* (צל"ם) is an acronym for צוה לנו משה (That which) Moshe commanded us".

As we begin the Torah reading cycle once again, may our commitment to this 'single discourse' drive every aspect of our lives and practice. חביב אדם שנברא בצלם. Beloved is man.













