



BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON BEREISHIS - 5764

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: October 23, 2003 Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Bereshis
These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 388, The "Kedushai Ketanah" Controversy.

The Heavenly Truth and the Earthly Truth
The pasuk [verse] says, "Let us make man" (Bereshis 1:26). The Medrash comments on that G-d "consulted" with the ministering angels in Heaven before creating Adam. G-d wished to teach us "Derech Eretz" [ethical behavior] that it is appropriate for people in power to consult with their subordinates even though the decision making power rests totally with the one in power.
The Medrash then relates that the "feedback" which G-d received from the angels was not unanimous. Some argued that man should be created and others argued that he should not be created. The Attribute of Kindness (Chessed) advised that man should be created for he would be a kind creature who would do acts of benevolence. The Attribute of Truth (Emes), on the other hand, advised that man should not be created -- for his character is entirely false in essence. He is the antithesis of truth.
The Medrash continues by relating that G-d took Truth and threw it to the ground. The pasuk in Daniel alludes to this incident when it says, "...and You threw Truth to the ground..." [Daniel 8:12]. The simple reading of the Medrash is that G-d had a "problem" with the objection raised by Truth, so He eliminated Truth -- throwing it to the ground -- and then proceeded to create man, despite the objection.
What is the meaning of this Medrash? Does "Truth" cease to exist just because G-d threw it down to the ground?
There is a metaphor here. Rav Schwab explains this Medrash in a way that also interprets a Gemara in Bava Basra that has always bothered me. There are two types of Truth -- the Heavenly Truth and the Earthly Truth. The Heavenly Truth is the pure unadulterated hard truth. Truth in Heaven pulls no punches and tells it exactly as it is. That is why when the Prophets spoke to the Jewish people, the words were harsh. They were delivering a message of Truth that came from Heaven. There is no sugar-coating or compromises in the Heavenly Truth. It is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the (sometimes painful) truth. The expression "the truth hurts" is referring to the Heavenly Truth.

In this world, we also have truth. But human beings are not always capable of dealing with pure unadulterated truth.
A friend asks, "do you like my tie?" Am I going to say, "No. It doesn't match your suit?!" In fact, the choice of a tie may indicate that the wearer has very poor taste or very bad eye sight. But one does not tell him that. "Interesting... Creative... Very nice... Original..." We come up with all sorts of adjectives, but we can not bring ourselves to say the unadulterated truth. We sugar-coat the truth. We bend the truth. This is the Earthly type of "truth."
"How was your day?" "Fine." Am I going to respond with a detailed description of how my day really was? This is the way we speak. Is "fine" the truth? No. But it is the "Earthly Truth."
This is the meaning of the Medrash. G-d took Truth and threw it down to the ground. G-d said that the truth that human beings will experience will be the Earthly Truth. They will hear the Heavenly Truth from the Prophets -- from the likes of Yeshaya and Yirmiyahu. The Prophets will tell it like it is.
The Gemara says in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, "From the day the Temple was destroyed, prophecy was taken from the prophets and given over to fools and to young children" [Bava Basra 12b]. What does this mean? The Rambam describes the qualifications for becoming a prophet [Yesodei HaTorah 7:1]. A prophet must be wise and of strong character, outstanding in his intellectual and moral credentials, and so forth. How could it be that all of a sudden, after the destruction of the Temple, the village idiot or the three year old can be the prophet?
The Gemara means that nowadays, the truth comes from the mouth of babes. Pure unadulterated truth, truth that hurts, is not spoken by mature people with social graces. Cultured people will not tell me what my tie really looks like. But sometimes, from the mouth of babes who have no inhibitions and from the fools who do not know better, truth is still heard. This is sometimes how G-d delivers the message of truth to us. Rav Schwab writes that he was once at a mourner's house. The maternal grandfather of a three year old boy had just died. The paternal grandfather walked in to pay a shiva visit to his daughter-in-law. The 3 year old said to his paternal grandfather "How come that grandfather died and you did not die?"
Perhaps that was a message. The 3 year old was perhaps delivering a message spoken with Divine Inspiration -- "It is better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of drinking for this is the end of every man and the living should take it to heart." [Kohel 7:2]. Whenever a person goes to a funeral or to a mourner's house, he should be thinking "there, but for the grace of G-d, go I". This grandchild put it into words -- "How come not you?"
This is the meaning of the Gemara "From the time the Temple was destroyed, prophecy was given to fools and to young children". We are afraid to say Truth the way it sometimes needs to be said. That only comes from people who are not yet "wise enough to the (deceitful) ways of this world" and who can tell it like it is. From the mouth of babes, comes the truth.
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From: Shema Yisrael [shemalist@shemayisrael.com] To: Peninim Parsha
PENINIM ON THE TORAH BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM
PARSHAS BEREISHIS
In the beginning of G-d's creating the heavens and earth. (1:1)
The Baal Haturim notes that the last letters of the words Bereishis bara Elokim -

taf, aleph, mem - spell out the word emes, truth. This teaches us that the world was created via the attribute of emes. Interestingly, the Torah alludes to the word emes in an indirect manner, since the sequence of the letters is out of order. Horav Shmuel David Walkin, zl, infers a profound lesson from here. The Torah teaches us that one must strive for the truth, regardless of the situation. One is not obligated to be truthful only during times of smooth sailing in which he has no extenuating circumstances or financial troubles. One must be truthful, even under circumstances that overwhelm and distress him, when life has no seder, order, and the demands on him are overpowering. Even when he is under stress, one must act with integrity. Indeed, the only thing that can guide him to maintain a straight course through the ambiguities and vicissitudes that confront him is the truth. The Brisker Rav, zl, was known to be the paragon of integrity. The attribute of emes was his benchmark in every endeavor in his life. He demonstrated this trait when an individual whom he held in esteem would visit. The Brisker Rav showed him the greatest reverence, regardless of the person's station in life. Conversely, if he was visited by a person for whom he had very little respect, it did not matter whether the individual had a large following or not, the Rav's greeting was only cordial and diplomatic.

Indeed, the Brisker Rav was once asked if a person's stature can be measured by his following. He responded that one's following is not an indication of his true character. He substantiated this with Rashi's comment concerning the multitude of stars that accompany the moon. These stars are present to appease the moon after its size had been diminished by Hashem. This teaches us that one's following is not a sign of his essence. On the contrary, it might indicate the converse. A weak person needs a strong backing. A strong person does not need the accolades and the "pat on the back" that are quite often false anyway. The Rav cited the following analogy to explain this further. A man walks down the street and notices a large tree. Regardless of how many people come along to support his "view," he is clearly aware that there is a tree in this place, because he sees it with his own two eyes. Let us look at another scenario. The same person stands in the street and does not see a tree. Then, even if another person comes along and says he sees a tree, he will not believe his peer. If ten people come and declare that they see a tree, the first person might begin to question his own ability to see clearly. After all, ten people say that they see a tree! If one hundred people come along and verify that they see a tree, then the first person who had not seen a tree might even begin to believe that he is losing his eyesight. If one hundred people see something and he does not, then something must be wrong. His "inability to see" will increase as more and more people exclaim that they see a tree.

The same idea applies to Torah leadership. The true Torah giant does not need a large community to pay him homage. The Chafetz Chaim was rav in Radin, a small community in Poland. He made the town great. He gave it distinction. He gave it greatness. The Chafetz Chaim and so many like him were distinguished in their own right. They did not need others to substantiate the reality of their gadlus. There are others, however, who are like the elusive tree that one believes exists only because so many say they see it. If the tree is not there, the fact that people say it is there will not bring it into existence. Gadlus baTorah is inherent within the person. It is not subject to public acclaim.

And G-d saw all that He had made and behold it was very good. (1:31)

Life is comprised of successes and failures. Some of us have a greater number of success. Others look at failure more often than at success. This is not a perfect world, but our perspective on life and the world can make a "world" of difference. Hashem created the world that we know in Six Days of Creation. He made some subtle changes during Creation in order to offset some of the problems that arose. Hashem first created light. This was a powerful, intense and very spiritual light. In fact, it was so spiritually illuminating that the wicked would never be worthy of experiencing it. Hashem, therefore, separated it from this world and set it aside for the righteous to enjoy in the World to Come. On the third day, there was once again a disappointment, when Hashem created fruit trees whose bark would taste the same as the fruit. The tress produced a bark, but it did not taste like the fruit. The earth was later punished for not conforming to Hashem's command.

On the fourth day, the two illuminations, the sun and the moon, had a "situation." At first, they were both the same size - until the moon complained about having to share its dominion over the world with the sun. In response, Hashem decreased the size of the moon. Once again, the creation produced disappointment.

Yet, as we see from the Torah, despite the shortcomings and disappointments, Hashem said that His creation was tov me'od, very good. It would have been better. It could have been perfect. There could have been an absence of strife, no disagreement, no complaints. There could have been - but there was not. Yet, Hashem says it was very good. Why? Horav Avraham Pam, zl, cited in The

Pleasant Way, explains that Hashem accentuated the positive. He focused upon the success - not the disappointments.

Emphasize success; accentuate the positive; focus on winning: these are phrases that we hear all the time. How often do we listen to them? We listen to a shiur, lecture, or speech. The speaker/lecturer has presented a powerful and brilliant discourse. The presentation contained a few short moments when he seemed to drag out his thoughts. During the sixty-minute lecture, eight minutes were boring. Does that diminish the value of the rest of the speech? Just because a small part of an endeavor does not rise to the apex of our expectations does not - and should not - decrease its total accomplishment. Having said this, we are enjoined to make every effort to praise the positive efforts of those with whom we come in contact on a regular basis. This is a reference to those whom we take for granted, the chazzan or baal tefillah in shul, the cook who prepared our food, the one who gives a daily shiur, our wives and mothers, etc. We tend to ignore the basic expression of gratitude for services rendered, either because we take them for granted or because we do not focus on their positive aspects. We have constant opportunities to perform chesed with a simple good word, a smile, a gesture of recognition. Some of us, regrettably, find it difficult to pay a compliment. We conjure up all forms of excuses for not rendering this common courtesy, but, after all is said and done, it is the result of an insecurity on our part. What we do not realize is that a subtle compliment can make a distinct difference in someone's life, as evidenced by the following story:

The story is told about a famous author who was walking along the East River promenade in New York City, very depressed. He felt at the end of his rope. His life's work, his writing, was of no value. His life felt empty and meaningless. Had his writing really accomplished anything? There was only one thing to do. Suicidal, he thought about climbing over the railing that divided the promenade from the river and throwing himself in.

He stood there, staring at the dark waters, about to make his final move, when he suddenly heard an excited voice, "Excuse me, I am sorry to impose on your privacy, but are you Christopher D'Antonio, the author?" He could only nod in return. "I hope you do not mind my approaching you, but I had to tell you what a difference your books have made in my life! They have helped me incredibly, and I just wanted to thank you!"

"No, it is I who should be offering gratitude to you," he said, as he turned around, walking away from the East River and heading home. Space does not permit me to add many more vignettes of chesed through words. As someone who has spent many years in the field of chinuch, however, I can say unequivocally that nothing does more for a student than positive recognition from his rebbe. This equally applies with regard to the rebbe. Parental recognition of a rebbe's efforts on behalf of their child is crucial for the rebbe, the child, and the parents.

And the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden and the Tree of Knowledge good and bad. (2:9)

Sforno explains that daas, knowledge, means to focus one's heart on (what is) good and evil. From this source of the word daas, we also find the phrase v'haAdam yoda, "and Adam knew," i.e., he became aware and now concentrated his heart on her (Chavah). This is also why a relative is called a moda, as it says in Rus 2:1, moda l'ishah, "a relative of her husband," for it is natural that one concerns himself for the needs of his relative. Horav Shmuel David Walkin, zl, infers from here that a relative is a moda, because the foundation of closeness and love is the knowledge and concern for the needs of his relative. This is also why a friend is referred to as meyuda, as it is written in Tehillim 31:12, ufachad limyudoai, "and a fright to those who know me (my friends)." A friend is someone who understands my needs and focuses upon them.

Any love, any relationship in which the two parties are not sensitive to the needs of one another, is not a relationship. Love cannot exist unless there is an awareness of each other's needs and sensitivities. Horav Moshe Leib Sossover, zl, was want to say that he learned ahavas Yisrael, love for all Jews, from an itinerant farmer. A farmer who was totally inebriated asked his friend, "Do you love me?" The friend responded, "Of course I do," and he immediately proceeded to demonstrate his affection by embracing and kissing him. The drunken farmer continued, "Do you know what I am missing? Do you know what I need?" "How should I know what you need?" the other farmer/friend retorted. "Well, if you are not aware of my needs, how can you say that you are my friend?"

This story sums it up. A friend is aware; a friend cares. One who is not aware of his friend's needs is not much of a friend.

By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread... For you are dust and to dust you shall return. The man called his wife's name Chavah, because she had become the

mother of all living. And Hashem made for Adam and his wife garments of skin. (3:19,20,21)

The commentators question the sequence of the pesukim. The fact that Adam named Chavah should have been written earlier, at the end of Perek bais, where the Torah relates how Adam gave names to all the creatures. Why is the naming of Chavah juxtaposed on Hashem making garments for Adam and Chavah? The Kehillas Yitzchak explains that when Adam realized what Chavah's act had catalyzed, when he understood that his death and the deaths of all future generations was the result of Chavah's eating and sharing of the Eitz Hadaas, he immediately became severely depressed and angry. After awhile, it dawned on him that anger would be to no avail. It would not rescind the decree. Death was now an inevitable part of the human condition. At the same time, Adam was acutely aware of Chavah's role in propagating life. He decided to be maavir al midosav. He overlooked his anger and decided to forgive Chavah. He transcended, passed over, his natural character traits that would predispose him to anger. This character trait was Adam's distinction. Imagine what we have just said. A man discovers that his wife has put poison into everyone's food. She is about to feed this preparation to him and all of their descendants. Is there any question as to his reaction? He would undoubtedly call her a murderess at best and immediately go out to publicize his wife's invidious act.

Is that not what Chavah did? She caused death to become a part of our lives. Everyone returns to dust as a result of Chavah's actions. Should she be lauded for this act? Yet, Adam controlled himself and overlooked her error. He did not call her an evil serial killer or murderess. He accentuated her positive attributes. While it was true that she brought death to the world, she also brought life. Without Chavah there would be no life, no future - nothing! We must remember her positive contributions and name her accordingly. When Hashem saw how Adam transcended his anger and harbored no enmity towards his wife, He made holy garments for them - an indication of His favor. This teaches us that when one transcends his natural inclination for anger, revenge and hatred, Hashem overlooks his transgressions and gazes favorably upon him.

Great people are able to act in this manner. The Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh writes that Moshe Rabbeinu had every reason to be upset with Klal Yisrael. They caused his death. Because of them, he would never enter Eretz Yisrael. Yet, he still blessed them prior to his death. Great people overlook their contemporaries' shortcomings. They transcend slander and disparagement. They look beyond the pettiness that has become a major component in the daily endeavor for so many of us. Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates that this middah, character trait, the ability to transcend anger and hurt in order to pursue peaceful reconciliation, was the hallmark of the previous Bobover Rebbe, Horav Shlomo Halberstam, zl. The Bobover Rebbe was a wellspring of sensitivity for all Jews. His activities during and after World War II saved the remnants of Galician Jewry, both physically and spiritually. Men of distinction, however, will inevitably have detractors who are filled with envy, glory-seekers who resent sharing the limelight with anyone other than their own shadow. Shortly after the Rebbe emerged on the American scene, a rabbi who felt threatened by the Bobover Rebbe's activities on behalf of world Jewry lashed out strongly against the Rebbe. He did not mince words in his character assassination of the Rebbe. The Bobover Rebbe did not respond. It was only after the slanderous remarks were becoming downright humiliating that the Rebbe called together all of his chassidim in his bais hamedrash.

The large shul was filled to capacity. There was not an empty seat, as everyone crammed to hear the Rebbe's response to the insults hurled at him. Everyone expected a fiery rejoinder that would put the rabbi in his place. The Rebbe entered the bais hamedrash, ascended to the lectern in front of the Aron Kodesh, and, after kissing the Paroches, cover, turned to the gathering and spoke for fifteen seconds! He said, "I am declaring to everyone assembled, as I stand in front of the Aron Kodesh, that I absolutely forbid anyone from battling on my behalf. My honor is my honor - and it will remain my honor, if everyone acts appropriately and does not take sides. Whoever does not obey me has no place in my bais hamedrash." The Rebbe descended the podium and left the bais hamedrash.

A few hours later, the Rebbe asked his gabbai, attendant, to take him to the rabbi's home. Word of the Rebbe's response had already gotten out throughout the community. The Rebbe arrived at the rabbi's home and ascended the steps to his apartment. He knocked on the door lightly until the rabbi himself answered. Ashen-faced, the rabbi realized who was standing before him. Words were not necessary, nor would they suffice. It was action that was needed. The Bobover Rebbe took the rabbi in both his arms, embraced and kissed him. He said, "You may go to any one of my chassidim and they will attest to the fact that I harbor no ill feelings towards you. As once we were friends, we will continue to remain friends."

Rav Zilberstein notes that the Bobover Rebbe left this world on Rosh Chodesh Av, the same yahrtzeit as Aharon HaKohen. They had one thing in common: ohaiv

shalom v'rodef shalom; they were both individuals who loved peace and pursued peace. The common thread that coursed between them was their love of all Jews and unswerving desire to promote harmony within Klal Yisrael.

Out of a sense of hakoras hatov to Hashem Yisborach, I have taken it upon myself to present insights into our daily davening, with the hope that it will catalyze greater understanding of the Tefillos and, thereby, increase their inspiration and effect. In his Iyun Tefillah Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, cites the Chovos Halevavos, who says, "When one prays, he should not permit his mouth to precede his heart." This means, explains Rav Schwab, that one is to comprehend fully the words of the Tefillah before he utters them. The Chovos Halevavos is critiquing those who know the meaning of the words, but concentrate on their meaning only after they have vocalized the words. Merely mouthing the words, however, without having any understanding of their meaning, is nothing more than lip service and can hardly be called Tefillah. The Tefillos and their meaning should be integrated in our mind in such a manner that the conveyance of these words should be a form of speaking naturally to the Almighty. We begin with the first prayer of the day - iust okug-Adon Olam.

The phrase Adon Olam means Master of the world. To refer to Hashem as Master is to ascribe a personal relationship with Him, since a master has a personal relationship with his servant. Hence, we begin every brachah with Baruch Atah Ado-noi, which confirms our recognition of Hashem as our Master. It was Avraham Avinu who first referred to Hashem as Master. We affirm Hashem as Melech, which is a broader, more general term, and as Adon, which emphasizes His personal relationship with each individual.

Rav Schwab comments that there is no greater introduction to the prayer of the day than the notion that, regardless of how feeble and small man may be, he is in direct contact with the Almighty. One's concentration on Tefillah, his devotion and emotion, should reflect this feeling.

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From: howard.jackson@citigroup.com Eliyahu Asher ben Reuven

<http://www.divreitorah.co.uk>

By The Light of The Moon Bereishit

"And G-d made the two great luminaries: the great luminary to rule the day and the small luminary to rule the night" (Bereishit 1:16).

"Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi raised an apparent contradiction: the above verse first states "and G-d made the two great luminaries", and the verse then states "the great luminary" and "the small luminary"?! The Moon said to G-d: "Master of the Universe, is it possible for two rulers to share one crown?" G-d said to the Moon: "Go and shrink yourself ..." (Gemara Chulin 60b).

Rabbi Betzalel HaKohen MiVilna asks: Why did Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi insist on his interpretation that originally the Sun and Moon were both great luminaries but because the Moon complained it became a small luminary? Couldn't he simply read the verse as "And G-d made the two great luminaries: the greater luminary to rule the day and the smaller luminary to rule the night", i.e. that the Sun was always greater than the Moon? Maybe the luminaries are initially both called "great luminaries" because they are both "great" relative to the other heavenly bodies? Gemara Yoma 62b teaches regarding the Yom Kippur offerings that when the Torah emphasizes "And he should take the two goats" (VaYikra 16:5) it means that both goats must be exactly identical, in appearance, height and value. This is derived from the apparently superfluous word "two". Since the minimum plural is two, it would have sufficed for the Torah to write just "goats" and we would know it refers to two goats. So why did the Torah include the word "two"? It teaches us that both goats must be exactly identical in appearance, height and value.

Now we can understand Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi's difficulty. Since our verse states "the two great luminaries", the word "two" seems superfluous. It would have sufficed for the Torah to write just "luminaries" and we would know it refers to two luminaries! The word "two" teaches that "the two great luminaries" were exactly equal in size originally. Hence Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi explains why the verse later mentions "the great luminary" and "the small luminary". Therefore, the Gemara concluded that initially they were equal in size and later G-d caused the Moon to shrink.

From: Rafael Salasnik [rafi@brijnet.org] Sent: Oct. 22, 2003 To: daf-hashavua@shamash.org

Subject: daf-hashavua Bereishit 5764/2003

U N I T E D S Y N A G O G U E - L O N D O N (O)

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JEWISH VALUES

by CHIEF RABBI DR JONATHAN SACKS
ON G-D AND GOOD

Today we are delighted to commence a new monthly feature to be written by the Chief Rabbi on Jewish Values, which will appear in the Daf Hashavua every Shabbat Mevarchim

How we live and what we become depends on what or who we worship. Other civilizations in the ancient world built monuments of stone. Israel - our ancestors - were summoned to a quite different task: to build a society out of holy lives and generous deeds. Ethics, along with kedushah, sanctity, stands at the very core of Jewish values. To worship G-d is, for us, not an escape from the world and its challenges but an engagement with the world and its challenges. To honour G-d is to honour His image, mankind.

It is often said that you don't have to be religious to be good. That is true. There were people who, without any particular faith, rescued Jews during the holocaust, fought for justice in South Africa, or dedicated their lives to curing disease, relieving poverty, and giving shelter to the homeless. Implanted within us (part of what makes us G-d's image) are strong instincts of justice and compassion. Without them, homo sapiens would not have survived.

But in the long run, without a nonnegotiable code whose authority transcends all earthly powers, societies have a tendency to lose their way.

The moral sense becomes confused. People begin to think less of society than of self, less of duty than desire, more of rights than responsibilities.

Tolstoy gave a powerful analogy: "The instructions of a secular morality that is not based on religious doctrines are exactly what a person ignorant of music might do if he were made a conductor and started to wave his hands in front of musicians well rehearsed in what they are performing. By virtue of its own momentum, and from what previous conductors had taught the musicians, the music might continue for a while, but obviously the gesticulations made with a stick by a person who knows nothing about music would be useless and eventually confuse the musicians and throw the orchestra off course."

That is why, seven times in its first chapter, the Torah repeatedly uses the word "good." Virtually every other account of creation, mythological or scientific, emphasises power and process, the "how" but not the "why." The Torah is remarkably uninterested in the "how." Its entire account of the emergence of the universe takes a mere 34 verses. Its interest is in the "why." Goodness, for Judaism, is the purpose of creation. Morality is not something we invent. It is written into the structure of life itself.

Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Mecklenburg offered a fascinating interpretation of the phrase, ki tov. Normally we translate this as " [And G-d saw] that it was good." He translated it as "because He is good." Creation was a moral act on the part of G-d. He made the universe because He is good, in order to bestow blessing on His creations. And whenever we bestow blessings on others, we become "G-d's partners in the work of creation."

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From: RabbiWein@jewishdestiny.com Sent: October 22, 2003

Subject: RABBI BEREL WEIN'S WEEKLY COLUMNS

Parsha Archive October 24, 2003 BERESHIT The first book of the Torah is a perplexing compilation of stories about people. No apparent master plan or blueprint of morality is readily discernable from its

contents. It does not prescribe a set of rules to live by, there are no "Ten Commandments" within its pages, it is almost completely devoid of mitzvot - divine ritual commandments - and the narrative details of the lives of its heroes are incomplete and sometimes cryptic. As such, who needs the book? What does it come to teach us? What is its purpose? Rashi raises all of these questions in the opening paragraph to his immortal commentary on Torah. "Said Rabbi Yitzchak: The Torah should have begun from the first commandment regarding the mitzvah of the New Moon!" Rashi presents the answer that the Torah begins with creation in order to impress upon us G-d's control over the world's events and property and that He parcels out land to whomever He desires and has assigned the Land of Israel to the people of Israel. But that does not answer why all of the other narratives and stories appear in this holy book. In fact, the entire book of Bereshit is an enigma. It tells us much but not all about the founders of our people; it records historical events that shape world civilization but does not really place them in a true historical perspective; and it certainly reveals almost nothing to us about the nature of the G-d of creation and Israel. So, again we ask: Why the book?

My rabbinic teachers taught me over a half-century ago that the secret of the entire book of Bereshit lay in the simple understanding of the verse: "This is the book of the generations of mankind." The Torah does not come to define G-d; it leaves that to the theologians. The Torah does not explain creation; it leaves that to the astrophysicists and geneticists. The Torah comes to direct, counsel, guide and strengthen each and every individual human being in that person's journey through life and its vicissitudes. Therefore, the Torah is devoted to personal detail about people's lives. It tells of human heroism and greatness, as well as to record the petty, violent and dark side of our nature. But most importantly, it provides us with role models, real heroes who inspire and challenge us to live up to our humanity and to the service of our Creator. Each of the heroes, Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Sarah, Rivka, Rochel, Leah, Yosef, Yehuda, etc., illustrates the unique path in life that a Torah believer should follow. We become aware how to overcome adversity, how to accept defeat and even tragedy, how to be positive in a negative society, and how to be G-d-centered in an earth-bound mortal body.

It is no wonder that the rabbis of the Talmud demanded that Jews ask of themselves: "When will my actions in life reach the level of faith and performance of my original (Book of Bereshit) forbearers?" I may never be able to achieve or accomplish what Avraham and Sarah did, but I am duty bound to measure my goals and attitudes in life according to the goals and standards that they established for their descendants - the people of Israel, many millennia ago. And the establishment and explanation of those attitudes and standards, as actually lived by these heroes, is the basic message of the Book of Bereshit. In a world where standards and morality change swiftly, where there are no fixed definitions of right and wrong behavior, the example of the people of Bereshit remains vital, perhaps even more vital than in previous eras. The evil people bring destruction to civilization, no matter how enticing the momentary enjoyment of that evil appears to society. The righteous person preserves all humanity and brings eternal blessing to generations yet unborn. Therefore each of us should write our own book of Bereshit, through our behavior, our loyalty to Torah and its standards, our learning the lessons of the original book of Bereshit. Then we will appreciate the true greatness of this first book of the Torah.

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From: RAV KOOK LIST [RavKookList@hotmail.com] Sent: October 22, 2003

Subject: Rav Kook Dvar Torah List - Breishith: Creation of the Universe - Twice

Breishith: Creation of the Universe - Twice

The Torah introduces the creation of the universe - not once, but twice: "In the beginning G-d created heaven and earth." [Gen 1:1] "These are the chronicles of heaven and earth when they were created, on the day G-d completed earth and heaven." [Gen 2:4]

Why are there two accounts of creation?

The most prominent difference between the two verses is the name used for the Creator. The first chapter uses the name "Elokim", expressing the divine attribute of "Midat HaDin" (Justice). This aspect of creation is also called "Gevurah" (Strength), as the ability to meet the standards of unmitigated justice gives strength and legitimacy. If we can measure up to "Midat HaDin", we deserve to live.

The second chapter uses a combination of two names for the Creator, "Adonoy Elokim". The Torah precedes the name "Elokim" with the Tetragrammaton. This ineffable Divine name signifies the trait of "Midat Harachamim" (Mercy). The quality of Mercy indicates that the world did not deserve to exist solely on the basis of its own merits.

Creation of the universe required that the attribute of Justice be tempered with a measure of Mercy.

Why this change in G-d's name? The Midrash explains that a fundamental shift took place during the creation process:

"Initially, He intended to create it with the attribute of Justice, but then saw that the world cannot exist; so He gave priority to the attribute of Mercy, and joined it with the attribute of Justice." [Pesikta Rabbati 40] The combination of two opposing traits, Mercy and Justice, is the basis for the middle path that allows the universe to exist. The admixture of Mercy permitted free choice, and the possibility that evil desires may rule over us. It created a reality in which human frailties and foibles are tolerated.

When did this compromise become necessary? And why not create the world from the start with both attributes? Did not G-d know that our world could not exist according to unmitigated justice?

Corresponding to these two Divine aspects of creation, all mitzvot can be grouped into two categories: positive and negative. At the very heart of the positive commandments are the attributes of Love ("Ahava") and Mercy. The negative commandments, on the other hand, are based on Awe ("Yirah") and Justice. According to the Zohar, Adam was instructed concerning both types of mitzvot in the Garden of Eden. Man was placed in the Garden "to work it and watch over it." [Gen 2:15] "To work it" refers to the positive commandments, while "to watch over it" refers to the negative precepts.

Yet, in the Garden of Eden there was an underlying unity encompassing both of these Divine attributes. There exists an inner bond between Justice and Mercy. While all negative precepts are based on Awe, the actual command to feel awe and reverence for G-d is itself a positive one! [Deut. 10:20] Deep within the attribute of Awe lies hidden the attribute of Love. Love concealed within Awe; Mercy concealed within Justice. This form of Justice, containing a hidden measure of Mercy, was the original master-plan for creation.

The Tree of Knowledge also combined two opposing qualities, knowledge of good and evil. Adam could not grasp how one tree could encompass two contradictory traits. In truth, this combination is the very foundation of our world. The universe could not exist without combining Justice with Mercy. Adam's sin was in separating between the two, thus creating a broken, disjointed world.

What about the original plan for the world - to exist exclusively by Justice? This level of creation will be attained in the future, as the world is repaired. Thus, there is a tradition that in the future the "Halacha" will be decided according to the more stringent opinion of Beit Shammai. Since the universe will return to the original design of "Midat HaDin", the term "Gan Eden" refers both to the past and the future. The Garden

of Eden was the pristine, integrated world that existed before Adam's sin, and is also the future place of reward.

In our divided reality, deed and reward are separated in time and place. "Today (this world) is for keeping the commandments, and tomorrow (the world to come) is for receiving their reward." [Eiruvin 22a] In the Garden of Eden, on the other hand, there is no dichotomy between action and reward, no confusion between good and evil, no division between Justice and Mercy. In the future, the universe will return to the Divine attribute of Justice, with Mercy concealed within, thus uniting all apparent opposites.

[Shemu'ot HaRi'iah 8 (Breishith, 1930)]

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http://www.geocities.com/m_yericho/ravkook - Rav A.I. Kook on the Weekly Parasha http://www.geocities.com/m_yericho/ravkook/thisweek.htm - This week's Dvar Torah

From: dan@zomet.org Sent: October 21, 2003 Subject: Shabbat-B'Shabbato - Parshat Bereishit

21/10/2003 No 984: 29 Tishrei 5764- 25 October 2003

STARTING POINT

Descendants of Kayin and Descendants of Shet -

by RABBI AMNON BAZAK - 10/21/2003

The death of Hevel left two remaining families, that of Kayin and that of Shet, which are contrasted by the Torah. Both families have names that are identical (Chanoch, Lemech) or similar (Mechuyael/Mahalallel, Metusha'el/ Metushelach). On the other hand, it is clear that there are significant differences between the two families.

Kayin's descendants are characterized by action and creativity. After his son Chanoch is born, Kayin builds a city and names it for him: "And he called the city the same as his son, Chanoch" [Bereishit 4:17]. The last thing described about of the dynasty is with respect to the three innovative sons of Lemech. Yaval was "the father of all those who dwell in tents, with cattle" [4:20]. Yuval was called "the father of all who play a harp and a flute" [4:21]. And Tuval Kayin was "he who sharpened all works of copper and iron" [4:22]. However, one thing is missing throughout this long narrative: the name of G-d. The flurry of activity was the result of a secular outlook, and the creativity was credited to human efforts alone. The situation is different with respect to Shet's offspring. As opposed to Kayin, who teaches his child to name a city for him, Shet teaches his son a different lesson. "And he called him Enosh. It was then that calling out to G-d began" [4:26]. The son named Chanoch in Shet's family is also different from the one descended from Kayin. He does not represent the name of a city, rather he "went with G-d" [5:24].

One difference that is especially noteworthy is that between the two sons named "Lemech" in the different families. These are the only people in both families whose words are quoted in the Torah. Lemech, descended from Kayin, declares to his wives, "I killed a man because of my wound and a child for my bruise, for Kayin will be avenged seven times but Lemech seventy-seven." [4:23-24]. Many pens have run out of ink in the attempt to understand Lemech's words, but in general terms it seems that Lemech is sorry about the killing that he has done. In addition, he is convinced that his situation is much better than that of Kayin, and that anybody who harms him will be punished much more severely than what was decreed for Kayin. However, there is a big difference between the two. While Kayin was given a divine message ("Therefore, whoever kills Kayin will be avenged seven times" [4:15]), Lemech received no such promise. Thus, it seems that Lemech reached his far-reaching conclusions on his own, following the non-religious path of his father and their ancestors.

The humility of Lemech in the other family stands out as the opposite of this approach. He calls his son Noach, "saying, this one will console us for our actions and our harsh labors, from the earth, which G-d has cursed." [5:29]. This Lemech recognizes the weakness of the land as opposed to the power of the Almighty. Therefore, as opposed to the other one, who boasted that he would be avenged "seventy-seven" times, this Lemech is rewarded with a long life: "Seventy-seven years, and seven hundred years" [5:31].

The skills and experience of the industrialist sons of Lemech, Kayin's descendants, were in the end preserved in Noach's Ark. The dynasty that began with Kayin and ended with Tuval Kayin was lost forever, while the one that began with Shet and led to Noach continued on with the existence of the world. This family declared its faith even when acknowledging great accomplishments. "What is there about

Enosh that you should remember him... You let him rule creations of your hands... G-d, our master, how great your name is throughout the earth" [Tehillim 8:5-10].
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Shabbat-B'Shabbato - Breishit No 984

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JEWISH HISTORY CRASH COURSE #2 - BIBLE AS HISTORY

by RABBI KEN SPIRO

"An enormous amount of information in the Bible has been borne out by archeology. There is not much direct evidence, but there is a huge amount of indirect or circumstantial evidence."

We assume that people throughout human history always studied history, but that's not true. As a matter of fact, if you go back more than a couple of thousand years you'll find people had no interest in history. The first historian in the West is Herodotus, a Greek who lived in the 5th century BCE. And he's given the title: Father of History.

Columbia University historian, Joseph Yerushalmi, who wrote an excellent, highly-praised book called *Zahor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, says that "If Herodotus was the father of history, the father of meaning in history was the Jews." This is a profound idea.

First, not only were Jews recording history well before Herodotus, but while Herodotus might record the events, the Jews were looking at the deeper meaning, and that deeper meaning can be found most importantly and most significantly within the Bible itself.

The first of these stories that we will examine in the future installments of this series pre-dates Herodotus by about 1,300 years. It is the story of Abraham and it takes place around the 18th century BCE, or 3,700 years ago.

Now don't make the mistake of thinking the Bible is a history book. For example, Abraham, when he appears in the Book of Genesis is already 75 years old. He's one of the most significant figures in Jewish history and the Torah doesn't tell us about him as a child or as a young adult -- we pick up his story when he is an old man already.

The Bible is not concerned with giving us all the details of Abraham's life. It is interested only in history as a means of teaching us the important lessons of life -- it's a book of theology in Jewish worldview first and foremost. Therefore, it focuses on the basic information that we need to know.

HOW ACCURATE IS THE BIBLE?

An article was published recently in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'Aretz*, smashing the Bible, and in the same week, an article was published in *US News and World Report* -- a cover story, no less -- supporting the accuracy of the Bible vis-a-vis archeology.

Why such diametrically opposed views? Because archeology is a very complicated field. So a few words of caution are in order.

The definition of archeology is "the discovery and interpretation of the physical remains of previous civilizations and peoples." Note that within the definition of archeology is the word "interpretation". How one archeologist interprets the meaning of a particular find can be very different from how another archeologist interprets the meaning of the same find.

Archeology is not a hard science. When an archeologist finds a piece of rock, a vessel, or a piece of a building, he tries to decide what it means. The find has no label on it, unless it's a written document, and even written documents are open to interpretation.

So when people make definitive statements about what archeology does or doesn't say, you have to be very careful, because the bias of the archeologist affects how he interprets the information.

As the early books of the Bible are concerned, there is little direct evidence for the characters in the Bible. There is, however, a huge amount of indirect or

circumstantial evidence -- names, places, business contracts, marriage contracts, migratory patterns. An enormous amount of information in the Bible has been borne out by archeology.

That is as far as the early books of the Bible are concerned, but once we get to later books, like the Book of Kings, for example, there is excellent direct evidence, written records of other emperors, etc. But the early events exist more or less in a historical vacuum and, unfortunately also in an archeological vacuum.

Keep in mind that the same thing that applies in a court of law applies to archeology: Lack of evidence is no evidence of lack. The fact that I haven't found Abraham's camel saddle doesn't mean Abraham didn't have a camel or a saddle. And, indeed, there is a huge amount of circumstantial evidence supporting the basic historicity of the Bible.

Archeology doesn't definitively prove the Bible, and it certainly doesn't discredit it. In fact the more we find, the more we see that there's a tremendous amount of historicity in the text.

In summary, the Bible is not a book of history, yet it contains history and culture, which is more or less borne out by archeology. It's a book of teachings, and it's the ideal way to learn the patterns of history. And if we understand that the reason why we're learning history is to learn lessons, then we have to pay extra special attention to what is going on in the Bible.

PATTERNS IN JEWISH HISTORY

The actions of the fathers are assigned to the children. (Nachmanides)

This is a very famous Jewish saying and Nachmanides was not the only one to say it. What does it mean?

On the microcosmic level, within the stories of Genesis in the Bible, we're going to see that what happens to the ancients will be repeated by their children.

On a macrocosmic level, the personalities and interactions of the early forefathers -- the patriarchs and matriarchs -- are going to be a model for all of Jewish history, and all of human history. This is why we have to pay extra special attention to what's going on at this early phase of the Bible, because here is where the patterns are set.

Additionally, we must remember that the Jewish people are arguably the oldest surviving people on the Planet Earth, and because they have been spread out throughout the world, when we learn Jewish history we have to pay attention to all of human history. It's a great framework. To understand Jewish history means to build a great deal of general knowledge of the history of the world at large.

We can't appreciate Jewish history (or the history of any people for that matter) without understanding the larger context in which it takes place.

In the next installment we are going to zoom out and take a macro look at the world into which the first Jew, Abraham, was born.

NEXT: THE WORLD OF ABRAHAM

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Ezras Torah Luach

EREV ROSH CHODESH

SHABBOS PARSHAS BREISHIS

29 TISHREI, FRIDAY EVENING, OCT. 24 Welcoming the Shabbos and Maariv as usual for every Shabbos.

29 TISHREI, SHABBOS MORNING, OCT. 25, SHACHRIS As is customary for Shabbos morning: Brachos; Pesukei Dazimra; Nishmas; Shema and its Brachos; Shemonah Esrei of Shabbos; the Chazzan's Repetition; Kaddish Tiskabel; Reading of the Torah: seven Aliyahs in Parshas Breishis; The Haftorah is read from Machar Chodesh, the special Haftorah for a Shabbos whose morrow is Rosh Chodesh. (Samuel I 20:18-42).

(The remarks "Sefardim begin here" and "Sefardim conclude here" that are commonly found in the Chumash, refer to those Jews whose ancestors originally came from Spain, not to those who follow Nusach Sefard. In a similar vein we commonly find notations that say *it*he Italians begin^î or *i*conclude here,^î where we are obviously speaking about Jews whose ancestors came from Italy. Those who follow Nusach Sefard, still follow the general customs of most Ashkenazic Jewry. We bless the month of MarCheshvan (and announce the time of the New Moon*). We say neither *Kel Malei* nor *Av Harachmim*. *Ashrei*; *Yehalelu*; we return the *Sefer Torah* to the *Aron HaKodesh*.

* [Rav Henkin noted: The time of the appearance of the New Moon is that single moment when the New Moon is visible in Israel. When we announce that the time of the Molad is in the early morning, we mean that it appeared in Eretz Yisroel in the early morning, although here in America, it was not yet midnight. This discrepancy in time does not affect the yearly calendar, which always follows Eretz Yisroel. However, it does affect our Sanctification of the New Moon, which should be done before the exact moment of mid-month, which is one half of 29 days, 12

hours and 793 chelekim from the Molad. (A chelek is 1/1080 of an hour or 1/18 of a minute). It is logical to conclude that we in America must sanctify the moon before mid-month in Eretz Yisroel, which is 7 hours before mid-month in New York.]

MUSSAF Half-Kaddish; Shemonah Esrei of Shabbos Mussaf; Chazzan's Repetition; Kaddish Tiskabel; Ein Keilakeinu; Aleinu; Anim Zmiros; Shir Shel Yom (Psalm of the Day); Mourner's Kaddish; Adon Olam.
MINCHA Ashrei; Uva Letzion; Half-Kaddish; Vani Sfilasi; Torah Reading: three Aliyahs in Parshas Noach (no Half-Kaddish after Torah Reading at Mincha); Yehalelu; Half-Kaddish; Shemonah Esrei of Shabbos; Chazzan's Repetition; No Tzidkascha Tzedek; Kaddish Tiskabel; Aleinu; Mourner's Kaddish; Borchi Nafshi.

FIRST DAY ROSH CHODESH - DEPARTURE FOR SHABBOS

30 TISHREI, MOTZIE SHABBOS, OCT. 25, For the departure of Shabbos: Ata Chonantanu and Yaale Veyavo in Shemonah Esrei; (and in Birkas HaMazon ó Blessings After Meals); (If one forgot Yaale Veyavo in Shemonah Esrei of Maariv or in Birkas Hamazon he does not have to return to the beginning of the Shemonah Esrei again [in Birkas Hamazon, if one remembered after the third Bracha, but before he began the fourth, he should say the compensatory Blessing: [Asher Nasan Roshei Chadoshim Lefamo Yisroel Lezekoron] [There is an opinion that in the morning, if after reciting the Mussaf of Rosh Chodesh, one realized that he had omitted Yaale Veyavo in Shachris, he need not repeat Shachris.]) Half-Kaddish; Vihi Noam and Va-ata Kadosh followed by Kaddish Tiskabel; V'yittan Lecha; Havdalah; Aleinu; Mourner's Kaddish. Havdalah at home.

30 TISHREI, SUN. MORNING, OCT. 26,

SHACHRIS As is customary for Rosh Chodesh: weekday Shemonah Esrei with Yaale Veyavo; Half-Hallel; Kaddish Tiskabel; Torah Reading: four Aliyahs in Parshas Pinchas 28:1-15: Kohen reads the first three verses from Vayedaber until Olan Tamid; Levi repeats the third verse Veamarta and continues with two additional verses until Reviis Hahin; Yisroel reads from Olan Tamid until Venisca (The opinion of the Vilna Gaon is that the first Aliyah reads the first three verses; the second Aliyah reads the next five verses; the third Aliyah repeats the sixth verse Olan Tamid and then continues until Venisca). The fourth Aliyah reads from Uvrashai Chadshaichem until Yayaseh Venisco; Half-Kaddish; Yehalelu; the Torah is returned to the Aron HaKodesh; Ashrei; Uva Letzion (no Lamnazeach); Half-Kaddish; we remove our Tefillin.

MUSSAF Shemonah Esrei of Mussaf for Rosh Chodesh; Chazzan's Repetition; Kaddish Tiskabel; Aleinu; Psalm of the Day; Borchi Nafshi; Mourner's Kaddish.

From: Midei [rachrysl@netvision.net.il]

Subject: MIDEI SHABBOS BY RABBI ELIEZER CHRYSLER - Parshas Bereishis

Vol. 11 No. 1 This issue is sponsored anonymously
Parshas Bereishis K'lal Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael Rashi opens his commentary on the Chumash with Rabbi Yitzchak, who, comments on why the Torah begins with the creation (rather than with the Mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh, the first Mitzvah that Yisrael was commanded). It is he says, in order to stress that if G-d created the world, He is entitled to give it to whom He wants, and that when we conquered Eretz Yisrael from the Canaanim, we did so by His grace, and they are not therefore, entitled to accuse us of having stolen the land from the Canaanim. This Rashi is striking in two ways. Taken independently, it is striking in that Rashi chooses to comment on Yisrael's Divine right to Eretz Yisrael, turning it into a major aspect of the creation. Had Rashi not treated it as a major issue, it is doubtful that we would have attached much importance to it, certainly at this early stage in the world's history (when Yisrael did not even exist). And collectively, it is striking, inasmuch as the opening Rashi in each of the five Books of the Chumash (I heard recently) deals with a specific aspect of Yisrael's honour and dignity. To begin with the second point - Rashi's opening comment in Bereishis concerns Yisrael's right to Eretz Yisrael; at the beginning of both Sh'mos and Vayikra, he refers to Hashem's love of Yisrael, in that he counts them often, like he does the stars. In Vayikra, Rashi discusses the advantage of Jewish prophets over non-Jewish ones, whilst in Devarim, he describes how, out of respect for K'lal Yisrael, Moshe was careful to

avoid rebuking them directly. It is certainly no coincidence that Rashi chose, at the beginning of each Seifer, to portray Yisrael in a favourable light. It can be seen perhaps, as a demonstration of Rashi's Ahavas Yisrael, as well as lending support to the Chazal that Rashi will quote shortly, that the world was created for the sake of Yisrael.

The first point that we raised is particularly revelant in light of the situation today, where the nations of the world, having already stripped us of the major part of our country (after initially granting us the rights to the territory in its entirety) now insist on giving away additional areas to our enemies. That they are giving it to a fictitious people who have not the least historical claim to nationhood, let alone to our country, and whose very existence endangers the stability and the peace of the entire area, is in itself, unintelligible, undignified and unpardonable. But that they brazenly deny our historical and Biblical rights to the whole of Eretz Yisrael, when it is the only country in the world whose boundaries are clearly mapped out in the Chumash (the Old Testament, which western civilization by and large, accepts), can only be understood in terms of extreme antisemitism (in terms of hatred of Jews).

It is interesting that, according to Rashi, the Torah, Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael as our inheritance, all figure prominently in the creation. We have often cited Rashi on the Pasuk "ve'Samtem es devorai eileh", who explains that the Mitzvos are really meant to be observed in Eretz Yisrael. In that light, we might apply Rabbi Yitzchak's D'rashah to this concept, and even more so, according to the Ramban, who considers living in Eretz Yisrael a Mitzvah, as we discussed in Parshas Matos/Masei. From Rabbi Yitzchak's wording however, it is clear that the basic message is intended, not for our ears, but for the ears of the gentile nations.

The K'li Yakar (whose explanation we cited in volume 9), queries the significance of Rabbi Yitzchak's answer. Who cares, he asks, what the nations of the world will say. If the nations want to call us thieves, let them! That alone is surely not a reason to change the natural order of the Torah? What's more, one might add, his question conforms with the principle 'The ways of G-d are straight; the Tzadikim go on them, whereas the Resha'im stumble on them', from which we learn that the Torah writes the truth (in spite of any negative implications), and those who misconstrue its lessons, have only themselves to blame. Nobody of course, could have foreseen the intensity of the struggle for Eretz Yisrael, more now than ever before. The leading nations of the world believe in the Divine character of the Chumash, as we stated earlier. And in any event, the Torah was written in seventy languages, precisely to enable them to copy it and learn it, as the Gemara explains in Sotah. If they did not do so, they too, have only themselves to blame. Any knowledge they are expected to glean from (including Rabbi Yitzchak's lesson) but do not, will be held against them. Ignorance will not be deemed an excuse. Consequently, if the nations deny the children of G-d their historical and biblical rights, and moreover, they deliver them into the hands of their cruel and vicious enemy, they will eventually be treated as accessories. They will be made to pay dearly for their crimes against us.

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Rabbi Jachter's Halacha Files

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THE BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE OF MIKVAOT - PART 1 BY RABBI HOWARD JACHTER

We all use a Mikva at some point in our lives. Most of us, though, are unaware of how a Mikva is constructed and maintained. This week we shall begin a series of essays that will outline the basic rules and logic of Hilchot Mikvaot. The series will be based on a number of sources including the three volume work Mikva Mayim by

Rav Yirmiyah Katz. We will begin with a discussion of the parameters of a community's obligation to create Mikvaot.

The Obligation to Build a Mikva The Rama (Choshen Mishpat 163:3) codifies a ruling of the Teshuvot Mahari Mintz (number 7) that the entire community is obligated to pay for the building of a Mikva. Even those individuals who do not use a Mikva must pay for its construction and maintenance. Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe C.M. 1:42) rules that this communal obligation applies even if there already exists a functioning Mikva a short distance away, if the community is not within walking range of the existing Mikva. In fact, Rav Moshe writes (ibid. number 40) that it is appropriate for a community to build a Mikva even if the existing a Mikva is only two miles away. Indeed, Teshuvot Divrei Malkiel 3:67 (a major early twentieth century authority) wrote to the rabbis of Paris, "We must be exceedingly careful to create Mikvaot that are readily accessible to all to avoid discouraging anyone from immersing when they must." Rav Moshe (ibid. number 41) outlines how community leaders should divide the costs to build a Mikva among community members.

The following anecdote from the Chazon Ish (Pe'er Hador 2:157) vividly demonstrates the seriousness of this obligation. A Rav in a certain community in Tel Aviv posed the following problem to the Chazon Ish. The only available option to construct a Mikva for the neighborhood was to transform an existing Shul into a Mikva and subsequently add a second story where the synagogue would be rebuilt. The problem was that the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 153:9) forbids transforming a Shul into a Mikva. The Chazon Ish pondered the question for a few moments and replied in a dramatic and deliberate fashion "better that the learned Jew violate a minor prohibition so that the ignorant Jew will not violate a major transgression." The Chazon Ish stated that he is ready to accept punishment in Geihinnom (for condoning the transformation of a synagogue into a shul) in order to spare marginally observant Jews from violating the terrible sin of not using the Mikva when necessary.

The Priority to Build a Mikva before other Mitzvot The Chafetz Chaim (Kuntress Ma'amarim vekol Korei p.26) writes that it is forbidden to reside in a city that has no Mikva and building a Mikva "enjoys priority over building a shul, purchasing a Sefer Torah or any other Mitzvah." Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe C.M. 1:42) buttresses this point by citing the Halacha (Megilla 27a) that one may sell a Sefer Torah in order to secure funds to facilitate a marriage. Since the Mishna (Megillah 25b-26a) teaches that the holiness of a Sefer Torah exceeds the holiness of a shul, it follows logically that one may sell a shul to facilitate a marriage. Since Mikvaot facilitate the appropriate functioning of a marriage, reasons Rav Moshe, the building of a Mikva enjoys priority over building a shul. Indeed, Rav Yonatan Shteif (Teshuvot Mahari Shtief 187 - Rav Shtief was an important American Halachic authority, especially in the area of Hilchot Mikvaot, in the middle of the twentieth century) was asked by a Rav who was about to assume a rabbinical position in a community where most of its members were not observant whether his priority should be to promote Shabbat observance or Mikva construction and use. Rav Shteif replied Mikva should be of the highest priority since one must sacrifice his life in order to avoid violating the Niddah prohibition and one is not required to lose his life in order to observe Shabbat.

Rav Moshe (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Yoreh Deah 2:91) writes that the community must build a Mikva in a safe place where the privacy of those who use the Mikva will be preserved. Rav Moshe (ibid. number 90) strongly encourages the building of a Mikva at a high aesthetic and highest hygienic standards to encourage Mikva attendance by the widest circle of individuals. The Chazon Ish (Y.D. 123:5) also strongly urges that the Mikva should be maintained at the highest possible standards of cleanliness and aesthetics "as is proper for those performing a Mitzvah."

Temporary Closing of a Mikva The need often arises to expand and/or upgrade a Mikva. The question then arises whether we are permitted to temporarily close a Mikva in order to expedite the completion of the necessary work. Halachic authorities unanimously forbid temporary closing of a Mikva. These authorities include Rav Meir Arik (Teshuvot Imrei Yosher 2:210:1) and Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Yoreh Deah 2:91). These great Rabbanim all cite the Gemara (Megilla 26) that forbids temporary closing of a synagogue to facilitate its repair. The Gemara is concerned that the people will be lazy and not expend the money and effort to rebuild the shul. This rule most certainly applies to a Mikva for we have seen that building a Mikva is even more important than building a synagogue. Indeed, Rav Moshe writes that it is forbidden for the community not to have the Mikva available "even for one night."

Building a Mikva to the Highest Halachic Standards Already since the time of the Rishonim, (see Teshuvot Tashbetz 1:17, Beit Yosef chapter 201, and the Teshuvot Radbaz 1:85) the practice has been to be exceptionally strict regarding Mikva construction and maintenance. We seek to accommodate even opinions that

represent a small minority of Halachic authorities. The closest analogy in our experience is our exceptionally scrupulous avoidance of Chametz on Pesach. Rav Yirmiya Katz (Mikva Mayim 3:14-16) assembles a long list of authorities that record this practice to be extraordinarily strict regarding Hilchot Mikvaot. These authorities include Teshuvot Maharam Milublin (number 97), Teshuvot Divrei Chaim (2:97 and 99), Teshuvot Maharash Engel (1:78), Teshuvot Divrei Malkiel (4:85), Teshuvot Minchat Elazar (4:7), Teshuvot Mahari Shtief (number 71) citing an oral tradition from the Chatam Sofer, Teshuvot Chelkat Yaakov (2:90 and 3:57), Teshuvot Doveiev Meisharim (3:36), and Teshuvot Minchat Yitzchak (9:94). Indeed, although Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 1:136) regards the size of an Amah (cubit) to be twenty one and a quarter inches in the context of almost all Halachot including Hilchot Shabbat, regarding Mikva Rav Moshe urges to stringency and assumption that an Amah is twenty four inches. Moreover, in a later responsum (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Y.D. 2:89) Rav Moshe is even stricter and advises regarding an Amah as twenty four and a half inches in the context of Hilchot Mikvaot.

In addition, it is common to cite the Chazon Ish who reportedly remarked that he never saw an invalid Mikva, due to the many stringencies that Am Yisrael practices in regards to Mikva. Moreover, my cousin Rav Yosef Singer (who for many decades supervised the Lower East Side of Manhattan Mikva under the auspices of Rav Moshe Feinstein) relates that whenever Rav Moshe had the opportunity to enhance and upgrade the Mikva he did so. For example, although the Mikva originally used metal pipes to transport water from the roof to the Mikva, Rav Moshe later changed to plastic pipes (see Rama Yoreh Deah 201:36 and Pitchei Teshuva Y.D. 201:24 regarding the use of wooden and metal pipes and Teshuvot Minchat Yitzchak 4:36:2, Rav Nissim Telushkin, Taharat Mayim p.200, and Mikva Mayim 3:171-172 regarding the use of metal pipes). We should note that Rav Telushkin was a major mid-twentieth century authority regarding Hilchot Mikvaot. He resided in Brooklyn New York and was a major player in the creation and maintenance of Mikvaot in the United States during his rabbinic career.

There are a number of reasons to explain the reason for this stringency. Some explain that the concept of Tahara is a uniquely Jewish concept and one that we must zealously safeguard. Rav Chaim of Sanz (in the aforementioned Teshuvot Divrei Chaim) writes "one should strive to construct a Mikva that will be acceptable to all opinions because Mikva embodies the holiness of the Jewish People." Rav Yaakov Breisch (in the aforementioned Teshuvot Chelkat Yaakov) notes that regarding matters of Kashrut the community rabbis might decide to be lenient regarding the certification of a particular product or establishment. In such a case, those who wish to be strict may simply refrain from eating that product or patronizing the particular establishment. However, we must create a Mikva at the highest possible standards, as we must accommodate the needs of even the most pious and stringent of individuals since they do not have an option to refrain from using the Mikva.

Rav Moshe Heinemann (Rabbinic Administrator of the Star K, who is considered a leading contemporary Halachic authority) elaborated on this point in a Shiur that he delivered to a conference of the Council of Young Israel Rabbis. He noted that when Jews lived in their "old countries" there was a Rav of the town who constructed the local Mikva in accordance to the traditions and practices of the area. However, now that Jews have settled in America from a wide variety of places that maintained a wide variety of practices, we must construct Mikvaot in a manner that is acceptable according to all of the traditions. He mentioned as an example that when he helped plan the construction of the Mikva in Lakewood in the mid-1960's, he consulted Rav Yoel Teitelbaum, the Satmar Rav zt"l, to insure that the Mikva was constructed in harmony with his standards (the Satmar Rav is considered a leading authority in the area of Hilchot Mikvaot). Interestingly, the Satmar Rav is quoted in this context (in the aforementioned Teshuvot Minchat Yitzchak and Teshuvot Chelkat Yaakov) as stating that the Mikva is supposed to purify us, and not that we should have to "purify" the Mikva with explanations of why the Mikva is Kosher. Rather, the Kashrut of the Mikva should be beyond question.

On the other hand, Rav Moshe (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Y.D. 1:111) cautions that it is virtually impossible to create a Mikva that will satisfy all opinions. He notes that the practice is to immerse in a warm Mikva even though a minority of Rishonim forbid this (see Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 201:75 and Aruch Hashulchan Y.D. 201:214-217) and that a small group of Rishonim require a Zavah (see Niddah 67b that today all are considered Safek Zavah) to immerse in a Maayan, a natural spring (see Rashi Shabbat 65b s.v. Vesavar). Elsewhere Rav Moshe writes (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Y.D. 2:89) "in small Jewish communities one should certainly not be especially strict to impose an enormous financial burden" to accommodate minority opinions. Indeed, Rav Yirmiya Katz stated at a conference of Young Israel Rabbis

that it is possible to create a small, basic Kosher Mikva (that does not accommodate every stringency) in the range of ten thousand dollars for a Jewish community. Mystical Considerations The Baal Shem Tov (cited in Mikveh Mayim 3:6 and elsewhere) is cited as interpreting the Pasuk in Chabbakuk 3:12 (and see Metzodot David) "Bezaam (Bet, Zayin, Ayin, Mem) Hashem will remove the enemies of the Jews from Eretz Yisrael."

The Baal Shem teaches that Zaam is an acronym: Zayin=Zevicha (ritual slaughtering, i.e. Kashrut), Ayin=Eirubin, and Mem=Mikva. In other words, scrupulous observance of the Halachot of communal Kashrut, Eirubin, and Mikvaot will bring the removal of the enemies of Am Yisrael from Eretz Yisrael. Moreover, Rav Katz records that in 1943 when Hitler (Yimach Shmo Vezichro) was at El Aleiman and poised to conquer Eretz Yisrael, a group of leading Chassidic Rebbes assembled in Jerusalem and pledged to do their utmost to build and upgrade Mikvaot throughout Eretz Yisrael to prevent the Nazis from entering our Holy Land. Indeed, that meeting sowed the seeds of the establishment of the Vaad Letaharat Hamishpacha that supervises the functioning of the more than one thousand five hundred Mikvaot in Medinat Yisrael today. Perhaps it is partly in merit of these heroic efforts that our beloved Medinat Yisrael has witnessed so many miracles from the beginning of the modern Zionist movement until today. Conclusion Rav Katz mentioned at the Young Israel Rabbi's gathering, that in contrast to Eretz Yisrael, there are only approximately three hundred functioning Mikvaot in the United States. He urged rabbis and community leaders to do their utmost to change the facts on the ground and establish a wider network of Mikvaot in this country to facilitate easy access to Mikvaot where it is not necessary to aesthetically pleasing endure long lines to immerse.