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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON BEREISHIS - 5769

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Rabbi Mordechai Willig

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The Financial Crisis: A Warning Shot?

I Rashi (Breishis 1:1) tells us that Hashem created the heavens and earth for the sake of Torah and Am Yisroel, both of which are called "reishis". Bechiras Yisroel, i.e. the fact that Am Yisroel is the chosen nation, is thus emphasized in the very first passuk in the Torah. Some associate the notion of bechiras Yisroel with a superiority complex, but that can not be correct since we are taught that all human beings are beloved and created in Hashem's image (Avos 3:18). Some Jews don't want to accept the idea of bechiras Yisroel due to an inferiority complex. Their unjustifiably guilty conscience leads them to believe that Am Yisroel has no right to Eretz Yisroel, thus conceding to the claim of the nations of the world that we are bandits (see Rashi 1:1). For this reason the Torah's first passuk teaches that Hashem created the world and has the right to give Eretz Yisroel to whomever He sees fit (Rashi 1:1. See Cheit Hameraglim: Then and Now). Bechiras Yisroel is defined by our receiving the Torah and being called the children of Hashem (Avos ibid.). Hashem's arrangement of world events rotates around us, just as parents arrange activities, which may affect many people, around the needs of their child. As a result, we bear a greater measure of responsibility for world events. We should all have a "responsibility complex", as the Rambam writes: One should view the entire world half innocent and half guilty. If he sins, he tips the scale and causes destruction. If he does a mitzvah, he saves the entire world. - Hilchos Teshuva, 3:4 While this is true for every person, a Jew bears a greater measure of responsibility.

II "I know that it is because of me that this great tempest is upon you" (Yona 1:12). Although many lives were in danger, Yona realized that he was responsible. The Chafetz Chaim applied this principle to the floods and earthquakes of his time. These natural disasters, which killed thousands in faraway lands, were wakeup calls to do teshuva (Kovetz Maamarim by Rav Elchanan Wasserman, p.26). "I have destroyed nations, their towers have become desolate....I said 'Just fear Me, accept mussar'" (Tz'fania 3:6,7). Following Yona's example, we should view desolation of all types as a charge to accept mussar, i.e. to recognize that Hashem is sending us a message that we dare not ignore. "If you say that the distress is a coincidence, I will punish you even more severely" (Vayikra 26:27). Hashem causes distress so that we should do teshuva. If we don't, we are cruel and cause greater suffering (Rambam Hilchos Taanios 1:3). "A land

(i.e. Eretz Yisroel) that Hashem, your G-d, seeks out." (Devarim 11:12). He seeks out none but it, and through that seeking out, He seeks out all the other lands along with it (Rashi). The world's rain, the source of financial success, is determined by Hashem based on Eretz Yisroel, whose rainfall, in turn, depends upon our observing mitzvos (11:13-17). When a financial setback is decreed upon the Jews, a world economic crisis takes place. Hashem hides the fact that we are punished by causing a wider crisis (Kovetz Maamarim p. 142 based on Tz'fania ibid). If we accept the reality of our central role in the course of world events, the losses we experience from the world-wide financial crisis will serve as our punishment. Otherwise, we may face additional, particularly Jewish, crises. This would be similar to the double punishment that we suffered in the past (Yeshaya 40:2, Kovetz Maamarim ibid). While we have no Navi to tell us which aveiros caused the current financial crisis, consider the following: "One who amasses wealth unjustly will lose that wealth in the middle of his days" (Yirmiyahu 17:11) ... [this includes] dishonesty, interest, price-gouging, unfair competition, etc. This also includes money gained from chilul Shabbos and yom tov and from bitul Torah ... [it even includes] money which should have been donated to causes that we are obligated to support, such as the poor or to the support of Torah... - Kovetz Maamarim p. 144 We may want to carefully reflect on all aspects of our financial lives, be it making sure that we scrupulously adhere to all simanim of Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat, be it examining how we allocate our financial resources. As we begin Breishis in turbulent times, we must remember that the world was created for Am Yisroel and Torah. This fact imposes a great responsibility upon us, one which we ignore at our peril. If, however, we accept this responsibility, we can work towards living up to our bechira and hastening the ultimate redemption.

From: Rabbi Goldwicht [rgoldwicht@yutorah.org] Sent: Thursday, October 27, 2005 11:41 PM Subject: **WEEKLY INSIGHTS BY MEIR GOLDWICHT** - The Weekly Sichah - Parashat Bereishit 5766
Parashat Bereishit 5766

If we look through the entire sefer Torah, we find, very interestingly, that the נחש escorts the world from its very creation until the eve of בני ישראל's entrance into ארץ ישראל. It is the נחש who causes the downfall of אדם and חווה by convincing them to eat from the הדעת once again. When Yosef's brothers throw him into the pit, we find the נחש once again. The passuk says, regarding Yosef's pit, "והבור ריק אין בו מים", And the pit was empty, there was no water in it" (בראשית ל:כד). Chazal (שבת כב ע"א) comment, "מים אין בו, אבל נחשים ועקרבים יש בו", There was no water in the pit, but there were snakes and scorpions." We again find the נחש in Moshe's very first encounter with הקב"ה. Moshe argues that there is no point in sending him to talk to עם ישראל, since they would not believe that הקב"ה appeared to him. Thereupon, הקב"ה instructed Moshe to throw his staff to the ground, at which point it transformed into a snake. Moshe grabbed the snake by the tail and it transformed back into Moshe's staff. The נחש makes one more appearance on the eve of בני ישראל's entrance into ארץ ישראל, as mentioned earlier. עם ישראל complains that there is no bread and water, so הקב"ה punishes their lack of emunah with a plague of snakes, killing many of the Jews. Moshe constructs a נחש נחוש according to הקב"ה's instruction, and thereafter any Jew who was bitten by a snake would be healed by simply looking at the נחוש נחוש. Why does Hashem choose the snake to appear in these different places and times ranging from בני ישראל all the way through ארץ ישראל?

When הקב"ה punished נחש for enticing אדם and חווה to eat from the הדעת, the Torah tells us that the נחש was given two curses, "על גחונך תלך", On your stomach shall you crawl," and, "ועפר תאכל כל ימי חייך", The dust of the ground will you eat all your days." The curse of "ועפר תאכל" is very clear: Since dirt can be found almost anywhere, the נחש would never be without food and would thus never need to turn to הקב"ה for help. In other

words, the curse of “ועפר תאכל” meant that the נחש was completely cut off from the הקב"ה. The curse of “על גחונך תלך” is somewhat more perplexing. Is this punishment the removal of the נחש’s legs? This isn’t much of a punishment, considering that snakes can move quite fast on their stomachs, even without legs. Rather, this punishment is also one of cutting off. An animal that crawls on its stomach can only move in a zigzag. A snake therefore cannot move in a straight line. When a person walks in a zigzag, everyone who sees him avoids him, since this strange way of walking suggests deviousness. The curse of “על גחונך תלך,” then, serves to distance the נחש from the rest of “society” in addition to being distanced from the הקב"ה.

Understanding the נחש’s curses, we can now move a step further in analyzing the concept represented by the נחש. We find the נחש once more in Parashas Shemini, listed among the non-kosher animals. The passuk says, “לא תאכלום כי שקץ הם” (ויקרא יא:מב). Any animal which crawls on its stomach...do not eat, for they are abominations” (ויקרא יא:מב). The letter ו"ו in the word גחון is larger than the rest of the letters, which brings Chazal to expound that this letter is at the very center of the Torah (קידושין). This, Chazal explain, is the chiddush that the קדמונים revealed to us, and it is the reason they are called סופרים, because they counted all the letters and taught us that this letter is in the very middle of the Torah. This chiddush is difficult to understand, though, because seemingly anybody with a little patience could count all the letters in the Torah and come to the realization that this ו"ו is the halfway point of the Torah. The explanation, rather, is that the קדמונים were not revealing technical and numerical facts of the Torah, but the lesson that everything that happens in life, whether to the יחיד or the צבור, can be seen in one of two ways. We can look at these events through our own emotions and understanding, in which case a person might see things one way at the time it happens, differently after a few months, and even more differently after several years. His views oscillate rather than remain constant. Alternatively, one can look at these events not through his own emotions and feelings, but rather through the teachings of his rabbanim, which they received from their rabbanim – the מסורה. Through this way of looking at life, one realizes that even if the journey is challenging and difficult to understand, perhaps even illogical at times, when he ultimately looks back on his life he will find that the entire way he had gone straight, living a life of ישירות.

This is the central point of the Torah. If a person follows his own heart and his own feelings, he will find himself crawling on his stomach on a crooked path. If he follows the מסורה, the guidance and direction of his rabbanim, he will find himself on a path straight like a ו"ו. Here lies Man’s choice.

Yosef understood this lesson when he saw that the pit in which his brothers placed him was full of snakes, and yet he survived. He realized that the day would soon come when he would be reunited with his brothers, yet he would not obey his emotions and retaliate against them, rather he would help them lay the foundation for their stay in מצרים, realizing that only the הקב"ה can mete out punishment.

This was also the lesson the הקב"ה taught Moshe when he doubted that בני ישראל would listen to him. The הקב"ה transformed his staff into a snake and back in order to teach Moshe that if you follow your own beliefs, you will find yourself going in a zigzag like a snake, but if you follow Me, even when it seems difficult, even if you don’t understand, you will be on a path as straight as the staff in your hand. And with this very staff, representing straight, unwavering emunah, Moshe struck מצרים with the מכות and brought about the miracles of מצרים.

כניסה לארץ ישראל was taught this lesson on the eve of their לארץ ישראל, when the nation, openly displaying their lack of bitachon in the הקב"ה, complained about the lack of bread and water. The הקב"ה sent the נחש to show them exactly

what they resemble. Appropriately, the cure for the bite of the snake was to look at the נחש and be משהעבד לקב"ה. This lesson was necessary before the entrance into ארץ ישראל, because you cannot enter ארץ ישראל without emunah, and you cannot live there without bitachon in the הקב"ה.

We now understand why the נחש escorts the world from the time of Creation until בני ישראל’s entrance into ארץ ישראל. The concept represented by the נחש is expressed by Noach as well. When Noach left the teivah, the Torah says, “בראשית ט:כ-” (כד). The gemara (סנהדרין ע"א) says that the letter ו"ו appears 13 times (attached to verbs) in these pesukim. The explanation is that Noach had the opportunity to start a new world in a ישיר way, enabling the world to last forever, yet the moment he got off of the teivah he began with the גפן, which, while it has a positive side, providing יין for קידוש, also has a negative side, drunkenness. In this way, Noach lost the opportunity to start the new world with ישירות. Planting the גפן was an expression of Noach’s worldview, as the גפן is the only tree that grows crooked, in a zigzag. This is hardly the tree with which he should have begun the new world. Amazingly, the same gemara in Sanhedrin brings R’ Meir’s opinion that the עץ הדעת, from which אדם הראשון ate improperly, was the הקב"ה. “Every tree is a reflection of you, אדם הראשון גפן. כי האדם עץ, השדה, For Man is the tree of the field” (דברים כ"ט), except for the גפן. Every tree is ישיר, except for the גפן.”

אדם הראשון and Noach were both lowered because of the גפן, but then Avraham came along. The Torah tells us that Avraham planted an אשל, a tree, bringing ישירות back into the world. It is because of his ישירות that Avraham is called עמוד של עולם, the pillar of the world. From Avraham’s tree, Yaakov took some branches on his way down to מצרים, understanding that the way out of גלות is to exhibit ישירות in one’s relations with his fellow man and with the הקב"ה. Yaakov planted those branches in מצרים, where they sprouted other trees, from which בני ישראל built the משכן, the place of ישירות, representing emunah, bitachon, and ישירות. This is why ספר בראשית is called ספר הישר, as the נביא writes in his hakdamah, because the essential quality of the אבות was not their צדקות or their חסידות, but their ישירות. With ישירות, you can attain everything, and without ישירות, even if you have everything, there is nothing.

How do we acquire this ישירות? The Torah teaches us in שירת האזינו. The passuk says, “זכור ימות עולם בינו שנות דור ודור, שאל אביך ויגיד וזקניך ויאמרו: לך, Recall the days of old, contemplate the earlier years; ask your father and he will relate it to you, your elders and they will tell you” (דברים לב:ז). The Torah commands us here to learn the history of the world and to turn to our elders for their experience. Certainly the Torah doesn’t mean here that we should simply learn about the destruction of the המבול, דור הפלגה, and זיל קרי בי רב, and is not something one would have to ask his elders about. Rather, the Torah wants us to examine the potential of the earlier generations, what these generations failed to bring into the world. Let us analyze what exactly this potential was.

The דור המבול had the potential to receive the Torah. The gemara (זבחים קטז ע"א) says that when בני ישראל received the Torah, the הקב"ה’s voice was so loud that the אומות העולם, who were not fit to receive the Torah, thought another מבול was coming to the world. In other words, we see that a מבול comes in the absence of התורה. The gemara (ע"ב) asks, “משה מן התורה מנין?” The gemara brings the passuk immediately before the הוא בשר והוה ימיו מאה ועשרים שנה, For he is flesh and his days shall number one hundred twenty years” (בראשית ו"ג). Rashi explains that משה is בשגם, and Moshe in fact lived for one hundred twenty years. If the דור המבול had the potential to receive the Torah, Moshe Rabbeinu must also be there in potential form. How amazing also that Moshe was named Moshe because

“From the water I drew him” (שמות ב:י). What water was he saved from? From the water of the מבוול, where he would have emerged had the דור המבוול fulfilled its potential, he was saved for a later generation.

The דור הפלגה had the potential to explain the Torah. “יהיה כל הארץ שפה” אהת, The entire world spoke one language.” They could have used this gift of clear communication to explain the Torah truthfully, but instead they used it to rebel against הקב"ה by coming together to build בבל. We see that this was the potential of בבל, because years later בבל produced the תלמוד בבלי, which remains with us to this day, explaining the תורה שבכתב. Unfortunately, however, this potential was not realized by the דור הפלגה.

אנושי had the ability to create strong connections between man and fellow man as well as between man and הקב"ה. Instead, however, they did the opposite, completely perverting any concept of להבירו בין and בין אדם להבירו. Their failed potential was realized many years later, when דוד המלך, a descendant of מואב (רות), who was born as a result of מהפכת סדום, said, “ואני תפילה, I am prayer” (תפילה קטד). תפילה is a connection between man and הקב"ה and between man and fellow man, as we constantly pray for צבור and for individuals in the צבור.

We see from this that the pillar of the world is Torah, the way to understand Torah is through שבעל פה, תורה שבעל פה, and once you understand this you can build great relationships with your fellow man and with הקב"ה. These three things together create ישרות. This is תורת חיינו, the eternal Torah. Our task is to remember that we were created on יום אחד and are therefore all ישרים like a ישר. Man was created ישר. We must fix the crookedness of the נחש. The harder we strive for this, the faster we will approach the גאולה העתידה. This is why the קדמונים tell us that נחש in גמטריא is משיח. The harder we try to fix the crookedness of the נחש and live our lives with ישרות, אמת, and bitachon in הקב"ה, especially in our times, when we really see everything coming apart and the only thing that stands strong is the ישרות of Torah, the more we will merit to walk the straight path and bring more שמחה, becoming עומדים שטים, standing straight for all eternity.

Shabbat Shalom!
Meir Goldwicht

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Parshas Berashis 5769

Prologue: It is the holiest of times.

The Torah informs us that Hashem himself sanctified Shabbos and endowed it with his Kedusha (Holiness). As we note in the Shabbos Kiddush, this was God's sign of the bond that exists between the Jewish people and Him. And despite the fact that logic dictates otherwise – that Shabbos which refers to the completion of the world should apply between G-d and ALL mankind – it remains part of our special connection to Hashem (See Aruch Hashulchan, O.C. 242:1).

The Torah Temimah (Devarim 5:12) adds that this is why unlike the other themes of Yom Tov, Shabbos is unique in highlighting the concept of Ahava (Love). Namely, the acceptance of Shabbos by the Jews was a

solidification of the love that exists between Hashem and each member of Klal Yisrael.

Rav Shalom Rosner (Rav of Nofei HaShemesh – See Sefer Eshet Hashem) once noted that the love of Shabbos is demonstrated through the process of Shabbos preparation. Citing the Rambam (Hil. Shabbos 30:2), Rav Rosner noted that washing ones hands and face and dressing for Shabbos are expressions of the love of Shabbos. He further noted that these are also the parameters of preparation for Tefillah (See Hil. Tefillah chap. 4). What connection exists between Tefillah and Shabbos that might explain why the preparatory steps for both mimic one another?

Rav Soloveitchik (Shiurim LZecher Abba Mori vol. I: 62-63) suggested that both are times when man finds himself L'fnei Hashem – in the direct presence of Hashem. Preparing for these moments helps man to reflect and realize that these times are precious and not to be wasted. The Shabbos experience is a 25 hour extended day prayer service whereby man brings hashem into his life fully.

May we merit the benefit of Shabbos and speedily experience the day that is Yom SheKulo Shabbos.

***** VaYechulu: Testimony or testing the crowd *****

The Talmud (Shabbos 119b) notes that all must say VaYechulu on Friday evenings. The Talmud goes so far as to note that doing so allows the individual to be a partner in the creation of the world. The Gemara adds that when one says Vayechulu, the 2 angels that accompany man on Shabbos place their hands on his head and announce that his Sins are forgiven.

Accordingly, when the matter is codified in Shulchan Aruch, it is noted that the practice is to repeat VaYechulu again after the Shemoneh esrai on Friday night (O.C. 268:7).

The Kaf HaChaim (O.C. 265:34) notes that the number 3 is significant and that VaYechulu should be recited 3 times. He brings 4 reasons as to why that is so: Firstly, the Midrash notes that VaYechulu can atone for sins like the Para Aduma and the word Asher appears 3 times in both sections. Second, it is testimony to the fact that Hashem created 3 worlds (elyon, Tachton and Emtzaee). Third, When something is recited thrice, it is meant. And finally, there is a deep Kabbalaistic significance to the recitation which cannot be altered.

But why the additional repetition after Shemoneh Esrai? And what about the person who doesn't finish in time?

The Tur (O.C. 268) cites three reasons for the extra VaYechulu. 1) it was instituted for the weeks when Yom Tov begins on Shabbos and VaYechulu is not said in Shemoneh Esrai. Once it was started it was added to all other weeks. 2) It was instituted to help those who couldn't say it on their own and 3) it was offered as testimony to G-d on the creation of the world. (The Rosh is the source for this last explanation – see Rosh to perek 10 of Pesachim Siman 15).

Based on the last explanation provided by the Tur, the Taz (268:10) notes that when one recites VaYechulu he must do so aloud and as part of a group since testimony in Judaism requires a group. Accordingly, the Mishna Berurah (See 268:19) notes that if one were to get to VaYechulu and be Davening alone, he should not repeat it. In fact many Poskim encourage people to daven somewhat faster on Friday nights to enable them to say VaYechulu with the Tzibbur.

The Chazon Ish (O.C. 38:10) differed with this position. He notes that there are 3 reasons for the practice of saying VaYechulu and in truth we do not require Eidus in the other times we say it (i.e. the silent Shemoneh Esrai and in the quiet confines of our home abodes). Accordingly, he rules that one should NOT seek out additional people in order to say VaYechulu if the Tzibbur happens to pass him by. (Hagaon Harav Asher Weiss Shlita noted that the Rosh which is the source of this explanation never mentions Kol Rom seemingly noting that one need not apply Dinei Eidus to the situation.)

Bottom line, whether one must repeat VaYechulu is open to serious discussion but the keeping of "Eidus" should not come at the expense of the order of Tefilla or answering Kaddish.
Shabbat Shalom

Rav Yissocher Frand
Parshas Bereishis

Adam Regrets His Gift to Dovid

The Medrash teaches that the Almighty showed Adam the history of mankind—each generation and its leaders. In the course of this “exhibition,” Adam was shown the soul of Dovid HaMelech [King David] and the fact that he was destined to live only 3 hours. Adam was very grieved at this loss of potential. He inquired whether he was allowed to bequeath some of his own years to Dovid. The Almighty answered that Adam was destined to live for 1000 years, but that he would be allowed to give up some of those years to Dovid. Adam then bequeathed 70 years to Dovid, so that Adam lived for 930 years and Dovid lived for 70 years. Chazal teach that when Adam was about to turn 930 years old, he regretted his earlier generosity and wanted to back out of the deal. G-d urged Adam to keep his word. G-d pointed out that Adam would have a descendant Yaakov who would make a vow and keep it. Ultimately, Adam agreed to keep his earlier vow. The Rokeach cites an even more startling version of this Medrash: When Adam originally agreed to give over 70 years of his life to the future Dovid HaMelech, he signed a document to that effect. The document was “co-signed”, so to speak, by the Master of the Universe and by the Angel Matat. In the Rokeach’s version of the Medrash, when Adam turned 930, he tried to deny that he ever made such an agreement. At that point, the Almighty pulled out the document proving that he had made the deal! The Medrash in Tehilim cites in this vein, that Dovid HaMelech’s comment in Tehilim [146:3]: “Do not trust nobles nor sons of man (ben Adam), for he holds no salvation.” refers back to Adam’s attempt to retract his gift of the 70 years. What are Chazal trying to tell us with this Medrash? The book *Mayanei haChaim* by Rav Chaim Zaitchik makes an interesting observation. Rav Chaim Zaitchik interprets that Adam HaRishon—as with all Tzadikim—cherished life so much that as he was approaching death he could not bear to forgo the opportunity he had to accomplish more with those extra years. There is so much that a Tzadik can do with even one more year, with even one more month, with even a single day. Life is so precious that when he realized that his time was up, he became so distraught and irrational that he forgot his promise or was willing to retract the promise (depending on the varying versions quoted above). This desire to retract does not stem from evil or shortcomings on Adam’s part. On the contrary, it stemmed from his greatness and his understanding of the value of life. A pasuk [verse] in Hallel states: *Yakar B’Ainei Hashem hamavsa l’ chasidav* [Tehilim 116:15]. We just finished reciting this for 9 days. What does this mean? Rashi interprets *Yakar* to be equivalent of *Kaved* (heavy or difficult). The pasuk thus means it is difficult for the Almighty to bring death to His righteous ones. Others however interpret: when the Almighty sees how Tzadikim act when they are staring at death, it is precious in His eyes. He is pleased with the fact that they recognize the great value of life. The Ibn Ezra points out that the mitzvah of “You shall rise before those who have seivah” (the elderly) [Vayikra 19:32] is a different mitzvah than that cited at the end of the same pasuk: “You shall give honor to the face of the zaken”. The term *zaken* in the phrase “you shall give honor to the face of the zaken” refers to a Torah scholar (*zeh she’kanah chachmah*). However, the term *seivah* in the mitzvah to rise before the elderly refers to anyone who is old. The Ibn Ezra asks, why must we honor the elderly by rising before them? The Ibn Ezra answers that people who are elderly have learned to appreciate the value of life. They deserve honor for that recognition. A person acts differently, thinks differently, and has a different perspective on life when he is in his fifties and sixties than when he is in his twenties and thirties. He is a

different type of person. We need to honor that perspective and attitude by rising before such people. When Adam was “born,” and was told he had 1000 years in front of him, it was tantamount to someone coming to a millionaire and asking for \$1000 donation. The millionaire is prepared to flippantly give over the 1000 dollars. It means very little to him. But if this same millionaire loses all his money he will be greatly aggravated over the fact that he gave away 1000 dollars. At the end of his life, Adam was like the millionaire who lost his money. The 1000 years that he once had in front of him were now behind him. He had a different perspective on life now. It is because of that perspective that we rise up before the elderly. It is because of that perspective that we say “Precious in the Eyes of G-d is (the time of) death for his righteous.” Parents Love Children More Than Children Love Parents I would like to share a fascinating Shalo”h haKadosh. The Shalo”h haKadosh writes that a person should give as much as he can afford to his daughters so that they might be able to marry a Torah scholar. But, he writes, “I am not in favor of the practice I see that when a wealthy person gets old, he distributes all his money amongst his children, assuming that they will take care of him.” He categorizes this latter practice as a major mistake. A person should not give his money to his children, necessitating him to ask them for money when he is old. One cannot rely on children for support – even if their wealth comes from their parents! The Shalo”h haKadosh explains that the nature is that fathers love sons and fathers love daughters. However, it is also nature that the parental love to their children is greater than the reciprocal love of children to their parents. Why is that? The Shalo”h haKadosh explains that every personality trait that exists in creation is inherited from Adam. However, Adam had no parents. Therefore, Adam never exhibited the emotion of loving his parents. He did, however, develop an emotional love for his children. Hence, this love transferred down to all his descendants—even though they did have parents—their love of children was greater than their love of parents. The Shalo”h haKadosh concludes by citing the whimsical quip that one father lovingly provides for 10 children but 10 children cannot support one father.

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from **Rabbi Aryeh Striks** <striks@vths.org> reply-to striks@vths.org to internetparshasheet@gmail.com date Thu, Oct 23, 2008 at 8:05 PM subject Mussar HaTorah - Parashas Bereishis

Mussar HaTorah Torah insights into human nature from the weekly parasha. Based on the talks of **Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt”l** (Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim - RSA) and dedicated in his memory.

“And Hashem created man in His image ...” (Bereishis 1:27) The quality of *tzelem Elokim* is the defining aspect that describes man’s creation. Every one of us has been endowed with a divine quality that separates us from the rest of Hashem’s creations: an ability to understand, and grow in spirituality. In fact, the *S’forno* (ibid. 9:6) points to man’s *tzelem Elokim* as the critical factor that differentiates between humans and animals regarding the permissibility of taking a life. We are allowed to take the life of an animal, for food or other necessary purposes, but taking the life of a human being is a terrible crime, deserving the most serious retribution. Why? The *S’forno* explains: Each person is created in the image of Hashem, Who gives us life, and therefore anyone who takes a human life must be held accountable. Hashem’s system is perfect and just. Anyone who is held responsible for a crime must, by definition, be able to understand both the wrongfulness and the severity of the crime. It would unfair to inflict any punishment if he was oblivious to his misdeed, and equally unjust to mete out a harsher consequence if he was incapable of appreciating that degree of evil in his act. Let us examine our protagonist – a murderer. Let us give

him the benefit of the doubt that he is not a coldblooded pathological killer. If so, he must be overwhelmed by his passions: anger, jealousy, hatred, or other powerful drives that motivate him to kill another human being. Can such a person, consumed by his desires, think about the lofty concept of tzelem Elokim? Would it even enter his mind at this emotionally charged moment? Furthermore, besides the basic difficulty of focusing on an abstract concept, could it really be effective in stopping him from his headlong rush to commit murder? The Torah is teaching us the grandeur of the human being. Included in the priceless gift of tzelem Elokim is the universal ability of every person on the face of this earth to appreciate not only his own greatness, but even more so, the greatness of his fellow man. This capacity extends to the most pressured and stressful situations, and can influence our actions even when we are seized by the most violent and irrational emotions. One of the most valuable skills we can cultivate is to train ourselves to see the tzelem Elokim in others and to ignore their flaws. (The Da'as Z'keinim [Bereishis 5:1] says that the recognition of tzelem Elokim in others is more powerful than the fundamental concept of v'ahavta l'rayacha kamocho – love your neighbor as yourself.) If it can stop someone in a murderous rage, it can surely help us overlook all kinds of slights and insults, both real and imagined. If we use this powerful gift properly, it will help us treat others with dignity and respect, and simultaneously, appreciate our own greatness and our potential to reach the loftiest heights of achievement.

from Kol Torah <koltorah@koltorah.org> to Kol Torah
 <koltorah@koltorah.org> date Thu, Oct 23, 2008 at 10:25 PM
 subject Kol Torah Parashat Bereishit
 KOL TORAH A Student Publication of the Torah Academy of Bergen
 County Parshat Bereishit 26 Tishrei 5769 October 25, 2008 Vol.18 No.5

Growth Through Rejection by Rabbi Scott Friedman

Parashat BeReishit contains not only the creation of the physical world and all its components, but the creation of mankind as well. The first individuals introduced are the world's first parents, Adam and Chavah. After learning about Adam and Chavah and their complex relationship, the Torah introduces Kayin and Hevel, the world's first pair of brothers. Kayin, the older of the two, not only brought murder into the world, but introduced the concept of Teshuvah as well. A very interesting question can be asked about Kayin. How could a person on such a high level sink so low as to murder? What drove him to this point? The former Rosh Yeshiva of the Mirrer Yeshiva, Rav Chaim Schmuelovitz zt"l, asks this question. He adds, that not only did Kayin kill Hevel, but as the Pasuk states, "VaYomer Kayin El Hevel Achiv," "Kayin spoke with his brother Hevel." (4:8). Right before Kayin kills his brother the Torah states says that he spoke with Hevel. What was said in this conversation? Rashi tells us that Kayin said things that were quarrelsomeness in order to rationalize his killing Hevel. The Targum Yonatan Ben Uziel asserts that Kayin said there is no judge, there is no judgment, and there is no world besides this one. How could one who spoke prophetically to G-d himself not only kill his brother, but deny God's existence? Rav Shmuelovitz answers that we find the answer to these questions in the passage preceding the murder of Hevel. The Torah states, "VeEl Kayin VeEl Minchato Lo Shaah VaYichar LeKayin Meod VaYiplu Panav" "But to Kayin and his offering He did not turn. This upset Cain exceedingly, and his face fell." (4:5) Kayin felt rejected by Hashem, he felt inferior to Hevel; therefore, in response to feeling rejected, he rejects back. This is not an unusual response; most of us do the same thing. This defense mechanism is used to avoid embarrassment, rejection, or other uncomfortable feelings. Ramban states that not only was Kayin feeling rejected, but he believed that Hashem would build the world primarily through his brother Hevel, since his Korban was favored. Not only did Hashem's rejection of Kayin's Korban make him feel insignificant, but also made him worry that he actually would be insignificant. Ramban adds

that Kayin could have been inspired by his brother and improved but chose to rebel instead. Too often we reject when we feel rejected. When someone is rude or difficult or acts towards us in a way we don't like too often we act accordingly in return. In fact, we even feel justified in doing so! Although we might be justified, the Torah tells us "VeAhavta LeReiacha KaMocha", love your friends like yourself. Treat others the way you would want to be treated and not the way they treat you. Or as the saying goes, be the change you want to see in the world. We must take personal responsibility and realize that an argument or fight cannot continue without two sides involved. If we would treat others and ourselves the way we would like to be treated, eventually we will be treated the same way. My Rebbe, Rav Elie Marcus, Mashgiach of Yeshivat Reishit Yerushalayim, called me this summer just to relate this story that he knew I would appreciate. Rav Elie's brother-in-law was visiting Eretz Yisrael and meeting with many of the Gedolei Yisrael while there. He had been meeting with Rav Tzvi Meyer Zilverberg, a great Chassidic Rebbe in Yerushalayim, when the Rebbe asked him if he had visited Rav Vosner. Upon learning he had not yet visited Rav Vosner, Rav Zilverberg insisted he meet Rav Vosner, and then proceeded to tell Rav Vosner's story. Rav Vosner had gone for an interview to learn at Chachmei Lublin, where acceptance was based on having known hundreds of Blatt (folie) Gemara by heart. He was not accepted into the Yeshiva. Having been turned down, he went to the Beit Medresh to learn for the few hours he had while waiting for his train. Rav Meir Shapiro, the Rosh Yeshiva of Chachmei Lublin and the founder of the Daf Yomi learning program, noticed a Bochor sitting in the Beit Medresh that he had not recognized. He asked another Bochor who he was and learned that he was a boy who came for an interview and was not accepted. Rav Meir Shapiro asked when the interview occurred. "Just a few minutes ago" the Bochor responded. Rav Meir Shapiro said that a person who can be turned away from the yeshiva and instead of returning to his lodgings, moping, or complaining, was learning as soon as he received the bad news is exactly the kind of Bochor he wanted in his yeshiva. Rav Vosner was accepted into the yeshiva and is now today one of the great Gedolei Torah, one of the few survivors of Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin and the Rosh Yeshiva of Chachmei Lublin in Bnei Brak. Can you imagine being immediately turned away from the college or job of their dreams and going and working to advance his or herself in that area immediately? Rav Tzvi Meyer said it is this Middah of being humble and taking personal responsibility that makes us grow. May we all internalize this lesson, and utilize it to grow in Torah and Middot.

from Kerem B'Yavneh Online <feedback@kby.org> reply-to
 feedback@kby.org to KBY Parsha <kby-
 parsha@kby.org> date Fri, Oct 24, 2008 at 3:12 AM subject
 Parshat Bereishit

**Parshat Bereishit The Beginning of the Way
 Rav Netanel Berkovitz shlita**

There are great physical and spiritual changes occurring throughout the world. These two circles roll along one alongside the other, sometimes touching one another, and sometimes fusing into one circle. Both rotate around a single axle, that of Yisrael, which turns them around in all directions. A perceptive person who views the development of these forces recognizes that sometimes, more so with one and less so with the other, a finger points to Am Yisrael who is sitting in Eretz Yisrael. There are those who claim that pointing the finger does not express the truth, but rather all events are explained somehow or another. However, Chazal teach us: "In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth" (Bereishit 1:1) - on account of Israel, who are called 'first'; on account of the Torah that is called 'first.' "In the beginning G-d created" - He should not have begun the Torah but from "This month is for you..." Rather, "The strength of His works he told His nation to give them the inheritance of nations." (Rashi)

Three fundamental issues come together: Am Yisrael, Torat Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael, for which the world was created. (Cf. Chiddushei HaGri"z al haTorah in explanation of this.) These three foundations are engraved in letters on the parchment of Torat Yisrael. The most basic foundation of the nation and the Land is the Torah, and through the Torah the sanctity of the nation and the Land is revealed. When the Torah completely controls the way of life of the individual and the community, we understand why the world was created.

G-d created beings in His world, and made them in His likeness: "Let us make man in Our image, after our Likeness ... " (1:26) "In the image of G-d He made man." (9:6) The fundamental root of the image and likeness of man is G-d, and man's role is to continue to be similar to that source, so that the copy should match the original. For any creation to match its original image and likeness requires similarity as close as possible to the root. The most effective tools that were given to man to reach this goal are found in utilizing the power of Torah.

When a person's way of life is based on Torah, the value of Eretz Yisrael and Am Yisrael are obviously clear. When he increases the control of Torah over him, it is evident to all, and the importance of the nation and the Land is revealed and seen by the nations, and the beauty of its radiance draws their heart.

Chazal comment in the Midrash: "Anyone who murders it is considered as if he reduces the Image. Why? 'One who spills the blood of man ... for in the image of G-d He made man.'" (Bereishit Rabbah 34:14)

The prohibition against murder is the most logical and understandable. Why is it explained with this reason of "for in the image of G-d?"

G-d planted a tremendous potential in each person - to be similar to G-d, but in order to actualize this, a person needs tremendous toil. Then his abilities that reside in the depths of his heart will be revealed.

The root of worship in which every creature is obligated is to understand the independent greatness that G-d gave him, and thereby also G-d's greatness. When he has this ability to discern and this understanding, he can begin his way in life.

Specifically in this mitzvah in taking of life and putting an end to it, it is clear that there is special need to emphasize the power that gives life and its beginning, i.e., knowledge. Turning all of knowledge towards the goal of service of G-d and understanding His greatness is what brings all creatures to be similar to Him.

The natural place where Israel can understand G-d's greatness in an almost complete manner is in Eretz Yisrael. G-d's continuous hashgacha over the Land causes constant closeness with man, which gives a person the ability to recognize G-d's greatness, and thereby serve Him with a full heart.

When we go back and reread the Torah, and begin from Bereishit, we must internalize the elements that lead us through life - first and foremost of them the Torah, and from it the importance of the nation and the Land. Thus, each person understands why a finger is pointed at us, since the finger is pointed to the Creator, Whom we are just patterning.

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"PARENTING INSTINCTS IN OUR WONDROUS WORLD"

by Avrohom Katz

* * *

Motherly instinct might be vital for the protection of the young, but even that would be insufficient when the animals require a specific mechanism for the birth and survival of their young. In case you imagine that fathers have no share in the wonders of survival, listen to this. Down in the

Antarctic live the penguins. They spend most of their lives swimming in the icy Southern Ocean (kept warm by two layers of short, tightly packed feathers and by a layer of fat under their skin).

They only leave the sea at breeding times, walking up to 100 miles, year after year, to the very rookeries (breeding places) where they themselves were hatched. Each female lays one egg, passes it to the male, and goes back to the sea to feed. For up to nine weeks, the male keeps the egg warm with a special flap of skin just above its feet. The feather-covered flap of skin fits over the egg like a tea cozy, allowing the egg to develop.

During his nine-week wait, father penguin has no break whatsoever, and eats nothing. He survives from his own store of fat, and subsequently grows progressively thinner.

Around the time the chick hatches, the female returns (how does she know precisely when to return, and to which location?) with a store of food. The tiny chick penguin reaches inside mommy's beak, whereupon mommy obligingly regurgitates the contents of her stomach. While the chick is growing, it keeps warm by standing on its parents' feet, and snuggles under the special flap. Handy things, warm flaps of skin -- imagine having your own warm pockets, not in your coat, but on your body!

For the penguins it is no luxury, but a necessity to ensure the successful production of future penguins. Without the warm flap, there would be a frozen egg. It would be the end of the penguins. What it requires for its survival it receives from the Manufacturer.

* * *

The Shivering Snake

Everyone knows that there are no flies in winter. Flies, like many animals, are cold-blooded animals (which means that they cannot regulate their body heat), so when the temperature drops, so do they. May we present you with a problem? Imagine (and for this you require a very vivid imagination!) that you are a cold-blooded animal that lays eggs. You have no way of elevating your own body temperature, but the eggs that you lay have to be kept at a constant warm level. How will you cope?

Enter the python (and exit the reader!). Three to four months after mating, the female python lays up to 100 eggs. She gathers the eggs into a pile and coils her body around them for about three months until they hatch. By a special kind of shivering, the mother python can raise her body temperature by about 46 degrees (Fahrenheit) while she incubates the eggs. She only leaves her eggs for occasional visits to the water and for rare meals.

There are two factors of interest here. Firstly the python is able to perform the impossible -- to elevate her own temperature level with a "special" shivering. No one ever taught mother python how to perform her special shiver. But she knows exactly how it goes.

Secondly, somehow, she knows that the eggs require a higher temperature than she can produce naturally. Who told her that? Inborn mechanisms do not come from nowhere. No one owns a car that, while parked outside his home overnight, "somehow" senses the temperature, and should it drop beneath zero, induces the windshield to perform a "special" shiver that generates heat and prevents frost from forming.

* * *

Crocodile Eggs

No one, except crocodiles, likes crocodiles. They suffer from rather a negative public image, possibly due to the fact that they lurk unseen in the water with just their snout and cold eyes visible above the water, waiting, patiently, for their supper to come closer to the water's edge before lunging forward at lightning speed with their razor sharp teeth.

But for all that, it is a most caring parent. Each year, the female Nile Crocodile (according to some, the plague in Moses' time was not frogs, but crocodiles -- not a pleasant thought!) lays up to 40 eggs in a nest, dug in the sand above the waterline on the riverbank. She builds the nest in a shady place, about 10 inches deep, so that the eggs keep at an even temperature -- not varying more than 5 degrees. She covers the eggs with sand, and both parents guard them during the 90-day incubation.

When it is ready to hatch, the young crocodile makes loud piping calls from within its egg! The mother hears her unborn baby loud and clear, and scrapes away the sand covering the eggs. As the eggs hatch, she gently picks up each baby with those same razor-sharp teeth, and carries them in a special pouch at the bottom of her mouth to a "nursery" pool area off the river. The young crocodile stays in the nursery for about two months, guarded jealously by its parents.

Everyone knows that the crocodile is not known for its kindness or compassion. Yet to its own children, it allows them to crawl in and out of its terrifying mouth, never knowingly biting or scratching them in the process. And where did the "special" pouch come from? Why don't we have one to store extra cholent on Shabbos dinner? Which came first, its babies or its pouch? One without the other has little purpose. Like everything in the designed world, it arrived as a personalized finished product... The Designer of the world is desirous of the world continuing successfully -- from generation to generation.

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Excerpted with permission from "OUR WONDROUS WORLD."  
Published by ArtScroll/Mesorah Publications Ltd., Brooklyn, NY -  
<http://www.artscroll.com>

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to Peninim <[peninim@shemayisrael.com](mailto:peninim@shemayisrael.com)> date Thu, Oct 23,  
2008 at 5:59 PM subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib  
Scheinbaum - Parshas Bereishis

**Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum**

Shema Yisrael Torah Network  
PARSHAS BEREISHIS

And G-d said, "Let us make man in Our image, in Our likeness." (1:26) Man was created in Hashem's image. This means that every human being, regardless of his or her position, shares a unique quality with Hashem. This is the Tzelem Elokim, image of G-d. While man's physical appearance does not mirror G-d, he has a quality which is uniquely endemic to man, his ability to exercise free will, which relates him in some way to Hashem. While Hashem always chooses correctly - man does not. Man errs and is subject to his inclinations which very often reign over him. Thus, man's ability to choose between good and evil is what makes him G-d-like. He has the potential to choose correctly and thereby elevate his G-d-like status, or he can defer to his evil inclination and descend to the nadir of depravity,

thus destroying his essential G-d-like image. When one realizes that his ultimate self-worth is based upon his incredible potential to become G-d-like, he is encouraged. Certainly, one who recognizes his potential for greatness does not have any issues concerning self-esteem. After all, for what more can one ask? The ability to achieve Tzelem Elokim status-- to rise above a morally bankrupt world filled with spiritual filth-- should be sufficient to catapult one's self-esteem. Indeed, it is stated in the Shaarei HaAvodah, "The first gateway to serving Hashem is the realization of one's own worth." How can one act inappropriately when he realizes that he will be debasing himself? The next step is to realize that this same gift has been given to all other human beings. Therefore, the awareness that my fellow man also possesses a Tzelem Elokim should engender a healthy respect for the other. Indeed, as Horav A. Henschel Leibowitz, zl, explains, one who claims to have self-respect, but does not respect others, probably has little respect for himself. He cites the Baalei Tosfos who posit that one recognizes and is reminded of the Tzelem Elokim in others to a greater degree than in himself. Therefore, if one honestly respects his own nobility and potential, he should be even more aware of his fellow's greatness. Furthermore, if Hashem decided to create a person, He obviously did so for a reason. Who are we to disagree? Respect for others is equivalent to respect for ourselves. When we do not manifest respect for others, it indicates that we are ourselves troubled.

So G-d created man in His image, in the image of G-d He created him. (1:27) According to Chazal, the creation of man was perfection personified. It was only after he sinned that his stature was diminished, that he became imperfect. Ever since then, no man has been born perfect. He must spend his infancy and youth developing his strength, his physical and intellectual abilities, leading up to a more perfect version of that to which man can and should aspire. This is done through study for years, guidance from those more experienced, and much hard work. Why is it this way? The animal world does not seem to have this "problem." Immediately after birth, animals enter the world with all of their faculties in place. Within a few days, they are standing on their own. They recognize which foods are nutritious and from which ones they need to separate themselves, which creatures are friend and which are foe. Even those who do not develop immediately still do so much more quickly than human beings. The commentators offer a number of reasons for this disparity. In his Mishpetai HaTorah, Horav Tzvi Shpitz, Shlita, suggests a reason based upon a principle cited in the name of the Chasam Sofer by the Sefer Chut HaMeshulash. An individual was making life miserable for the Chasam Sofer for quite some time. The sage lamented, "I do not remember doing anything special for him that would cause him to treat me so miserably." The Chasam Sofer was addressing the natural tendency of a human being to feel a sense of gratitude to one who benefits him. Certainly, one will not respond negatively to one who is his benefactor. This is "normal" human nature: You are nice to me; in return, I am nice to you. Hashem commanded the Jewish People not to hate the Egyptians, despite all the misery and persecution which they caused us, because we had been strangers in their land. We owe them. They took us in during the great famine, gave us a place to live and food to eat. We are, therefore, beholden to them. The fact that they followed all this good with so much bad does not diminish our obligation to them. That is the "normal" way of acting. This is how good people respond to someone who has been kind to them. Regrettably, there are individuals whose self-centered nature induces them to descend beneath contempt, acting in such a reprehensible manner that they not only refuse to show any appreciation to their benefactor, they even revile those who benefit them. Why? Because they cannot tolerate being in anyone's debt. A person whose human nature is so repulsive that he is unable to do any good for anyone denies that he has received any benefit from another person. Therefore, he will go out of his way to do everything possible to denigrate and belittle any good that he has received. This is a truly troubled man. Sadly, such people exist in proportions that would be better left unstated. Rav Shpitz applies this principle to Moshe Rabbeinu's

remonstration that the abundance of gold and silver which Hashem gave the Jewish People catalyzed the sin of the Golden Calf. Simply, this means that now that they were wealthy and seemingly self-sustaining, they no longer felt they needed Hashem. Therefore, they rebelled. In light of the above, we can suggest a deeper meaning to Moshe's lament. The gold, silver and all the wonderful gifts which Hashem showered on the Jews had a negative influence on them. Actually, it backfired because now they had to downplay the fact that they "owed" Hashem. They neither needed a Golden Calf, nor believed in it. They behaved in this manner purely to anger Hashem, so that they could deny His favor. It was against their nature to feel beholden to Him, so they had to neutralize His beneficence in order to disparage the multitude of good that He had rained upon them. The obligation to pay gratitude compelled the Jewish people to rebel against Hashem. Prior to the sin, Adam HaRishon had been a creation who had no peer. He was absolutely perfect and, as such, clearly recognized his obligation to pay gratitude to his Creator. Once he sinned and the serpent's zuhama, spiritual filth, became suffused in him, he was engulfed in a powerful conflict. He knew what he must do, but the filth was telling him to renege and do everything within his power to repudiate his obligation of hakoras hatov, gratitude. Indeed, the Midrash claims that when Hashem asked Adam whether he had eaten from the tree, he replied, "Yes, I ate, and I will continue to eat!" These are words of gross chutzpah, insolence with shame. How do we explain such impudence on the part of Adam HaRishon? Apparently, he was a victim of his inner conflict, the confrontation of an obligation to pay gratitude acting against the serpent's filth, which egged him on to renounce Hashem's favor. We now understand why the ensuing generations of mankind had to be born "blemished." Therefore, they do not have this acute understanding of the overriding necessity to be makir tov, grateful, and, by extension, they do not feel compelled to reject this obligation by dismissing the favor. While it is obvious that man is helpless without Hashem, there exists room in man's "imperfect" mind to think that he has abilities and that he can achieve. Since he possesses this notion in his mind, he does not feel compelled to demonstrate his appreciation to Hashem, thereby circumventing the desire to repudiate Hashem's favor. On the contrary, he strives to fulfill his spiritual ambitions to come closer to Hashem and ultimately to cling to Him.

The woman said to the serpent... "Of the fruit of the tree which is in the center of the garden, G-d has said: 'You shall not eat of it...lest you die.' The serpent said to the woman, 'You shall not surely die.'" (3:2,3,4) The serpent immediately went to work enticing Chavah to commit the sin which forever altered world history. The question that glares at us is: Where was Adam during this time? It is not as if there was much to do. The world had just been created. Human beings had just entered the scene, with the female as the last creation. One would expect Adam to spend some "time" with his wife. Chazal ask this question, and the replies vary. One answer that deserves insight is given by Abaye: "Adam went for a nap." Adam's nap was not like ours in any way. Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl, cites the Talmud in Succah 26A that says that David Hamelech would sleep sixty respirations. Certainly, Adam's nap was even shorter than that! This was the yetzir kapav shel Hakadosh Baruch Hu, creation of Hashem's hands. The Heavenly angels mistook him for a celestial creation and were about to sing shirah, a song of praise, to him. Clearly, his sleep was but a moment that changed the world. Rav Zaitchik emphasizes how a rega, short moment, can spell the difference between acquiring eternal light or losing it, causing darkness to descend for oneself and all future generations. The Navi Yeshayah (54:7) says, "For but a moment have I forsaken you, and with abundant mercy I will gather you in." The Radak explains this to mean that, although the exile has extended for so very long, it will be considered as a quick moment in comparison with the magnanimity of Hashem's compassion when He gathers us in. Rav Zaitchik goes so far as to interpret this pasuk as a warning about the daunting responsibility one has to compensate for the loss of a rega katan, small moment. It is lost forever. To correct the loss of

this "small moment," which has incredibly large repercussions, takes rachamim gedolim, great compassion. We simply do not understand the overwhelming significance of each and every moment. When one realizes how much can be achieved in a moment and the difference it makes, he will appreciate it that much more. The Talmud in Berachos 58A relates that Rabbi Chana ben Chanilai would not remove his hand from his pocket, always keeping it ready to give charity. He feared that a respectable poor man might approach him for a donation and he would have to spend a moment looking for money, thus embarrassing the man. One moment—that is all it would be, but if someone would be humiliated, this moment would be magnified many times over. One moment can make the difference between life and death. One moment separates Shabbos from the rest of the week. One hairbreadth spells the difference between a kosher shechitah, ritual slaughter, and one that is invalid. One step separates the boundary of one country from its neighbor, one nation from another. One slight deviation can mean the beginning of an altered view, a changed relationship, a turning away from a Torah life. It all begins that one moment. How important it is for us to value every moment that Hashem grants us. It is His greatest gift. One moment, it is here; the next moment, it is gone forever. The Chafetz Chaim, zl, knew how to value the gift of time. He knew the infinite value of every single moment. Once, when the Rosh Yeshivah of Radin, Horav Naftali Trop, zl, was gravely ill, the students of the yeshivah prayed fervently for his return to health. Alas, the situation did not improve. Out of love for their revered rebbe, each student donated a part of his own individual life to their rebbe. One gave a day; another, a few days; yet another a week. They decided to ask the saintly Chafetz Chaim to join in their endeavor. How much would he contribute? How many hours would he spare for the Rosh Yeshivah? The Chafetz Chaim sat down and made an accounting of the time he had expended, to determine how much he could "spare." He thought long and hard, as the students stared in awe and consternation while he seemed to wrestle with himself for a figure. Suddenly, he turned to them and said, "I will give you one moment!" How startled and shocked they were from his answer. They had just witnessed an individual of unparalleled piety demonstrate to them the value of time. One moment of life was an eternity! It was invaluable. Here was an individual who never wasted a moment! It was G-d's gift. How could he squander it? When word of the Chafetz Chaim's reply spread through the yeshivah, it engendered an unprecedented inspiration and arousal for learning b'hasmadah, with great diligence. Indeed, it was later related that the hasmadah in the yeshivah that year surpassed that of any previous or following year. The students now understood the value of a moment.

Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. (3:18) The Bnei Yissachar offers a homiletic rendering of this pasuk. Prior to the sin of eating of the Eitz Hadas, Tree of Knowledge, man's perception of good and evil was unequivocally clear. There was good and there was evil, with no question whatsoever concerning their distinct definitions. Then Adam ate the forbidden fruit, and his vision blurred. Good and evil suddenly took on a new look - one that was ambiguous - one that was subject to personal prejudice and pre-disposition. This is implied by kotz v'dardar tatzmiach lach, "Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you." Every letter of the Hebrew alphabet can be clearly recognized without problem, even from a distance, except for the daled and reish. The only difference between these two letters is the kotz, tiny point that sticks out from the daled. We find two pesukim in the Torah in which these two letters are enlarged. In the pasuk Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad, "Hear O'Yisrael, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One," (Devarim 6:4) the daled at the end of echad (one) is enlarged. In Shemos 34:14, Ki lo sishtachaveh le'il acheir, "For you shall not prostrate yourselves to an alien god," the reish of acheir (alien) is likewise augmented. The sin of the Eitz HaDaas created a possibility of "confusing" the daled of echad with the reish of acheir and vice versa. The difference between the daled, reish, daled, reish or dardar became jumbled. It is only a little kotz that delineates

the letters, but it can make a world of difference between "one" G-d and alien gods. Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, embellishes this exegesis with a story. A simple villager hired a tutor to teach his son Torah. One night, he went upstairs to the tutor's room to find him on the floor, weeping. The villager could not understand what he was doing. "Why are you sitting on the floor weeping?" he asked. "I am mourning the destruction of our Temple," the tutor asked. "May I join you?" the villager asked. "Certainly," the tutor responded. After awhile, the villager asked, "Is there any reason we cannot have a little vodka?" "I see no reason why not," answered the tutor. This went on for a few shots of vodka until the tutor, unfamiliar with the effect of alcoholic beverages, became extremely "happy." Now that both the villager and the tutor were in excellent moods, they decided they might as well have a little dance. Shortly thereafter, one of the townspeople, hearing all of the racket and seeing two men dancing together in the middle of the night, asked them incredulously, "What are you doing? Why are you dancing?" The response from the villager was straightforward, "We are mourning the destruction of the Temple." When one's vision is blurred, when the reish appears to be a daled-- and vice versa-- one can begin dancing for the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash and weeping for what should be viewed as a joyous occasion. This is all the result of eating the forbidden fruit.

And also afterward when the sons of the rulers would consort with the daughters of man. (6:4) The nephillim, giants, had apparently been around for some time. Thoroughly evil, they were given the title nephillim, a derivative of nafal, to fall, because they fell and caused others to fall. The Midrash Rabba adds to their iniquity, saying, "The latter did not learn (a lesson) from its predecessors." The generation of the Flood did not derive mussar, an ethical lesson, from the generation of Enosh when one third of the world was flooded. Likewise, the generation of the Dispersion did not derive a lesson from the generation of the Flood. While it is certainly important to learn from the lesson of the past, it is essential that there be some sort of corollary between the past and the present. It is understandable that the nephillim should have taken heed after what had occurred during the time of Enosh and Kayin, but what does the generation of the Dispersion have to do with the generation of the Flood? Their sins were in total contrast with one another. The generation of the Flood stole from one another. They had no respect for one another. The generation of the Dispersion seemed to get along too well - exactly the opposite of their predecessors. Why does the Midrash posit that the sin of the Dor Haflagah, generation of the Dispersion, resulted from their not taking a lesson from the Dor HaMabul, generation of the Flood? Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, explains that although the individual sins of these two generations seem to be in direct contrast of each other, they nonetheless both share the same source for their iniquity. What is the fountainhead for the insidious sin of theft? What is the root of this sin? It comes from a lack of respect for another person. No one means anything to me: I want; I need; I take. The other person's feelings have no bearing on my desire. Everything branches out from the ani, the "I." Is this not what Communism and its various offshoots were all about? The "I," the "me." They even made an ideal out of corruption, a philosophy for the nullification of the individual's rights to anything. The individual no longer counted. He was part of a collective group. His identity was gone. He became a number that did not count. It all started with satisfying the "I" and resulted in the destruction of the "they." There is no room for "me" and "you" - only for "me," because "you" no longer count. "You" are here to serve "me." It goes so far that the "I" is willing to forego what is "mine" just as long as "you" do not have what is "yours." Once again it all revolves around "me." I do not have, but neither do you. I can live with that! We see now how the Dor Haflagah was an extension of the Dor HaMabul. The generation of the Flood negated the distinctiveness of the individual. He no longer had an identity. This led to wholesale theft. After all, why not? It does not really belong to "anybody." The person from whom I am stealing is not an entity. He is a nothing. This ideal mushrooms when the following generation continues

along this path of evil, making it a philosophy of life. If a person allows the evil of the previous generation to fester and germinate, it becomes adopted into his line of thinking, granting him license to justify the most heinous iniquity. Had the generation of the Dispersion given some thought to the actions of the generation of the Flood; had they delved into the source of their perfidious behavior, they would have realized that they, too, were in effect replicating them. Had they only learned from the lessons of the past. It is no different from one who plants a field. He must first weed out the plants and exterminate the bugs, so that the fresh seeds he plants in the ground will have the optimum conditions for prodigious growth.