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from: **Rabbi Berel Wein** <[info@jewishdestiny.com](mailto:info@jewishdestiny.com)> reply-to:  
[info@jewishdestiny.com](mailto:info@jewishdestiny.com) date: Tue, Oct 14, 2014 at 10:46 PM subject:  
Parshat Bereshith 5775 - Rabbi Berel Wein  
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog  
BERESHITH

In the whirlwind cascade of events that fill this opening parsha of the Torah, one can easily be overwhelmed by the sheer number of subjects discussed. Nevertheless, I think we can all agree that the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, after they exercised their free will to disobey God's commandment, is an important issue to dwell upon and discuss. What life was like within the Garden of Eden is pretty much an unknown to us. It is obvious that human nature was different there and that the prevalence of shame and titillating sexual desire was absent - certainly in a way that our world cannot countenance. But once driven from the Garden and apparently prevented from ever again returning, Adam and Eve and their offspring engage in a life and live in a world that is very recognizable to us. Sibling rivalry, jealousy, murder, psychological depression, sexual laxity and abuse are now all part of the story of humankind. Human beings are now bidden to struggle for their very physical and financial existence in a world of wonder- complete with ever present dangers and hostility. But the memory of the Garden of Eden has never departed from Adam and Eve or for that matter from their descendants, no matter how many centuries and millennia have passed since their expulsion. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the Torah records for us the hundreds of years that early human beings lived - to emphasize that even over nine hundred years later the memory of the Garden still burns bright in the recesses of the brains of Adam and Eve and their descendants. It is this memory that still fuels within us our drive for a better and more ideal world. Once human beings, albeit only Adam and Eve alone, experienced what human life and our world can be - life in a Garden of Eden - the drive of society to constantly improve our world and existence is understandable. We are always trying to return to the Garden. Even though human society has unfortunately perpetrated and witnessed millions upon millions of murders over its long bloody history, we still strive to create a murder-free society. And we do not feel that this is a vain and foolish hope on our part. Within

each of us there still is a fragment of memory that recalls that human beings once lived in the Garden of Eden and were spared the woes of human society as we know it from our past history - and even from today. It is interesting that human society never has really despaired, in spite of all historical evidence to the contrary as to the impossibility of the task, of creating this better world of serenity, spirituality, harmony and good cheer. It is the memory of the Garden that gives us no peace and does not allow us to become so desensitized that we would readily accept our current human condition as being unchangeable. The angels that guard the entrance to the Garden were also represented in the Holy of Holies on the lid of the Ark that contained God's message to humankind. Those angels have the faces of children in order to indicate to us that somehow, someday, in God's good time in the future perhaps, we will be able to once again enter the Garden and truly live in the better world promised to us by our holy prophets. Shabbat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

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Daf Hashavua 9 October 2010 • 1 Cheshvan 5771

**The Significance of the Creation Chapter  
by Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks**

If we understood the first chapter of Genesis, we might put an end to some of the needless arguments between scientists and religious believers.

The first thing to note is its sheer brevity. It takes a mere 34 verses. The Hebrew Bible takes some fifteen times as long to describe the Israelites' creation of the sanctuary in the wilderness. It is astonishing that the world's greatest and most influential account of the origins of the universe is so short.

Next is its numerical structure. We know the significance of the number seven. The universe is made in seven days. Seven times the word 'good' is used. But the pattern goes deeper than that. The first verse of Genesis contains seven Hebrew words, the second, fourteen. The account of the seventh day contains 35. The word 'G-d' appears 35 times; the word 'earth' 21. The entire passage contains 469 (7 x 67) words. By these hints, something is being intimated. The universe has a structure, and it is mathematical.

Then there is the structure itself. On the first three days G-d creates domains: light and dark, upper and lower waters, sea and dry land. On the next three days He populates these domains one by one: first the sun, moon and stars, then birds and fish, then land animals and human beings. The seventh day is holy. So six (the days of creation) symbolise the natural order, seven the supernatural. As if by way of unintended confirmation, Sir Martin Rees, the astronomer royal, wrote a book, *Just Six Numbers*, in which he showed that the entire structure of the physical universe is determined by six mathematical constants.

Beyond these structural features is a sharp polemic. Most readers of the Bible are only dimly aware of the degree to which it is shaped by a polemic against myth. In the case of Genesis 1 this is obvious. What is missing is the element of struggle between rival gods that dominates all mythical accounts of creation. In the biblical account there is no opposition, no conflict. G-d speaks and the world comes into being. So Genesis 1 is not a proto-scientific account of the birth of the universe and the Big Bang. Its purpose is clear. The universe is the result of a single creative will, so myth is eliminated. The universe is a place of structure and order, so the text is an invitation to science, by implying that the world is not irrational and ruled by capricious powers.

Why then is Genesis 1 there? We are puzzled by that question because we forget that the Hebrew Bible is called, in Judaism, Torah, meaning teaching, guide - ance, or more specifically, law. Genesis 1 is best understood not as pseudo-science, still less as myth, but as the foundation of the moral law. G-d created the world; therefore G-d owns the world. We are his guests - strangers and temporary residents, as the Bible puts it. G-d has the right to specify the conditions of our tenancy on earth. The radical message of

Genesis 1 is that Divine sovereignty is constitutional.

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from: Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald <ezbuchwald@njop.org> date: Mon, Oct 13, 2014 at 4:18 PM subject: Weekly Torah Message from **Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald**

Bereshith 5775-2014 "The Sad Destiny of the Firstborn Children" Edit Image by Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald

A prominent feature of the book of Genesis is the struggle for family leadership between the firstborn and the younger siblings. The "strugglers" include: Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Reuben and Judah, Joseph and Judah, Menashe and Ephraim.

It is fascinating that in each case, the younger child emerges as the victor over the biological firstborn, indicating that the birthright is not a factor of chronological age, but rather a factor of the spiritual character of the child who is eventually chosen to serve as the firstborn.

In his popular Bible study guide entitled, *Sh'aylot V'nosim B'Tanach* (Questions and Themes in Bible) Professor Menashe Duvshani analyzes these filial rivalries. In parashat Bereshith, Cain, the first human child, is born to his parents, Adam and Eve. Nevertheless, G-d prefers his younger brother, Abel. Even after Abel's death at Cain's hand, the birthright is transferred to Seth, the youngest son. The family of the firstborn, Cain, as well as his descendants, are ultimately lost in the great flood.

Despite being the first born son of Abraham, Ishmael does not emerge as the leader. Instead, the birthright passes to Isaac. It is through Isaac, the son of Sarah, that G-d promises Abraham that the Divine destiny shall pass. Ishmael subsequently becomes estranged from both his family and from the land, settling outside of the land of Israel.

Although Esau was born before his twin brother Jacob, the birthright passes to Jacob because he was considered the more worthy child. Jacob is blessed twice by Isaac, first unwittingly (when Isaac intended to bless Esau), with blessings of economic success and temporal power over nations. The second blessing, that Isaac knowingly blesses Jacob, passes the Divine Abrahamic covenant on to Jacob (Genesis 28:4).

Despite being the first born child of Jacob, Reuben nevertheless loses the birthright, as it passes to Judah, another of Jacob's firstborn children. Reuben is thought to have committed three improper acts which cause him to fall out of favor: 1. After the death of Rachel, Reuben moved his father's bed into his mother, Leah's tent, an act that was regarded as violation of his father's bed (Genesis 35:22). Even on his deathbed, in his blessing to his children, Jacob is still angry, recalling Reuben's grievous sin, and transfers the birthright from Reuben. 2. Reuben, the eldest son, failed to save Joseph from the hands of his brothers, and was unable to stop the sale of Joseph to the Midianites. 3. When Jacob's children wish to go down to Egypt to buy more food, Jacob refuses to allow Benjamin to go with them. At that time, Reuben suggests to his father, Genesis 42:37, *?? ?????? ????? ??????, ?? ?? ?????????? ????????, You may kill my two sons if I do not bring him [Benjamin] back to you.* Jacob is appalled by Reuben's irrational suggestion, yet, subsequently, readily accepts Judah's offer to act as surety for Benjamin.

By accepting full responsibility for his brother Benjamin, Judah emerges as the leader of his brothers. It is therefore Judah whom Jacob chooses to send ahead to Goshen, before they arrive in Egypt (Genesis 46:28), and who represents the brothers before Pharaoh (Genesis 44:14). The birthright is thus conferred upon Judah.

The rivalry for the birthright continues, as Judah now struggles with Joseph. The competition between Judah and Joseph that takes place in Egypt, is, in fact, representative of the long historic struggle between these two tribes that occurs in future generations, as to who was to emerge as the supreme leader of Israel.

In later years, during the times of the judges and the kings, the tribe of Ephraim (the descendants of Joseph's oldest son) saw itself as a chosen tribe, since Joshua, the great conqueror of the land, was of the tribe of Ephraim. During the reigns of King David and Solomon, the struggle between Judah

and Ephraim abated, but eventually resumed, resulting in the split of the kingdom after the death of King Solomon.

Obviously, when Joseph reigned over Egypt, the hand of Joseph was superior, confirmed by Jacob who doubled the tribal inheritance of Joseph by converting the tribe of Joseph into two separate tribes (Genesis 48:5). In Jacob's final message to his children, Judah and Joseph receive the most extensive and generous blessings.

In the time of King David, the monarchy was firmly in the hands of the tribe of Judah. However, according to Chronicles I, 5:1-2, the birthright remained with Joseph.

Although the reason is not stated, Jacob transfers the birthright from Joseph's oldest son, Menashe, to the younger son, Ephraim (Genesis 48:19), predicting that Ephraim will be greater than Menashe.

Clearly, every single firstborn child in the book of Genesis winds up on the short end. The fact that the birthright is always transferred from the older son cannot be merely coincidence. Apparently, the Torah wishes to teach that one does not merit the birthright simply by accident of birth. The privilege of the birthright belongs to the child who merits it, even though that child may be younger.

A similar pattern is seen with the eventual chosenness of the People of Israel, who were certainly not the oldest among the nations. When the Jewish people emerged from Egypt, dozens of other sovereign states already existed, far more powerful and more numerous than Israel. These nations, like Egypt, already possessed developed lands and had created advanced civilizations. The Edomites even had an established monarchy. Why then did G-d choose the People of Israel, a numerically small nation who had been lowly slaves to Pharaoh? Apparently, to teach that G-d does not choose based on external or physical merits, but rather uses a higher yardstick.

The principle of spiritual chosenness is confirmed by the story of the selection of King David as king, when the prophet Samuel is sent to Jesse in Bethlehem to choose a successor to King Saul. At the behest of G-d, he does not choose the handsome and valiant first born, Eliav, but instead chooses David, the youngest of Jesse's many sons. In fact, scripture relates that G-d instructs Samuel not to choose Eliav despite his stature and comeliness, Samuel I 16:7, *???? ?????? ?????? ??????????, ????? ?????? ?????????,* because the human being can only see with his eyes, but G-d can see into the heart.

The Divine method of choosing continues until this day. As the Talmud states (Sanhedrin 106a), *????????? ?????? ?????,* G-d's utmost desire is to feel the yearnings of the hearts of His creations. He therefore chooses to reward those followers who merit the Divine blessing on the basis of their inner spiritual commitment, faith and sincerity.

May you be blessed.

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Kol Torah Webmaster <webmaster@koltorah.org> 10/11/12 to Kol, bcc: me And here is the pdf.

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Parashat BeReishit 27 Tishrei 5773 October 13, 2012 Vol. 22 No.4

### **The Cup is Half Full: Focusing on "The Good" by Rabbi Darren Blackstein**

Having emerged from the Yamim Nora'im and Yamim Tovim, we face a great challenge. The New Year is before us. Will we implement the changes necessary to improve our lot? Given the precarious nature of the future of Eretz Yisrael, the status of Israel's relationship with its neighbors, and the tragic and sometimes bizarre events that happen during a year, how are we to gear up for yet another challenging year? I believe it is no coincidence that we read Kohelet right before we embark on a new cycle of reading the Chumash, beginning with Parashat BeReishit, to inspire us and provide a way to overcome the challenges.

Throughout the unfolding of the days of creation, the Torah uses the expression “Ki Tov,” telling us that the item or items being discussed are “good.” No matter what the deeper meaning may hold, let’s not escape the fact that all of the items of creation are “good.” In that sense, we are constantly surrounded by the “good” the Hashem has created.

In BeReishit 2:17, Hashem warns Adam that eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil will cause his eventual demise. Immediately thereafter, Hashem says that it is, “Lo Tov,” “not good” for man to be alone, and therefore it is necessary to create an “Eizer KeNegdo,” a helpmate. This directly implies that having the helpmate around places Adam in a state that is “good;” Hashem did not conceive of Adam’s solitude as proper. By juxtaposing the commandment about the Tree of Knowledge and the Helpmate, the Torah suggests that not being alone will help Adam refrain from partaking in the Tree. We see a similar concept in BeReishit 4:7, when Hashem addresses Kayin after ignoring his offering. Hashem tells him that, “Im Tativ,” if you do that which is “good,” if you improve, all will be forgiven. Since Hashem knows that Kayin’s feeling of rejection is motivated by comparing himself to his brother, perhaps Hashem is telling Kayin that the way to improve is by working with the one that is with you! We can experience and feel the “good” if we would only let that which is inherently “good” into ourselves and into our lives. It seems that “good” is reached by experiencing the wholeness of creation, and this, in turn, is facilitated by the experience of the “goodness” of Adam LaChaveiro – interpersonal relationships.

Shlomo HaMelech makes extensive use of the word “Tov,” “good” in Megilat Kohelet. In Perek 4 (Pasuk 9), we are told the famous adage of, “Tovim HaShnayim Min HaEchad,” “Two are better than one.” The straightforward meaning is that the atmosphere of two people together is better than being alone. This is not unlike the verse in BeReishit discussed above, where Hashem says it is not good for man to be alone. Perhaps the letter Hey on the word “Echad” indicates something more than the simple meaning. Instead of meaning one person, the Hey transforms it into “the One,” Hashem. Shlomo might be telling us that it is “good” that the One, who is “Echad,” made mankind as two beings. Having each other is the only way humanity can survive and thrive. This condition promotes the “good.”

Shlomo HaMelech also tells us, “Tov Acharit Davar MeiReishito,” “Better is the end of a matter than its beginning” (Kohelet 7:8). Simply speaking, this tells us that there is great value in the patience it takes to reach one’s goals. The end of a matter can only be reached with this patience. A Davar Acheir in Rashi tells us that we must focus on the word, “MeiReishito,” “from its beginning.” The conclusion of a matter is nurtured from its beginning. The way that people develop, the way that things in general develop, is intimately connected to their beginnings, their roots. If we look at the word “Reishito” as a reference to the story of BeReishit, perhaps Shlomo HaMelech is also telling us that our lives can be significantly enriched if we focus on our “beginning.” All that which is created by Hashem is for our “good”. Our goals should be designed with the involvement of using all of the “good” that Hashem has given us; the “good” of creation and the “good” of each other! I cannot help but be reminded of a movie from the 1970’s called “Oh God.” At one point, the movie’s main character encounters God and states that humanity needs help, at which point, God says, “that’s why I gave you each other.”

May we all merit, this year, to recognize and experience the “good” that Hashem has placed all around us, and use it to enhance our connection to Hashem and to each other.

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from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to: Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com> date: Tue, Oct 7, 2014 at 6:31 PM subject: **Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum -**

PARSHAS BEREISHIS In the beginning of G-d’s creating the heavens and the earth. (1:1) The Torah is the charter of man’s mission on this world. It is the “book of directions” which guides us how to live a life of commitment to

Hashem. In the Talmud Chagigah 11b, Chazal teach that it is prohibited to expound upon maaseh Bereishis in a class of two students, which means the teacher and one other person. The Talmud presents many Aggadic teachings related to this topic. Literally, maaseh Bereishis means “account of Creation.” Ramban interprets maaseh Bereishis as the wisdom of the natural world. The most widely accepted opinion is that maaseh Bereishis pertains to the wisdom of Kabbalah, mysticism. In any event, the issues pertaining to maaseh Bereishis go beyond the grasp of our natural minds. To delve into areas to which the brain is neither accustomed nor prepared sets a person up for failure to understand the profundity of the subject correctly.

When a person begins to think that he is capable of theorizing and understanding G-d’s hidden ways and the manner in which He created the world, he is already on a serious collision course with the teachings of Judaism. He will end up rejecting the true beliefs of Torah and setting course on a journey to infamy. The result of this philosophical journey will invariably be heresy, compelled by beliefs which undermine the very underpinnings of our faith. Darwin’s theory of evolution is based upon such erroneous conjecture. When a human being believes that he can understand G-d, he can fall to such a nadir as to believe that man, the b’chir ha’yetzurim, chosen one of all creations, has descended from a monkey, such that there is no difference between animal and human.

A Jew should believe one thing: Hashem created heaven and earth, and that He is behind everything which occurs in life. Once one accepts Hashem as Creator, he immediately understands that understanding Creation is beyond his ability. Every story, every issue, everything which has taken place and how Hashem has responded, are all part of maaseh Bereishis. The problem is that we cannot leave well-enough alone; thus, we feel compelled to postulate and interpret occurrences which are beyond our grasp, thereby making egregious mistakes.

Horav Yosef Segal, zl, relates that a maggid (preacher who often earned his living by traveling from city to city lecturing and inspiring the populace) once came before Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl, and narrated to him the contents of a recent derashah, lecture, that he had given in a large city. The man was very impressed with his ability to explain the pasuk homiletically to fit the objectives of his lecture. In the piyut, prayer, “Hashem, Hashem,” which is recited during the Neilah, Closing service, of Yom Kippur, we lament the fact that, B’reosi kol ir al tilah benuyah, v’ir haElokim mushpeles ad sheol tachtayah, which is translated as, “When I see every city built on a hilltop, while the city of G-d is degraded to the nethermost depth.” The payton, author of the prayer, bemoans the degradation of our Holy City. This is the simple interpretation of the prayer. This maggid suggested a new meaning. Rather than comparing Yerushalayim to other large metropolises, he felt the author was lamenting the fact that people are always striving to satisfy their physical/material desires, but, when it comes to the requirements of the soul/spirituality, they are satisfied with as little as they can get. Thus, kol ir, “every city,” is a reference to the physical material dimension of one’s life, and ir haElokim, “city of G-d,” refers to one’s spiritual needs. While it is a nice p’shat, exposition, it is clearly not the payton’s intended meaning.

Rav Chaim asked this maggid, “Tell me, have you ever been to a large metropolitan city, such as London or Paris?” “Yes,” he answered. “My travels take me everywhere. I have been to many large cities. I have rarely seen such advanced development and esthetic beauty as is found in some of these large cities. It is truly impressive.” “Perhaps you also have had occasion to visit the holy city of Yerushalayim?” “Yes,” he replied, “I certainly did, and I must add that the contrast is glaring. The Holy City is bereft of its spiritual beauty, its supremacy as the holiest site on the earth.”

“If, in fact, you see the contrast between Yerushalayim and Paris,” Rav Chaim asked, “why is it that you feel compelled to deviate from the simple explanation of the prayer? Every city is built up beautifully, advanced technologically and esthetically appealing. Yerushalayim is a city that once was yefei nof mesos kol ha’aretz, ‘Fairest of brides, joy of all the earth,’ and

now it is desolate of all its inherent beauty. Is this not something to lament? Why not adhere to the prayer's intended meaning?"

A similar idea applies to all of the would-be philosophers and self-proclaimed thinkers. With all of their hypotheses -- based upon meaningless conjecture-- that have yet to be ratified, they have succeeded in doing nothing but creating confusion in the minds of those who otherwise would believe in Hashem as G-d of Creation and G-d of history. They miss the most important verse in the Torah, the one verse that speaks directly to us, saying that the world of Creation is beyond us, because Bereishis bara Elokim. It was G-d Who created the world. Man is unable of comprehending G-d. He lacks the perception, because he is human - G-d is not. That is all one must know. Sadly, so many of us are not prepared to accept this concept. We think that we know more. The result of such erroneous speculation is that some believe that they have descended from monkeys. How very sad.

Two people can view the very same object and have two discrepant perspectives. One sees with clarity of vision, while the other has blurred vision which is either the result of shortsightedness, or self-imposed myopia. A well-known analogy demonstrates this idea. A brilliant artist was endowed with a special ability to create images that, to the naked eye, appear real. He painted a beautiful painting, depicting a man carrying a basket of fruit on his shoulder. He entered this painting in an outdoor art show, to be viewed by major art critics. The painting appeared so realistic that birds flying nearby saw the "grapes" on the man's shoulder, and they began to peck at them. A group of art critics saw this phenomenon and were amazed by the lifelike art which this master artist had created. The critics were standing around, staring in amazement as bird after bird swooped down to peck at the grapes.

One critic, who was obviously a perceptive individual, looked at his colleagues and said, "I do not believe that men of such intelligence could be so short-sighted as to err so foolishly!" They looked at him in astonishment. How dare he speak to them so! Anyone with a modicum of intelligence should be impressed by the graphic imagery captured by the artist. The critics, of course, dismissed their colleague's tirade. He spoke up again, "My friends, you base your assumption concerning the realistic nature of this artwork upon the fact that the birds are prepared to eat the grapes. The mere fact that the birds are prepared to risk eating the grapes indicates exactly the opposite. Have you ever seen a bird eat off the shoulder of a living human being? Indeed, the fact that the birds are attempting to eat the grapes demonstrates that the artist is not as skilled as you perceive him to be. Yes, he succeeded in creating lifelike grapes; the person, however, still looks like artwork. He did not fool the birds at all. The artist is good, but not that good."

Let us apply this analogy to our own misguided perspectives concerning the advanced development and refinement of mankind. On the one hand, we have made immense strides in science, medicine, and other disciplines. Man is capable of advances that even a decade ago had been considered impossible. One would conjecture that the human being has certainly progressed by leaps and bounds from his primitive roots. This is truly how modern society views itself and its achievements. They think that they are far removed from their crude beginnings. Let us now take a penetrating look at the base revulsions, the criminal activities of, not only the uneducated, but that of the highly cultivated and distinguished leadership of today's elite; the plunder and moral depravity of these select leaders, the carnage they create, or permit to ensue as a result of their egos and political affiliations. Indeed, they use the very scientific advancements that so demonstrates their refinement to wreak havoc on an unsuspecting and gullible world. So, is the artist that good?

It is all a question of perspective. Does one recognize that Bereishis bara Elokim? The only reality in this world is Hashem and, unless we remain focused on Him, nothing else is real. Whatever we see can be interpreted to suit our needs, but is that what we really want? When we begin a cycle of Torah study, we begin with one presumptive preamble. Hashem created the

world. We must see the Almighty in everything. Otherwise, we see nothing. And Elokim saw the light that it was good. (1:4)

The Talmud Yoma 38b states: "Rabbi Elazar says: it is worth for the world to be created even for (the benefit it derived from) one tzaddik, righteous person." This is derived from the above pasuk, "And Elokim saw the light that it was good." There is no "good" like a tzaddik. We also find in Mishlei 10:25, V'tzaddik yesod olam, "A righteous person is the foundation of the world." We now have some inkling of the great merit that a tzaddik has in this world. One tzaddik - not a world of tzaddikim - only one, single, righteous person makes the entire world's creation meaningful! The entire world with all its creatures and all humanity are all here because of the tzaddik. He is the purpose of creation.

With this compelling statement fresh in our minds, we may begin to understand the overarching importance of reaching out to unaffiliated Jews, to bring them closer under the kanfei haShechinah, wings of the Divine Presence. Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita, observes that if the world could have endured six thousand years just for the sake of one tzaddik, certainly we should expend every possible effort to reach out to Jews of all stripes and persuasions.

Furthermore, man is a microcosm of the world. He is an olam katan, tiny simile of the world. Thus, he must view himself in a similar perspective. As the entire world is worthy of creation just for the benefit of one tzaddik, so, too, should a person take great joy and feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment for every positive action which he executes. That one activity quite possibly makes "him" worth the effort.

Rav Gamliel quotes Horav Nota Freund, Shlita, who explains the pasuk, Kasis la'maor, "Crushed for the purpose for lighting" (Shemos 27:20), which is a reference to the olive oil used for the Menorah. Chazal derive from here that only maor - the oil used for the Menorah, for illumination, must be extracted from olives by crushing them, using the first oil that emerges for the Menorah. Concerning Menachos, the oil mixed with flour for the Meal-offering, one may use oil that has been ground up. Applying a homiletic twist, Rav Freund interprets the pasuk: kasis la'maor - "crushed for illumination." One who is struck by Hashem, who is subject to a difficult challenge, should be la'maor; it should serve as a source of inspiration that elevates him. He should never allow the kasis, the crushing effect, to cause menachos, pain, sadness, and menachos, "resting," whereby one disappears into a cocoon of hopelessness, going into emotional hibernation.

As Chazal posit that the world could likely have been created for one person, so, too, should a person believe that his own entire existence was worthwhile as a result of the good deeds which he carries out.

Concerning the meaning of Tzaddik yesod olam, I recently came across the following statement attributed to Horav Shlomo Zevihler, zl. Two great Admorim, who were both very righteous, distinguished leaders who devoted their lives to shepherding their flock: Horav Yisrael, zl, m'Huseitin; and Horav Shlomo, zl, m'Zevihl. Rav Yisrael was blessed with great wealth, while Rav Shlomo lived a life of abject poverty. Rav Shlomo once commented, "There are two types of tzaddikim. The tzaddik hador, righteous leader of his generation, does just that, guide his generation. There is also the tzaddik yesod olam, who acts very much like a yesod, foundation, who goes unnoticed, sort of buried in the ground - like a foundation." We must remember, however, that without the foundation, the entire edifice comes crashing down.

One cannot write concerning the importance of reaching out to every Jew without making mention of the Ponevezer Rav, Horav Yosef Kahaneman, zl. He was a Torah giant in whose heart burned a fiery love for every Jew. He would say excitedly, "Of course, I want whole-hearted sincere Jews - one hundred percent perfect Jews - but I also want all one hundred percent of all of the world's Jews, that none of them go lost; I am not giving up on a single one! Just as a Jew may never give up hope, so, too, are we also forbidden to give up on a simple Jew, no matter who he is."

A close student of his related, "I once saw the Rebbe in the middle of a throng of irreligious, assimilated Jews, who surrounded him with loving and admiring looks. Burning with curiosity, I went over to him and asked what approach he used to reach out to them. Smiling, he replied, 'I told them that they are Jews, more precious than anything else, and that they were just disguising themselves to the point that they are even maintaining their disguise towards themselves.' Thus, I told them, 'Remove your masks! Taire briderlach, beloved brothers, cast off your foreign garb. In time, many of them, indeed, shed their masks and reverted to being traditional Jews.'"

And Elokim saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good. (1:31)

We have read the above pasuk countless times; it is reiterated a number of times in the parsha about Bria ha'Olam, Creation. Yet, do we ever stop and ask ourselves: If the world is so good, why does Shlomo Hamelech begin his Sefer Koheles with the famous phrase - Haveil havalim ha'kol hevel, "Futility of futilities - all is futile!"? If all is futile, then it really cannot be tov meod, very good. How are to understand this? The Melitzer Rebbe, Shlita, explains that it all depends on one's religious experience. If he carries out the will of the Almighty, if his life is filled with mitzvos and maasim tovim, good deeds, then it is tov meod, very good. If, however, his life is characterized by abandon, with no relationship with Hashem, then it is all futility of futilities. His life is a waste.

This explanation is accompanied by a meaningful analogy. The king of the land had a son who was outstanding in his ability to absorb everything to which he set his mind. Among the many disciplines which he had mastered proficiently was medicine. He was a brilliant diagnostician and was able to prepare the exact remedy that would cure just about any disease. One day, the prince took a stroll on the king's vast grounds. He wanted to get away from the hustle and bustle of the palace, soak up some fresh air and relax amid the quiet of the surrounding forest. Carried away with his "freedom," he lost track of the palace boundaries and wandered off onto the property of the duke, who was no friend of the king. As a result, he was taken captive by the duke.

Overnight, the prince went from royalty to servitude. His new job was working in the stone quarry, breaking up large stones. Such work takes its toll on even the hardest workers. The prince was far from hardy. In no time, he would become a broken person. One day, the duke became gravely ill. Since the man was quite wealthy and money means nothing to a dead man, he sent out messengers to all areas of the country in search of a doctor who might save him. Money was no object. Various physicians were brought in - all, to no avail. The duke was rapidly wasting away. Soon, he would be nothing more than a memory.

At this point, the prince came before the superintendent of the prison and asked for an audience with the duke. "I can save him," he said. Both the jailor and the duke could not believe the prince's insolence. How could a lowly slave succeed where everyone else had failed? The prince reiterated his earlier request: "Allow me to leave, and I will heal the duke." The prince was released from the dungeon, and, after diagnosing the duke's ailment, prepared a powerful potion which cured the duke in a matter of days.

"Why did you not inform me that you were proficient in medicine?" the duke asked the prince. "You never asked me," replied the prince. "Instead of inquiring about my abilities, you immediately incarcerated me in the dungeon and put me to work chopping stones. I figured if you are a fool, it was your loss. In any event, sooner or later, my father and his armies would have located me and liberated me from this dungeon."

The lesson is very simple. The Jewish People are Hashem's children. Our goal and purpose in life is to study and master the Torah - which is the remedy for every ill known to mankind. If, however, Klal Yisrael deviate from their mission in life, and, instead of delving into Torah, revert to other disciplines which only succeed in distracting and turning them away from their source of life, they will fall captive to the futilities of life. Sadly, some Jews only discover their holy mission in life after they have fallen captive to the secular culture surrounding them. When the gentiles discover the beauty

and value of Torah, when they see the way of life experienced by the observant Jew, they change. They are cured from their illnesses. Life is futile when it has no direction. It is meaningless when one has no purpose. When a Jew lives a life of purpose, with goals and objectives that spiritually elevate him, then it is tov meod, very good.

We might suggest another interpretation for the Torah's emphasis on the underlying meaning behind tov meod. I think the Torah was intimating the perspective we should adopt upon viewing a person who manifests good and bad, behavior that is, at times, praiseworthy and, during other instances, iniquitous. I recently came across a thesis delineating the ahavas Yisrael, love for each Jew, as manifest by each of three great chassidic leaders: Horav Zushia, zl, m'Anapole; Horav Levi Yitzchak, zl, m'Berditchev; the Baal Shem Tov, zl.

Rav Zushia embodied Shlomo Hamelech's maxim, Al kol peshaim techaseh ahavah, "Love conceals all iniquities" (Mishlei 10:12). He did not notice the iniquities that the average man saw. People saw sin; he saw nothing. People perceived iniquity; he saw nothing of the sort. When others saw evil; he saw nothing. He was a person who was simply incapable of noticing anything negative about his fellow Jew. Whenever he did hear about someone's egregious behavior, he would find some way not to allow it to jaundice his perception of the person. He literally saw no evil.

The Berditchever was the Jewish People's consummate advocate. He always found some way to justify a person's behavior - regardless of its nefarious nature. He always provided some excuse. Unlike Rav Zushia, the Berditchever was well-aware of a Jew's failings and shortcomings, but he always found a way to justify his actions, to extend a positive spin to the man's misdeeds.

Rav Zushia saw no iniquity; the Berditchever more or less white-washed it. The Baal Shem Tov's love, however, superseded even that of his two disciples. To him, ahavas Yisrael, loving every Jew, extended beyond a refusal to see his evil, or endeavoring to cleanse his iniquity. The Baal Shem Tov's love for each and every Jew was unequivocal, incontinent; it was consummate love in its totality. This means that he was aware of the person's evil, his transgressions, his mean streak, but it did not matter - he loved him all the same - sin and all! The Baal Shem Tov loved the wicked sinner with the same degree of boundless love that he harbored for the greatest tzaddik. Why? They were all Hashem's children. A father loves all of his children the same - regardless of who they are and what they have done.

I think this is what the Torah is teaching us with the words tov meod. Hashem saw the world and its creations, mankind. They were all His. He knew that some would be imperfect, but they were still His! He taught us that everything is good. We should not make the distinction between bad and good when it comes to loving a fellow Jew.

Kayin brought an offering to Hashem of the fruit of the ground... and as for Hevel, he also brought. (4:3,4)

We note from the pesukim that Hevel was a righteous person. The mere fact that Hashem acquiesced to Hevel's sacrifice serves as a barometer of His approbation of Hevel. If so, why was he taken so soon? Hevel's life was cut short due to his brother's irrational jealousy. He did not live long enough even to establish a legacy of offspring. Kayin, on the other hand, lived seven more generations, from which was established the future of the world. To the average spectator, the disparity between the subsequent history of Kayin, the murderer, and Hevel, the innocent victim, is glaring. Furthermore, Kayin did not simply kill Hevel in one swoop. Chazal teach us that it was an extremely painful experience for Hevel, since Kayin did not know how a life is taken, from where the neshamah leaves. He stabbed Hevel many times all over his body until he struck him in the neck.

Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita, explains that such questions plague the minds of those who have recently embarked on a life of Torah observance. Apparently, prior to their "rebirth," their material/physical lifestyle had been wonderful. Now that they have eschewed their life of abandon, nothing seems to go right. They are financially challenged, emotionally

misunderstood, and physically vulnerable.. So they ask: Why? Is this what we have to look forward to now that we have become frum, observant?

We have no acceptable reply to these questions. Every Jew suffers in one way or another. Those who think that the fellow who is wealthy, has yichus, pedigree, and lives in an ivory tower has it better, is very naive. We all have pekelech, "parcels" of situations, troubles, issues - any name that you want to call it. Why? Ask Hashem. This is the way in which He guides the world. A believing Jew knows this; thus, he maintains his deep conviction despite the challenges to his faith.

Therefore, right from the onset, from the moment the Torah commences to relate the story of mankind, we are confronted with the first protrusive question to our faith - why Hevel? Why not Kayin instead? Why do bad things happen to good people? This question, which has apparently been around for quite some time is based upon the misconception that we mortals have been able to accurately determine the meaning of good/bad. We do not know the correct definition of good people - or bad things. We are not made aware of the reward and punishment in this world, in order that it not preclude our ability to choose wisely between good and evil. If the reward were to be immediate and the punishment likewise, what challenge would there be to being an observant Jew? We must reiterate constantly in our hearts and minds that we are clueless concerning the way in which Hashem runs the world. We have no idea what is involved; even if we were to know what has been factored into Hashem's decisions, our mortal minds could not even begin to grasp it. So, it is best that we do what is asked of us and leave the "decision- making" to Hashem.

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October 1, 2009

Chaim Shulman / Shifi Shulman

Bereishis - Sefer Hayashar

The Ramban in his introduction to Sefer Bereishis says that learning Sefer Bereishis strengthens our Emunah in Hashem. We see that Hashem created the world - and it was not some accident. We learn how Avraham came to discover Hashem. We see how Yitzchak and Yaakov remained strong in their commitment to Hashem. These lessons help us strengthen our belief in and dedication to Hashem. The Iturei Torah quotes that the Chafetz Chaim advised those whose Emunah is not strong to study and focus on Sefer Bereishis. The Iturei Torah also quotes a letter of Rav Shach to a student that all of us have ups and downs - and whenever Rav Shach needed Chizuk he would learn Sefer Bereishis!

There is another equally important aspect of Sefer Bereishis - and that is - it teaches us Midos - not merely the mitzvos that we are supposed to do but the way that we are supposed to behave. The Gemara in Avoda Zarah (22a) says that Sefer Bereishis is called the Sefer Hayashar - the book of the upright - because it teaches of the lives of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov and they are referred to as the "yesharim."

We learn many positive character traits from the Avos and the Imahos, such as \* how to act with Chesed - kindness to other human beings - like Avraham greeting strangers, \* how to behave with neighbors, \* how to relate to enemies like Eisav, \* how to be totally dedicated with Mesiras Nefesh to Hashem - like Yitzchok on the Akeidah, \* how to be tzanuah - modest like the Imahos, \* how to be dedicated to the spiritual well-being of our children as we see from Sarah and Rivkah, and so on.

Rav Chaim Vital - a talmid of the Ari Zal - says that Midos - character traits - are not among the 613 mitzvos, but they are a prerequisite - a requirement before the performance of Mitzvos. The Midrash tells us that Derech Eretz

Kadma LaTorah - that how to behave preceded the giving of the Torah by 26 generations.

\* \* \*

All these very important lessons to be learned from Sefer Bereishis make it difficult to understand the first Rashi in parshas Bereishis. Rashi quotes Rabi Yitzchak (some say this was a Tana and some say this was Rashi's father). Rabi Yitzchak asks, why does the Torah begin with Bereishis - why not begin with the mitvah in Parshas Bo of Hachodesh Hazeh Lachem Rosh Chadashim - to sanctify the new moon - which is the first mitvah commanded to Bnai Yisrael. Rashi answers that the Torah begins with Bereishis to disprove the accusation by enemies who say that we stole Eretz Yisrael. The creation of the world - as well as the promise to Avraham, Yetzias Mitzrayim and so on - show that Hashem created the world and rightfully took Eretz Yisrael away from the seven nations and gave it to us.

The proof that Eretz Yisrael belongs to Bnai Yisrael is extremely important and certainly timely today. But how could Rashi ask that the Torah should have begun with the first Mitzvah of Hachodesh Hazeh Lachem and leave out the first 14 parshiyos in the Torah? What about the lessons in Emunah? What about the midos we learn from the Avos and Imahos? What about lessons we learn from Yetzias Mitzrayim?

Rashi was not saying in his question that Sefer Bereishis should have been ignored. Rather, as the Mizrachi says, the midos and emunah from Sefer Bereishis could have been given as a separate book - similar to Sefer Iyov which according to some opinions was written by Moshe. So the Torah, which is a book of laws would have the Mitzvos, and another book would tell of the story of creation and the midos tovos of the Avos and Imahos.

And Rashi answers that the primary lessons in Bereishis about how Hashem is the master of the world - and how Bnei Yisroel were chosen to receive Eretz Yisrael and be the chosen nation - are more than just lessons in Midos - they are necessary for understanding the mitzvos that Hashem gave us and not to the other nations.

<http://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/parsha/redeeming-relevance-in-the-weekly-parsha-bereshit/2014/10/14/>

**Redeeming Relevance in the Weekly Parsha: Bereshit**

**By: Rabbi Francis Nataf**

Published: October 14th, 2014

Doesn't a religious life, despite the effort and sacrifices required by the mitzvot, at least guarantee us peace of mind?

Perhaps not.

Among the many foundational themes in the opening parsha of the Torah, Bereshit, is a strong statement that life in this world will include hard choices that challenge our decision making and leave us with lingering complications.

The Torah tells us that towards the end of the sixth day of creation, God stated: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heaven, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." (Bereshit 1:26). Rashi and other commentators teach us that God fully understood that the use of this phrase, Let us make man, in our image, could very easily be misunderstood and used by heretics as evidence of polytheism or a less than fully omnipotent deity. Yet God chose to use the phrase anyway because He saw the overriding importance of demonstrating Derech Eretz (decency) - to teach us that even if one participant in a particular situation far outranks the others, and is considering making a change to that setting, it is still incumbent on the most powerful one to consult with the others present before making the change.

By using this phrase, despite the inherent risks of misinterpretation, God shows us that a central fact of life is that we are often called to make choices that are not simple, easy, or risk free. We must evaluate our options in these times and choose the course that offers the most goodness and the least

detriment. Yet we should never delude ourselves into thinking that our ‘good’ choices carry no risk or downside.

As God Himself indicates, by taking a significant theological risk in using this phrase in order to model humility, there is always a greater good. But it often involves trade-offs and other significant costs.

This Dvar Torah was adapted by Harry Glazer from the chapter “Redeeming Ourselves: Lessons from the Mothers,” pages 42-43, in Rabbi Francis Nataf’s book *Redeeming Relevance In the Book of Genesis: Explorations in Text and Meaning* (Urim Publications, Jerusalem, 2006). 23 Elul 5774

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### **The Mandate of Genetic Testing**

**Rabbi Dr. Edward Reichman**

According to our mesorah (tradition), HaKadosh Baruch Hu histakel b’oraita u’bara alma—G-d looked into the text of the Torah and created the world.<sup>2</sup> In essence, the Torah is the divine architectural blueprint for the creation of the world. I would submit that the converse is true for man. Adam, man, histakel b’alma u’bara oraita. When man delves into the workings of the world through the study of medicine and science, he brings the Torah to life and gains an appreciation of HaKadosh Baruch Hu’s role in the creation of the world. In essence, DNA and the genetic code is the blueprint for the human being, which gives us the wisdom to appreciate G-d’s creation. Just as we find secret codes in the arrangements of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet in the Torah, we discover genetic codes with the handful of letters that comprise the nitrogen base building blocks of DNA.

Medicine is replete with military metaphors—we speak of the therapeutic “arsenal” or “armamentarium,” we fight the “war” on cancer and “battle” other diseases, as we continually seek the “magic bullet.” The Torah also utilizes a military metaphor in what Rav Soloveitchik considered man’s mandate to harness nature for the good of man: “u’milu et haartzet v’kivshuha,”<sup>3</sup> fill the earth and conquer, or subdue it. In what is the consummate fulfillment of this directive, man has been able to identify the genetics of certain diseases and literally conquer and begin to vanquish them.

We live in an age where alarmists have labeled the challenges people are experiencing in identifying suitable matches as the “shidduch crisis.” This label has appropriately led to the rallying of many well-meaning people attempting to alleviate the crisis in creative and novel ways. Yet there is one aspect of shidduchim that everyone should treat with concern: genetic testing. Genetic testing, accomplished through a simple blood test, is a safe and effective way of identifying the possibility of couples having children with a variety of severe and sometimes fatal diseases. The student-led YU Medical Ethics Society of Yeshiva University’s Center for the Jewish Future offers testing annually for the student body on both undergraduate campuses, and the testing is now under the auspices of the newly formed Program for Jewish Genetic Health at Einstein.

Genetic testing is not a purely medical/scientific issue. It has halachic and hashkafic ramifications. The Talmud already acknowledges concern over the transmission of disease to future progeny in advising one to not marry into a family of epileptics or lepers, assuming these conditions were heritable.<sup>4</sup>

Just as a rabbi is charged with educating his congregation about the halachic permissibility of violating Shabbat in the face of pikuach nefesh, so he is now equally obligated to inform his congregation of the availability of genetic testing, which can prevent disease in children and unimaginable anguish for parents. One may think that perhaps one should not second guess Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and if it is G-d’s will that one bear children with genetic disease, so be it. This appropriate theological question was asked and answered by Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l some 40 years ago when Tay-Sachs testing was first offered. Rav Moshe clearly articulated the position

that testing should be done, as it can easily be performed and can potentially spare the anguish of parents who are at risk to bear children with genetic diseases.<sup>5</sup> One need only spend five minutes with the parent of a Tay-Sachs child to appreciate the veracity of these words. We have moved well beyond the identification of this one disease to a time when many diseases can be tested for—including tests for genes that will certainly cause disease, some possibly, some fatal, some not. The genetic landscape is admittedly complex and evolving, and questions raised by genetic testing are manifold:<sup>6</sup> who to test, how to test, what to test, and when to test, but not, IF to test—as test we must. We still debate whether to test in a closed, anonymous fashion, as per the Dor Yesharim model, or in an open format. Studies are in process now to assess the impact of both. In either case, the ever-expanding mandate of verapo yerapei (you shall surely heal)<sup>7</sup> surely includes genetic testing in its purview, and its scope continues to widen as we identify more causes of disease. It is clear that man is privy to these Divine genetic secrets for a reason.

The details are debated by poskim and much halachic discussion is proceeding and will ensue in the coming years. The answers to the questions will not be unanimous, but they derive from the mesorah, and there is simply no other way for a Torah observant Jew to deal with the abundance of information and its potential halachic ramifications. Moving forward, we as a community will need to form clearer guidelines.

Which genetic conditions rise to the threshold of disclosure?<sup>8</sup> When and if should conditions be disclosed to one’s children? Should third parties, either medical or non-medical, share unsolicited genetic information? If a couple is already married and are found to be carriers for genetic conditions, can they perform prenatal testing?<sup>9</sup> If yes, can they act on the results? Can they avail themselves of pre-implantation genetic diagnosis? Some of these questions have also been asked and answered in the last generation, but the analyses need to be revisited and updated in light of new scientific advances.

One of the more challenging questions is when in the courtship should genetic conditions be divulged? While there is no magic formula, too early disclosure can unnecessarily sabotage a potentially wonderful relationship, while too late disclosure, when engagement is imminent or past, may cause undue stress. Disclosure of genetic information does not in itself assume the seriousness or advanced stage of the relationship, but rather is an important precautionary measure to prevent unnecessary psychological harm to the involved parties.

The poskim of our generation are addressing these issues and the piskei halachah continue to evolve with the accumulation of scientific and psychological data. It is not the mere acquisition of knowledge that constitutes a fulfillment of “fill the land and subdue it,” but a judicious application of this knowledge to better serve the world and its inhabitants. Some have considered this vast amount of complex information to have generated a so-called tyranny of knowledge. There is much merit to this notion. But the tyranny of ignorance may be a worse fate.

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<sup>2</sup> For an explanation of this concept, see R’ Chaim of Brisk’s commentary to Shemot 13:4.

<sup>3</sup> Bereishit 1:28.

<sup>4</sup> Yevamot 64b.

<sup>5</sup> Igrot Moshe E. H. 4:10.

<sup>6</sup> See F. Rosner, “Judaism, Genetic Screening and Genetic Therapy,” *Mount Sinai Journal of Medicine* 65:5-6 (October-November, 1998), 406-

413; R' J. D. Bleich, "Genetic Screening," Tradition 34:1(Spring 2000), 63-87.

7 Shemot 21:19.

8 On issues of disclosure in shidduchim, including which diseases to disclose, and who can or must disclose, see A. Dori, "Disclosure of medical conditions in shidduchim," Assia 87-88 (Sivan, 5770) (Hebrew), Y. Steinberg, "Disclosure of medical information to a potential spouse," in Y. Steinberg, ed., Brachah L'Avraham (Jerusalem, 5768), 341-362 (Hebrew). R' Yitzchak Zilberstein devotes some 80 pages to issues of disclosure and shidduchim, including specific genetic diseases, in his new sefer, Shiurei Torah L'Rofim (Tevet, 5772). 9 The two extreme positions on prenatal testing and subsequent abortion are espoused by Rav Moshe Feinstein in Igrot Moshe C. M. 2:71 and Rav Eliezer Waldenberg in Tzitz Eliezer 13:102. For a comprehensive analysis on halakhic aspects of abortion, see R' J. D. Bleich, "Abortion in Halakhic Literature," Contemporary Halakhic Problems (Ktav, 1977), 325-371.

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PARSHAT BREISHIT**

How many stories of Creation are there in Parshat Breishit, ONE or TWO? Although this question is often discussed more by Bible critics than yeshiva students, its resolution may carry a significant spiritual message.

In this week's shiur, we discuss the structure of Parshat Breishit, in an attempt to better understand the meaning of the Torah's presentation of the story of Creation. Our analysis will also 'set the stage' for our discussion of the overall theme of Sefer Breishit in the shiurim to follow.

### INTRODUCTION

From a literary perspective, it is quite easy to differentiate between two distinct sections in the Torah's account of the story of Creation:

SECTION I - THE CREATION IN SEVEN DAYS /1:1->2:3

SECTION II - MAN IN GAN EDEN / 2:4 ->3:24

In our shiur, we will first explain what makes each section unique. Afterward we will discuss how they complement one another.

### PEREK ALEPH

SECTION I, better known as PEREK ALEPH, is easily discerned because of its rigid structure, i.e. every day of creation follows a very standard pattern. Each day:

- \* Begins with the phrase: "VA'YOMER ELOKIM...", heralding a new stage of creation (see 1:3,6,9,14,20,24);
- \* Continues with "VA'YAR ELOKIM... KI TOV" (see 1:4,10,12,18,21,31);
- \* Concludes with "VAYHI EREV VAYHI BOKER, YOM..." (see 1:5,8,13,19,23,31).

In fact, one could construct a 'blank form' that would fit just about any day of Creation, that would look something like this:

"**va'yomer Elokim**" - And God said... \_\_\_\_\_  
[followed by some act of Creation.]

"**va'yhi chen**" - And so it was  
[often followed by some naming process: like "va'yikra.Elokim... , or some divine 'comment']

"**va'yar Elokim... ki tov**" - And God saw it was good

"**va'yhi erev va'yhi boker, yom \_\_\_#\_\_\_**"

Even though certain days may vary from this basic format, certainly each day begins with the phrase "va'yomer Elokim..."

This observation allows us to identify the first two psukim of this unit (1:1-2) as its header, for Day One must begin with the first "va'yomer Elokim" (in the third pasuk/ see 1:3 and Rashi on the meaning of the word "Breishit" in his interpretation to 1:1).

We reach a similar conclusion in regard to the 'Seventh Day' (i.e. 2:1-3). Since these psukim describe 'Day Seven', they must be part of this overall

Story of Creation; yet because they begin with "va'yichulu..." - and not with "va'yomer Elokim" - they form the conclusion of this unit.

To verify this, note the beautiful parallel between these two 'bookends' (i.e. 1:1-2 and 2:1-3, noting the phrase "shamayim v'aretz" and the verb "bara"!), and how Day Seven 'concludes' that which was introduced in 1:1.

This introduction and conclusion define for us the primary topic of this entire unit - - "briyat ha'shamayim v'ha'aretz" - God's Creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This topic is presented through a daily progression of God's creations that span over six days.

With this general framework defined, we can now begin our analysis of the progression of Creation from one day to the next. We will pay attention to how each day either follows, or slightly varies from the standard format discussed above. [For example, the fact that day two does not include the phrase "va'yar Elokim ki tov" should be significant.]

### A DAILY "CHIDUSH"

As we mentioned above, within this unit, the phrase "va'yomer Elokim" begins each day, and is always followed by an act God's Creation - or at least some type of "chidush" [i.e. something new, that didn't exist the day before].

After the execution each act of Creation, we may find 'peripheral' comments such as God giving names or duties to what He just created. However, we will show how the next "chidush" of Creation doesn't take place without an additional "va'yomer Elokim"!

We should also point out that in Days Three and Six we find our basic form repeated twice, i.e. the phrase "va'yomer Elokim" appears twice on each of these days, and each time followed by a distinct act of Creation, followed by the evaluation of - "va'yar Elokim ki tov". This suggests that each of these days will contain two acts of Creation. [The deeper meaning of this will be discussed as we continue.]

Therefore, our analysis begins by identifying what was the precise "chidush" of each day. Then, we will discuss the 'peripheral comments' of each day, showing how they relate to that "chidush".

### DAY ONE (1:3- 5)

God's first act of creation (i.e. what follows the first "va'yomer Elokim") was making "OR" - or what we call 'light'.

This creation is followed by a 'naming process' where God calls the light - 'Day', and the darkness (the lack of light) is called 'Night'.

### DAY TWO (1:6-8)

God makes the "rakiya" - whose function is to divide between the 'water above' and the 'water below'.

Then, God names these 'waters above' - "shamayim" [Heavens]. Note that the 'waters below' are not named until Day Three. Note as well that this is only time when God's creation is not followed by the phrase "va'yar Elokim ki tov". Hence, it appears that something on this day is either 'not so good' or at least incomplete. [We'll return to this observation later in the shiur.]

### DAY THREE (1:9-12)

\* **Stage One:** (i.e. the first "va'yomer Elokim").

Gods makes the "yabasha" [dry land].

Then God names this 'dry land - ARETZ [Earth?] and the remaining "mayim" - YAMIM [Seas].

Followed by God's positive evaluation: "va'yar Elokim ki tov"

\* **Stage Two** (i.e. the second "va'yomer Elokim" / 1:11-12)

God creates what we call 'vegetation', i.e. all the various species of vegetables and fruit trees. Note how these psukim emphasize precisely what makes the 'plant kingdom' unique - i.e. how these species contain seeds that will produce the next generation - e.g. "esev mazria zera" and "etz pri oseh pri".

Note that God no longer gives 'names' to what He created. However, we still find the standard positive evaluation "va'yar Elokim ki tov". [You were probably aware that "ki tov" is mentioned twice in Day Three, but you probably weren't aware that it was because it contains two "va'yomer Elokim's"!]

### A QUANTUM LEAP

Note the 'quantum leap' that takes place in stage Two on Day Three. Up until Stage Two, everything that God had created was 'inanimate' (non-living). From this point on, living things are created. [Keep this in mind, as we will uncover a similar 'quantum leap' when we discuss the progression from Stage One to Two in Day Six!, i.e. when we jump from animal to man.]

This may explain why Stage One of Day Three is the last time that we find God giving names. It seems as though God gave names only to His 'non-living' creations.

[In chapter two, we will see how it becomes man's job to give names to other living things (see 2:19), and maybe even to God Himself! (see 4:26)!]

Furthermore, note the 'separation process' that emerges as God created 'shamayim v'aretz'. In the introduction, we find 'mayim' - with 'ruach Elokim' [God's spirit?] hovering over it (see 1:2). Then, in Day Two, God takes this 'mayim' 'solution' and separates it ["va'yavdel"] between the 'mayim' 'above' and 'below' the 'rakiya'. The 'water above' becomes 'SHAMAYIM', but the 'water below' needs further separation, which only takes place on Day Three - when the remaining 'solution' separates between the "ARETZ" [Land] and the "YAMIM" [Seas].

Technically speaking, this is how God created 'shamayim v'aretz'. [The creation of the remaining 'v'kol tzvaam' - and all their hosts (see 2:1) - takes place from this point and onward.]

#### DAY FOUR (1:14-19)

God creates the "meorot", i.e. the sun, moon and stars.

This time however, note how God explains the function of His new creations (instead of giving names). For example, "va'hayu l'otot u'moadim" - and they shall be for signs and appointed times; and later - "I'ha'ir al ha'aretz" - to give light on the land (see 1:14-15). And finally: "I'mshol ba'yom u'va'layala" - to rule over day and night (1:18). [Note as well how this day relates back to Day One.]

#### DAY FIVE (1:20-23)

On this day, we find yet another 'quantum leap', as God begins His creation of the 'animal kingdom' (i.e. in contrast to the 'vegetation' created on day three). God creates all living things that creep in the water or fly in the sky (i.e. fish and fowl).

Even though this day follows the standard 'form' (discussed above), we do find two very important additions.

1. The verb "bara" is used to describe how God creates this animal kingdom: "va'yivrah Elokim et ha'tanimim ha'gedolim v'et kol nefesh ha'chaya..." (1:21). Note how this is the first usage of this verb since the first pasuk of "breishit bara..." (1:1)! The Torah's use of the verb "bara" specifically at this point may reflect this 'quantum leap' to the animal kingdom in this critical stage of the Creation.
2. A 'blessing' is given (for the first time) to these fish and fowl after their creation: "va'yvarech otam Elokim laymor - pru ur'vu..." - that they should be fruitful and multiply and fill the seas and skies. Note how this blessing relates to the very essence of the difference between the 'plant kingdom' and the 'animal kingdom'. Whereas self-produced seeds allow vegetation to reproduce itself, the animal kingdom requires mating for reproduction to take place, and hence the need for God's blessing of "pru u'rvu" to keep each species alive.

#### DAY SIX (1:24-31)

Here again, like in Day Three, we find two stages of Creation, each beginning with the phrase "va'yomer Elokim, with yet another 'quantum leap' in between:

##### \* Stage One (1:24-25)

God creates the living things that roam on the land, i.e. the animals. There is really nothing special about this stage, other than the fact that God found it necessary to create them 'independently' on the first stage of Day Six, instead of including them with His creation of the rest of the of the animal kingdom (i.e. with the fish and the fowl) in Day Five.

In fact, we find an interesting parallel between both days that contain two stages (i.e. days Three and Six). Just as Stage One of Day Three (separating the Earth from the 'water below') completed a process that God had begun in Day Two, so too Stage One of Day Six (the animals) completed a process that God began in Day Five!

##### \* Stage Two (1:26-31)

God creates MAN - "btzelem Elokim"!

Note how many special words and phrases (many of which we encountered before) accompany God's creation of man:

First of all, we find once again the use of the verb "bara" to describe this act of creation, suggesting that the progression from animal to man may be considered no less a 'quantum leap' than the progression from vegetation to animal.

Secondly, God appears to 'consult' with others (even though it is not clear who they are) before creating man ("naaseh adam b'tzalmeinu...").

Here again, we find not only an act of creation, but also a 'statement the purpose' for this creation - i.e. to be master over all of God's earlier creations:

"v'yirdu b'dgat ha'yam u'b'of ha'shamayim..." - Be fruitful and multiply and be master over the fish of the seas and the fowl in the heavens and the animals and all the land, and everything that creeps on the land." (see 1:26).

Thus, it appears that man is not only God's last Creation, but also His most sophisticated creation, responsible to rule over all other creations 'below the heavens'.

This explains we find yet another blessing (following this act of creation / similar to the blessing on Day Five). This blessing to man includes not only fertility, but also relates to his potential to exert dominion over all that Elokim had created. ["pru u'rvu v'kivshuha, u'rdu b'dgat ha'yam..." / see 1:28, compare with 1:26]

It should be noted that we find one final section, that also begins with the phrase "va'yomer Elokim" (see 1:29), but quite different than all the earlier ones, as this statement does not introduce an act of Creation, but rather the administration of food. In a nutshell, in these psukim God allows the animal kingdom to consume the plant kingdom. The green grass is given for the animals (to graze upon), while man receives the 'added privilege' of eating the fruit of the trees (see 1:29-30).

#### SOMETHING SPECIAL

As you surely must have realized, all of these 'variances' from the 'standard format' in regard to God's creation of man emphasize that there must be something very special about man's creation, and hence his purpose. But this should not surprise us, for that is precisely what we should expect from a book of prophecy, a divine message to man to help him understand his relationship with God, and the purpose for his existence.

All of these special points about man's creation should be important, but before we discuss their significance, we must take into consideration one more observation concerning the progression of Creation during these six days.

#### A PARALLEL STRUCTURE

Let's summarize our conclusions thus far concerning what was created on each day (and each statement of "va'yomer Elokim..."):

DAY	GOD CREATED...
=====	=====
I.	"OR" = LIGHT
II.	"RAKIYA" - separating: A. the MAYIM above [=SHAMAYIM], and B. the MAYIM below [=YAMIM].
IIIa.	"YABASHA", called the ARETZ (the Land) -
IIIb.	Vegetation (on that ARETZ) A. seed-bearing plants / "esev mazria zera" B. fruit-bearing trees / "etz pri oseh pri"
IV.	LIGHTS in the SHAMAYIM (sun, moon, stars etc.)
V.	LIVING CREATURES:

- A. birds in the sky [=RAKIYA SHAMAYIM]
  - B. fish in the sea [=MAYIM]
  - Via. LIVING CREATURES who live on the ARETZ (land) animals - all forms
  - Vib. MAN - b'tzelem Elokim, blessed by God to dominate all other living creatures
- Then, God assigns the appropriate food for these living creatures:
1. Man - can eat vegetation and fruit (see 1:29)
  2. Animals - can eat only vegetation/grass - (see 1:30)
- VII. SHABBAT - God rested, as His Creation was complete.

Now, let's turn our list into a table.  
If we line up the first three days against the last three days, we find a rather amazing parallel:

DAYS 1-3	DAYS 4-6
I. LIGHT	IV. LIGHTS in the heavens
II. RAKIYA - dividing: SHAMAYIM (above) MAYIM (below the sea)	V. Living things: Birds in the SHAMAYIM Fish in MAYIM
III. ARETZ (land) Seed bearing plants Fruit bearing trees	VI. Animals & Man on the ARETZ Plants to be eaten by the Animals Fruit of trees, to be eaten by Man

Note how this parallel reflects our discussion above concerning the internal progression of these six days of Creation; and our observation that from Day Four and onward, God not only creates, but He also states the purpose of His creations.

It also shows how the last three days 'fill in' the potential for what God created in the first three days. Basically, from day four and onward, nature 'goes into motion', as we find 'movement' both in the Heavens above and in the Earth below.

In summary, when these six days are complete, what we call 'nature' has gone into motion.

### DIVINE EVOLUTION

If we understand the phrase "tohu va'vahu" in the introductory section (see 1:2) as total chaos, then from this primordial state - six days later, we find a beautifully structured universe containing all of the various forms of life that we are familiar with; including plants, animals, and man.

Note that the Torah emphasizes that each form of life is created in a manner that guarantees its survival, i.e. its ability to reproduce:

- a. plants: "esev mazria zera" - seed-bearing vegetation  
"etz pri oseh pri" - fruit-bearing trees (1:11-12)
- b. fish and fowl: "pru u'rvu" - be fruitful & multiply (1:22)
- c. Man: "pru u'rvu..." - be fruitful & multiply (1:28)

One could summarize and simply state that the end result of this creation process is what we call NATURE - in other words - the exact opposite of TOHU VA'VAHU.

In this manner, PEREK ALEPH describes God's creation of nature, i.e. the entire material universe and its phenomena.

Even though 'nature' itself remains dynamic, with living things constantly changing and reproducing, its basic framework remains constant - for after "va'yachulu" (2:1), nothing 'new' will be created, and certainly, nothing more advanced or sophisticated as man.

This established, we must now ask ourselves the more fundamental question, which is - what can we learn from the unique manner by which the Torah tells over the story of Creation? Is it recorded for the sake of our curiosity, simply to let us know 'how it all happened' - or does it carry a prophetic message - for any human being contemplating the purpose of the world that surrounds him!

### ONE GOD, OR MANY?

Certainly, one primary message that emerges from this presentation is that the creation of nature, with all its complexities and wonders, was a willful act of GOD. Hence, by keeping Shabbat, resting on the seventh day, as God did, we assert our belief that God is the power that created nature (and continues to oversee it).

This analysis can also help us appreciate why the Torah uses the name -Elokim - to describe God throughout this entire chapter. As Ramban explains (toward the end of his commentary on 1:1), the Hebrew word "el" implies someone with power (or strength) and in control. Therefore, "shem ELOKIM" implies the master of **all** of the many forces of nature.

[This can explain why God's Name is in the plural form- for He is all of the powers / see also Rav Yehuda ha'Levi, in Sefer Kuzari, beginning of Book Four.]

This understanding can also help us appreciate the Torah's use of the verb "bara" in PEREK ALEPH. Note how the THREE active uses of the verb "bara" in PEREK ALEPH reflect each level of sophistication in Creation, i.e. "tzomeyach" [plant kingdom], "chai" [animal kingdom] and "m'daber" [man]. This also reflects the three 'quantum leaps' that we discussed in the evolutionary development of nature during these six days.

#### \* STEP ONE - All matter and plants -

"Breishit BARA Elokim et ha'SHAMAYIM v'et ha'ARETZ" (1:1)

This includes everything in the SHAMAYIM and on the ARETZ, i.e. the creation of all "domem" (inanimate objects) and "tzomeyach" (plants). Note that this takes place during the first FOUR days of Creation.

#### \* STEP TWO - The animal kingdom

"va'YIVRA Elokim - and God created the TANINIM and all living creatures... by their species"(1:21)

This includes the birds, fish, animals, and beasts etc. which are created on the fifth and sixth days.

#### \* STEP THREE - Man

"va'YIVRA Elokim et ha'ADAM..." (1:27)

The creation of man b'tzelem Elokim, in God's image.

Now we must ponder what may be the Torah's message in telling man that the creation of nature was a willful act of God?

In his daily life, man constantly encounters a relationship with nature, i.e. with his surroundings and environment. Man does not need the Torah to inform him that nature exists; it stares him in the face every day. As man cannot avoid nature, he must constantly contemplate it, and struggle with it.

Without the Torah's message, one could easily conclude that nature is the manifestation of many gods - a rain god, a sun god, a fertility god, war gods, etc. - as ancient man believed. Nature was attributed to a pantheon of gods, often warring with one another.

In contrast, modern man usually arrives at quite the opposite conclusion -- that nature just exists, and doesn't relate to any form of god at all.

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

But how does this relate to man himself?

#### MAN - IN PEREK ALEPH

In Perek Aleph, man emerges not only as the climax of the creation process, but also as its MASTER:

"And God blessed man saying: Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and MASTER it, and RULE the fish of the sea, and the birds in the sky, and the living things that creep on the earth..." (1:28).

Note that this is God's BLESSING to man, and NOT a commandment! One could consider this 'blessing' almost as a definition of man's very nature. Just as it is 'natural' for vegetation to grow ["esev mazria

zera"], and for all living things to reproduce ["pru u'rvu"], it is also 'natural' for man to dominate his environment; it becomes his natural instinct.

The Torah's use of the verb "bara" at each major stage of creation, and then in its description of God's creation of man - may shed light on this topic. When contemplating nature and his relationship with the animal kingdom, man might easily conclude that he is simply just another part of the animal kingdom. He may be more advanced or developed than the 'average monkey', but biologically he is no different. The Torah's use of the verb "bara" to describe God's creation of man informs us that man is a completely new category of creation. He is created "b'tzelem Elokim", in the image of God, i.e. he possesses a spiritual potential, unlike any other form of nature.

[See the Rambam in the very beginning of Moreh N'vuchim (I.1), where he defines "tzelem Elokim" as the characteristic of man that differentiates him from animal.]

In other words, man's creation in a separate stage of Day Six, and the use of the verb "bara", and his special blessing etc. all come to impress upon man that he is indeed a 'quantum leap' above all other creations. He should not view himself as just the most sophisticated animal of the universe, but rather as a Godly creation.

Perek Aleph teaches man to recognize that his very nature to dominate all other living things is also an act of God's creation.

However, man must also ask himself, "Towards what purpose?" Did God simply create man, or does He continue to have a relationship with His creation? Does the fate of mankind remain in God's control; does there remain a connection between man's deeds and God's "hashgacha" (providence) over him?

The answer to this question begins in PEREK BET - the story of Gan Eden, and will continue through the rest of Chumash!

#### **PEREK BET (2:4-3:24)**

PEREK BET presents what appears to be conflicting account of the story of Creation. As your review chapter two, note how:

- 1) Nothing can grow before God creates man (see 2:5), therefore:
- 2) God creates man FIRST (2:6-7), then:
- 3) God plants a garden for man, vegetation develops (2:8-14);
- 4) God gives man the job to work and guard this garden (2:15);
- 5) God commands man re: what he can/cannot eat (2:16-17);
- 6) God creates animals for the sake of man (2:18-20)
- 7) God creates a wife for man, from his own rib (2:21-25).

Clearly, the **order** of creation is very different. In PEREK BET we find that man is created FIRST, and everything afterward (i.e. the plants and the animals) are created FOR him. In contrast to perek Aleph where man was God's final Creation - the most sophisticated - and blessed to exert his dominion over the entire animal kingdom; in Perek Bet we see how man is simply a servant of God, tending to His Garden (see 2:15-16), and searching for companionship (see 2:18-25). In perek Aleph, he emerged as 'ruler', almost like a god himself ("b'tzelem Elokim"); in perek Bet he is a servant.

In addition, there are several other obvious differences between these two sections:

- \* Throughout this section, God's Name is no longer simply ELOKIM, rather the name HASHEM ELOKIM (better known as "shem Havaya").
- \* In contrast to the consistent use of verb "bara" (creation from nothing) in Perek Aleph, Perek Bet uses the verb "ya'tzar" (creation from something/ see 2:7,19).

Although it is possible to reconcile these apparent contradictions (as many commentators do), the question remains - Why does the Torah present these two accounts in a manner that (at least) appears to be conflicting?

We obviously cannot accept the claim of the Bible critics that these two sections reflect two conflicting ancient traditions. Our belief is that the entire Torah was given by God at Har Sinai - and hence stems from one source. Therefore, we must conclude that this special manner of presentation is intentional and should carry a prophetic message. For this reason, our study of

Sefer Breishit will focus more so on how the Torah's 'stories' of Creation explain the nature of man's relationship with God, and less so on how to resolve the 'technical' problems to determine what events actually took place and when.

Two renowned Torah scholars of the 20th century have discussed this issue of the two creations stories at length. The analytical aspect, the approach of "shtei bechinot" (two perspectives), has been exhausted by Rabbi Mordechai Breuer in his book Pirkei Breishit. The philosophical implications have been discussed by Rav Soloveichik ZT"L in his article 'The Lonely Man of Faith' (re: Adam I & Adam II).

It is beyond the scope of this shiur to summarize these two approaches (it is recommended that you read them). Instead, we will simply conduct a basic analysis of PEREK ALEPH & PEREK BET and offer some thoughts with regard to its significance. Hopefully it will provide a elementary background for those who wish to pursue this topic in greater depth.

With this in mind, we begin our analysis in an attempt to find the primary message of each of these two sections. We begin with a review of our conclusions regarding Perek Aleph.

#### **PEREK ALEPH - THE CREATION OF NATURE**

Nature - the entire material universe and its phenomena ["ha'shamayim v'haretz v'chol tzvaam"] - was the end result of the Seven Days of Creation. Without the Torah's message, man may logically conclude that the universe that surrounds him is controlled by various different powers, each controlling their own realm (or what ancient man understood as a pantheon of gods).

Chumash begins by informing us that nature itself, with all its complexities and wonders, was a willful act of the 'one God' - who continues to oversee His creations. [Hence the name -Elokim -(plural) all of the powers of nature.]

However, if there is one phenomenon in nature that appears to contradict this conclusion of unity, it is the very existence of "shamayim" [Heaven] and "aretz" [Earth]. Two totally different realms, with almost no contact between them, separated by the "rakiya"! This observation may explain why there was 'nothing good' about Day Two, when God made the "rakiya", for it was this very first division that leaves us with the impression that there must be 'many gods', and not one.

This may also explain why the entire story of Creation begins with the statement that Elokim made [both] "shamayim v'aretz" (see 1:1), and concludes with a very similar statement (see 2:1 & 2:4).

[Note as well See Breishit 14:19-22 & 24:3. Note as well Devarim 31:28 & 32:1. See also Ibn Ezra on Devarim 30:19 (his second pirush on that pasuk)!]

One could suggest that this may be one the primary messages of the Torah's opening story of Creation - that the apparent 'duality' of "shamayim v'aretz" is indeed the act of one God. Hence, the only aspect of Creation that could not be defined a 'good' was the creation of the "rakiya" which divides them. Later on, it will become man's challenge to find the connection between "shamayim v'aretz"!

#### **PEREK BET - MAN IN GAN EDEN**

Perek Bet presents the story of creation from a totally different perspective. Although it opens with a pasuk that connects these two stories (2:4), it continues by describing man in an environment that is totally different than that of Perek Aleph. Note how man is the focal point of the entire creation process in Perek Bet, as almost every act taken by God is for the sake of man:

- \* No vegetation can grow before man is created (2:5)
- \* God plants a special garden for man to live in (2:8)
- \* God 'employs' man to 'work in his garden' (2:15)

\* God creates the animals in an attempt to find him a companion (2:19/ compare with 2:7!)

\* God creates a wife for man (2:21-23)

In contrast to Perek Aleph, where man's job is to be dominant over God's creation, in Perek Bet man must be obedient and work for God, taking care of the Garden:

"And God took man and placed him in Gan Eden - L'OVDAAH u'ISHOMRAH - to work in it and guard it." (2:15)

Most significantly, in PEREK BET man enters into a relationship with God that contains REWARD and PUNISHMENT, i.e. he is now responsible for his actions. For the first time in Chumash, we find that God COMMANDS man:

"And Hashem Elokim commanded man saying: From all the trees of the Garden YOU MAY EAT, but from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad YOU MAY NOT EAT, for on the day you eat from it YOU WILL SURELY DIE..." (2:16-17)

This special relationship between man and God in Gan Eden, is paradigmatic of other relationships between man and God found later on in Chumash (e.g. in the Mishkan).

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

Should man obey God, he can remain in the Garden, enjoying a close relationship with God. However, should he disobey, he is to die. In the next chapter, this 'death sentence' is translated into man's banishment from Gan Eden. In biblical terms, becoming distanced from God is tantamount to death. [See Devarim 30:15-20.]

In the Gan Eden environment, man is confronted with a conflict between his "taava" (desire) and his obligation to obey God. The "nachash" [serpent], recognizing this weakness, challenges man to question the very existence of this Divine relationship (3:1-4). When man succumbs to his desires and disobeys God, he is banished from the Garden.

Whether or not man can return to this ideal environment will later emerge as an important biblical theme.

#### **A DUAL EXISTENCE**

From PEREK ALEPH, we learn that God is indeed the Creator of nature, yet that recognition does not necessarily imply that man can develop a personal relationship with Him. The environment detailed in PEREK BET, although described in physical terms, is of a more spiritual nature - for God has created everything specifically for man. However, in return he must obey God in order to enjoy this special relationship. In this environment, the fate of man is a direct function of his deeds.

So which story of Creation is 'correct', PEREK ALEPH or PEREK BET? As you probably have guessed - both, for in daily life man finds himself involved in both a physical and spiritual environment.

Man definitely exists in a physical world in which he must confront nature and find his purpose within its framework (PEREK ALEPH). There, he must struggle with nature in order to survive; yet he must realize that God Himself is the master over all of these Creations. However, at the same time, man also exists in a spiritual environment that allows him to develop a relationship with his Creator (PEREK BET). In it, he can find spiritual life by following God's commandments while striving towards perfection. Should he not recognize the existence of this potential, he defaults to 'spiritual death' - man's greatest punishment.

Why does the Torah begin with this 'double' story of Creation? We need only to quote the Ramban (in response to this question, which is raised by the first Rashi of Chumash):

"There is a great need to begin the Torah with the story of Creation, for it is the "shoshon ha'emunah", the very root of our belief in God."

Understanding man's potential to develop a relationship with God on the spiritual level, while recognizing the purpose of his placement in a physical world as well, should be the first topic of Sefer Breishit, for it will emerge as a primary theme of the entire Torah.

shabbat shalom,  
menachem