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The Art of Listening

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

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

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

Maimonides understood this. That is why he turned to this episode at almost the very beginning of *The Guide for the Perplexed* (Book 1, Chapter 2). His answer though, is perplexing. Before eating the fruit, he says, the first humans knew the difference between truth and falsehood. What they acquired by eating the fruit was knowledge of "things generally accepted." But what does Maimonides mean by "things generally accepted." It is generally accepted that murder is evil, and honesty good. Does Maimonides mean that morality is mere convention? Surely not. What he means is that after eating the fruit, the man and woman were embarrassed that they were naked, and that is a mere matter of social convention because not everyone is embarrassed by nakedness. But how can we equate being embarrassed that you are naked with "knowledge of good and evil"? It does not seem to be that sort of thing at all. Conventions of dress have more to do with aesthetics than ethics.

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

After the attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Americans knew they were about to enter a war against a nation, Japan, whose culture they did not

understand. So they commissioned one of the great anthropologists of the twentieth century, Ruth Benedict, to explain the Japanese to them, which she did. After the war, she published her ideas in a book, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. One of her central insights was the difference between shame cultures and guilt cultures. In shame cultures the highest value is honour. In guilt cultures it is righteousness. Shame is feeling bad that we have failed to live up to the expectations others have of us. Guilt is what we feel when we fail to live up to what our own conscience demands of us. Shame is other-directed. Guilt is inner-directed.

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

With this contrast in mind we can now understand the story of the first sin. It is all about appearances, shame, vision and the eye. The serpent says to the woman: "God knows that on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." That is, in fact, what happens: "The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked." It was appearance of the tree that the Torah emphasises: "The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and desirable to the eyes, and that the tree was attractive as a means to gain intelligence." The key emotion in the story is shame. Before eating the fruit the couple were "naked, but unashamed." After eating it they feel shame and seek to hide. Every element of the story – the fruit, the tree, the nakedness, the shame – has the visual element typical of a shame culture.

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

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

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

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

If Jews had followed the majority, they would have disappeared long ago. In the biblical age they were the only monotheists in a pagan world. For most of the post-biblical age they lived in societies in which they and their faith were shared by only a tiny minority of the population. Judaism is a living protest against the herd instinct. Ours is the dissenting voice in the conversation of humankind. Hence the ethic of Judaism is not a matter of appearances, of honour and shame. It is a matter of hearing and heeding the voice of God in the depths of the soul.

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

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

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

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

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

From: Shulman@milah.net

[From Shmini Atzeres]

A TIME OF MOURNING AND DANCING

Rabbi Moshe Shulman

Young Israel of St. Louis

Shmini Atzeret / Simchat Torah 5776

This year we come into שמחת תורה / שמחה תורה with heavy hearts, and deep pain.

This year we enter שמחת תורה with the question of how to dance and feel the joy of שמחתנו, in a week that has seen 3 separate terrorist attacks that have taken the lives of 4 precious souls of our people, wounded several others!

Rabbi Eitam Henkin, 31, and his wife **Na'ama**, 30, parents of four, Rabbi Henkin - a Torah scholar, an historian, author, thinker and musician, Na’ama – a graphic artist who used her talents to reflect Jewish life in art and beauty, killed in a drive-by shooting while their children, ages 9 and under, witnessed the attack!

Rabbi Aharon Bennett, 22, of Beitar Illit and **Rabbi Nehemia Lavi**, 41, of Jerusalem who were stabbed to death near Lion’s Gate, in the Old City, מוצאי שבת, Rabbi Levi, a Ram in Ateret Kohani, killed when he attempted to assist and defend Aharon Bennet from the attacker!

Beautiful Jewish souls, going to the Kotel to daven, or driving with their children, scholars and artists, children of people we know, have a relationship with, have hosted in this shul as scholars and guests. Students of ours have studied at their Yeshiva.

There is a time to mourn and a time to dance. עת ספוד ועת רקוד!

Yet, when Kohelet lists all of the various contrasts, עת ללדת ועת למות עת לטעם, עת להרוג ועת לרפוא עת לקרוץ ועת לבנות, they all begin with a “to” – a time **to** ‘give birth’, a time **to die**, a time **to plant**, a time **to uproot**...

(ב) עת ללדת ועת למות עת לטעם עת לעקור נטוע:

(ג) עת להרוג ועת לרפוא עת לקרוץ ועת לבנות:

One exception: **עת ספוד ועת רקוד**. A time of eulogy, a time of dancing....

הרב אברהם, written by the grandson of Rav Shlomo Kluger, ספר אמרי צדיקים, יונה איטינגא, as a קובץ of divrei Torah, quoting R. Eliyahu of זידיטשוב, suggests the following (p. 16)

The other contrasts in Kohelet are all describing things that one must choose between - one has to do one **or** the other. You can’t plant something and uproot it at the same time. A time to be born is fundamentally opposed to a time to die.

But when it comes to the **death of righteous individuals, their death is a time to eulogize them, while at the same time realize that in the Heavens, righteous souls are greeting with joy and dancing of the מלאכים, welcoming this great person.**

While this is a beautiful and comforting note, I’d like to offer an additional nuance to this thought, as I considered this Simchat Torah in particular.

Yizkor is supposed to be about recalling the memory of our parents. Unfortunately, as many in our own community so painfully and personally know, sometimes it is also about recalling the memory of children.

For these bereaved families, the Henkins, Lavi’s and Bennets, they too will recite Yizkor – for their children, even before they have a chance to sit shiva for them!

And in Israel – today is also שמחת תורה, which means that when Israelis recite Yizkor, with tears in their eyes and deep pain in their hearts, they **are also dancing with the Sifrei Torah!!**

How?

In a message to Nishmat students and parents from Rabbanit Henkin, sent before the learning of Hoshna Rabbah, Rabbanit Henkin made a special request of her students:

She asked us to celebrate with joy on Simchat Torah. To hold the Torah tight and close to our hearts, to kiss it and raise it high; to dance with the joy of Torah. For now, more than ever, may we merit that the light of Torah shine forth on us, and all Yisrael.

עת ספוד ועת רקוד!! A time of mourning, a time of dancing....

We do both! We mourn terrible loss; we feel pain; AND we DANCE – because we celebrate the **tenacity, strength, spirit, faith, joy, and hope** of Torah, and our people.

But we do more than just dance with the Sifrei Torah.

LIVING SIFREI TORAH

רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר, העומד על המת בשעת יציאת נשמה - חייב לקרוע. למה זה דומה - לספר תורה שנשרף, שחייב לקרוע! (גמ' מועד קטן כה.).

איבעיא להו: מהו לעמוד מפני ספר תורה? ר' חלקיה בר' סימון ור' אלעזר אמרי: קל וחומר, מפני לומדיה עומדים, מפניה לא כל שכן. (גמ' קידושין לג.)

- We dance with our Rabbis, and teachers
- We dance with our parents and grandparents;
- We dance with our children.

- We dance with all the generations of Torah – those who lived it, those who taught, it, those who transmitted it - because we are celebrating the **love and hope that Torah and Jewish life instills in our hearts.**

And when we feel pain – we embrace G-d!

When we feel pain – we dance and hug the Sefer Torah even more tightly, because we need to feel G-d's embrace!

עת ספור ועת רקוד

I WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU 2 STORIES

STORY 1:

A number of years ago, the singer and song-writer Abie Rotenberg (Aish, and Journeys) met a Rabbi Leo Goldman from Detroit, on a plane from Chicago. They struck up a conversation, and Rabbi Goldman told him his 'story'. Abie was so moved by it, that it inspired him to re-tell it - in a song.

Rabbi Goldman had been a yeshiva student, in Europe, who received his semicha at 19. He was living in the Ukraine, which was constantly under contention between the Poles and the Russians. When the war broke out, he was conscripted into the Russian army as an artillery officer.

After the war, he returned with his wife to Lithuania to see if any relatives had survived. They had both lost their families. Searching for them, they ended up in Vilna, and the rest is in the lyrics.

*I remember liberation, joy and fear both intertwined
Where to go and what to do, and how to leave the pain behind?
My heart said 'go to vilna', dare I pray yet once again
For the chance to find a loved one, or perhaps a childhood friend?*

*It took many months to get there, from the late spring to the fall
And as I, many others, close to four hundred in all
And slowly there was healing, darkened souls now mixed with light
When someone proudly cried out, 'simchas Torah is tonight!'*

*We ran as one towards the shul, our spirits in a trance
And we tore apart the barricade, in defiance we would dance
But the scene before our eyes shook us to the core
Scraps of siddur, bullet holes, bloodstains on the floor
Turning to the eastern wall, we looked on in despair
There'd be no scrolls to dance with, the holy ark was bare
Then we heard two children crying, a boy and girl whom no one knew
And we realized that no children were among us but those two*

*We danced round and round in circles as if the world had done no wrong
From evening until morning, filling up the shul with song
Though we had no sifrei Torah to gather in our arms
In their place we held those children, the Jewish people would live on*

*We danced round and round in circles as if the world had done no wrong
From evening until morning, filling up the shul with song
Though we had no sifrei Torah to clutch and hold up high
In their place we held those children, am yisrael chai"*

STORY 2:

In 2003, Abe Foxman, the longtime National Director of the Anti-Defamation League, wrote a book called "Never Again? The Threat of the New Anti-Semitism." In it, he recounts his own personal story, the experience of being hidden by a Catholic nanny for four years during the Holocaust, separated from his parents. This Catholic nanny saved Foxman's life, but she also taught him to spit on the ground when a Jew walked by.

In the middle of 1945, when Foxman was 5 years old, he was reunited with his parents who had miraculously survived. His father didn't know what to do with his little boy who now had negative feelings for Judaism. He waited four months to take him to Shul until it would be the holiday of Simchas Torah since it is associated with fun and joy.

Foxman remembers walking to Shul that evening and when passing a Church making the sign of the cross on himself, as he had been taught to do by the nanny.

There, on Simchat Torah night, in a shul in Vilna, he met a Soviet soldier, who had lost his parents to the Nazis. "Are you Jewish?" the Soviet soldier asked the boy. When he nodded yes, the soldier said, "I have traveled thousands of miles without seeing a Jewish child." Then he stooped down, lifted the boy onto his shoulders, held up aloft like a flag, and danced around the room with him.

He describes that day as "a memory, a bittersweet memory." The soldier -- a total stranger to him -- had embraced him in public, in a synagogue. He had carried him like a trophy around the synagogue. "That was for me the first time anyone took pride in me," says Foxman, who as "a hidden child didn't know who or what I was. I came home and told my father that I wanted to be Jewish. It was the beginning of my life as a Jewish person." A life, I might add, devoted to the Jewish people and the fighting of anti-Semitism and bigotry.

In 2007, Foxman told his story at Yad Vashem. A researcher there was moved, and began a quest for the dancing man in uniform Foxman had described. Her research led her to - Rabbi Leo Goldman of Detroit - who was indeed that Soviet soldier, the Man from Vilna!

In 2010, a year before Rabbi Goldman passed away, the two men were reunited, and prayed together!

[See full story here

www.detroitnews.com/article/20100409/OPINION03/4090372]

Every Jew is a living breathing Sefer Torah!

When we dance with the Sifrei Torah, we also dance with our children, and our grandparents, our teachers, and our ancestors. We dance with the souls of every Jew who sacrificed their lives for Jewish life today!

We say Yizkor and pledge tzedaka for the souls of our loved ones, and for those of **Aharon Bennett, Rabbi Nehemia Lavi, Rav Eitam & Naama Henkin**, and all those who have sacrificed their lives because they dared live Jewish lives in their Jewish land!

And we dance – **עת ספור ועת רקוד**.

from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Thu, Oct 8, 2015 at 6:05 PM subject: Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Bereishis

The Ramban, on the expression "It is not good for man to be alone" [Bereshis 2:18], raises a basic question. Every species brought into the world throughout the Six Days of Creation was given the ability to procreate. Apparently, the only exception to that rule was man. Adam was created alone, without a partner. The Ramban raises the question – Does this mean that man was born without the ability to have offspring? He rejects this possibility.

The Ramban explains that man did have the ability to procreate -- in accordance with the opinion that man was created as a single being that had both male and female components (du-partzufim) -- which would allow self-fertilization and the ability to reproduce. It was concerning this dual-gender Original Man that the Almighty proclaimed "It is not good for man to be alone, I will make a help mate, opposite him."

The Almighty concluded that it was not good for man to be a free standing totally self-sufficient creature who was capable of doing everything – including having children – on his own. The question is, why not? Wouldn't we all be better off if we did not need to deal with somebody else?

Everybody longs for independence. Here we find Hashem stating that independence is not the ideal situation. Man is better off needing and having a help mate, opposite him.

The answer to this question is that such independence on the part of man would defeat the whole purpose of Creation. The tachlis [ultimate purpose] of creation is the idea that Olam Chessed Yibaneh [Tehillim 89:3] (the

world shall be built through kindness). Life in this world is really all about doing kindness for the next person. My existence is futile if I have no one to do kindness for and there is no one who can help me by doing kindness for me.

It is written in the name of Rabbi Chaim Volozhin "This is the essence of man. He is not created for himself, but to do for others all that he is capable of doing for them." These are very definitive and strong words. What this in effect says is that most people enter marriage with a misconception -- a terrible misconception -- which is the cause of so much difficulty in marriage. In truth, the purpose of marriage is to give rather than to get.

The sooner a person understands and realizes this, the more successful his marriage will be. Most people, unfortunately, enter marriage thinking "What am I going to get out of this marriage?" For different people in different societies, "getting something" out of marriage means different things. For a totally secular and non-spiritual person, there may be one set of things he or she wants to get. It may involve physical pleasure. It may involve having someone to take care of him or her. It may involve financial gain. This is why wealthy people are more attractive mates. The person who marries wealth thinks, "now I am set for the rest of my life."

Even in our "pristine society" where a person gets married and he hopes to sit and learn for a few years, hopefully, he has expectations of how he will be able to survive financially: "My wife is going to support me" or "my in-laws are going to support me" or "my parents are going to support me". This is a noble thing on the part of the wife or the in-laws or the parents. But this is also going into marriage thinking "What am I going to get out of the marriage?"

This is a fundamental flaw. Marriage is about giving. We as human beings come into this world as the most self-centered creatures ever created. Babies think about one thing and one thing only -- their own comfort. Whether they are hungry or dirty or they need to burp. Whatever it is, they are only interested in themselves.

One who deals with babies and realizes how much care they need recognizes that they have no idea whatsoever that there is someone else in the world besides themselves. This is what a baby is.

The purpose of life is to go from being a taker to being a giver. In twenty five words or less, this is what the tachlis of life is all about! Every person who was ever born must learn this lesson. Morally, man must set for himself the goal: "I want to be a giver rather than a taker."

Ironically, this morning I received an e-mail from someone who once heard me speak about the importance of giving rather than taking. He wrote as follows:

I recently listened to your CD on marriage and wished I could have heard it before I got married in 1973. It might have saved me from divorce. I made a copy of the CD -- with permission -- and sent it to my daughter. My daughter is married to a lieutenant in the Marine Corps, so she sent it to him where he was stationed, overseas. He just returned home, Baruch Hashem, and I spoke to him yesterday. Besides thanking me for the inspiration he received from hearing this CD, he related to me the following story:

One of his Marines was a young man of about 20, already married fresh out of high school with a young child. He told my son-in-law that he was unhappy being married and that he was thinking of 'fooling around' and ending the marriage. Eric (my son-in-law) told him to listen to the CD first. [This is for a Marine Corporal in Iraq who is not Jewish.] A few days later the young Marine came and told me "I want to thank you sir -- you have given me a whole new perspective on the idea of marriage. I am going to go back to my wife and be as ideal a husband as I can be." So, on behalf of myself and my children and on behalf of some non-Jewish Marine in Iraq and his wife and young child, thank you for the inspiration.

I am not telling you this so you can say "Gee, what a great teacher we have." But think about it. What does a Marine candidate straight out of high school think about marriage? Apparently no one ever told him that the purpose of marriage is to give rather than to get. The purpose is to become a

better human being by accustoming yourself to giving. This is something that anyone can understand.

This is why "It is not good for man to be alone." When one is "alone" he only thinks about himself. The purpose of marriage is to become a giver, which, as Chaim Volozhiner writes, is the essence of man.

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion.

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Parsha Potpourri

Speech Or Food?

by Rabbi Ozer Alport

Bereishit(Genesis 1:1-6:8) Speech Or Food? A man who was stricken with cancer was presented by his doctor with a painful and heart-wrenching decision. In order to treat his illness, the doctor would need to perform surgery, and in order to access the affected region, he would need to cut through either the man's esophagus or his vocal cords. As a result, the man would permanently lose either the ability to eat (requiring a feeding tube) or the ability to speak. From a medical perspective, the two options were equal, so the doctor gave the man the choice of how the surgery should be performed. Although most people would approach this tragic decision by weighing which of the two faculties is more important to them, this patient was an observant Jew who understood that his decision would have important ramifications for his ability to perform mitzvot. If he gave up his ability to eat naturally, he would no longer be able to perform the biblical commands of eating matzah on Passover, a meal prior to Yom Kippur, and eating in the sukkah. On the other hand, if he lost his faculty of speech, he would be unable to say the Shema and the Grace After Meals. Unsure of the proper course of action, he approached a rabbi for guidance. However, rather than focus on weighing the mitzvot to be preserved and lost, the rabbi surprised the man by citing the translation of Onkeles (first century C.E.) on the verse in Genesis 2:7. The Torah records that God formed man from the dust of the ground and blew into him the soul of life, at which point man became a living being. Onkeles renders the phrase "and man became a living being" as a reference to the fact that he acquired the ability to speak. In other words, as advanced as man may be, virtually everything can be duplicated by other living creatures. Onkeles is teaching us that what makes man uniquely human and elevated above all other species is the ability to speak. In light of this insight into the special status of the power of speech, the rabbi advised the man to preserve his vocal cords and forego the ability to eat naturally. Rabbi Yitzhak Zilberstein of Bnei Brak adds that even according to the man's initial approach of weighing the mitzvot involved, it is clear that the mitzvot which required the power of speech are performed much more regularly than those which are associated with the ability to eat and would therefore take precedence. * * * THE TENTH UTTERANCE The Mishnah (Avot 5:1) teaches that God created the world with 10 utterances. However, a count of them yields only nine. What was the tenth utterance? The Vilna Gaon (Peninim MiShulchan HaGra) suggests that the tenth utterance was Genesis 1:29-30, where God said, "Behold, I have given to you (Adam) all herbage-yielding seed that is on the surface of the entire earth, and every tree that has seed-yielding fruit; it shall be yours for food. And to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the sky, and to everything that moves on the earth within which there is a living soul, every green herb is for food," and so it

was. The Gaon explains that although God had previously created plants and fruits, they didn't yet possess the capacity to nourish those who consume them, and it was this ability that God gave through this utterance. Rabbi Aharon Kotler adds that this explains why this statement ends with the words "Vayehi chen" - and it was so - which is found after the other nine utterances of Creation. This explanation also sheds light on the verse (Deut. 8:3) which teaches that man does not live by bread alone, but rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of God - which can now be read as saying that bread itself doesn't inherently possess the capacity to sustain man, but is only able to do so after God's utterance. * * * THE JOY OF A NEW GARMENT After Adam and Chava ate from the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge, their eyes were opened and they realized that they were naked (Genesis 3:7). After God meted out their punishments and curses for eating from the forbidden fruit, He made garments of leather for them to wear. Why did God specifically make them out of leather? The Rogatchover Gaon answers based on the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 223:3) that a person who buys or acquires a valuable new garment must say the She'hecheyanu blessing thanking God for his new possession. As such, Adam and Chava would be obligated to recite this blessing upon receiving from God the new garments that He made for them. However, the law is that this blessing must be recited immediately upon acquiring the new item, while the joy that it brings to its receiver is still fresh and at its maximum. As such, God had a dilemma, as at the moment that He gave Adam and Chava their new garments, they would be required to make a blessing, yet they were naked and a naked person is forbidden to say blessings. However, the prevalent custom (Orach Chaim 223:6) is not to say this blessing on garments made from animals. Therefore, God specifically made the clothing out of leather so that the naked Adam and Chava would be exempt from reciting the blessing.

from: Chaim Leibtag <cleibtag@gmail.com>
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Divrei Torah on Jerusalem
by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein
Parashat Bereshit / 5776
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Yerushalayim as the Goal of Creation

On the third day of creation, Hashem created dry land by taking the water that filled the globe and limiting it to the bodies of water. But what contained the water in the demarcated oceans, lakes and rivers if the quantity of the water would allow it to cover the whole world? The midrash comments that this is an example of "hichzik mu'at et ha-merubeh" - where a measured location miraculously contained more than the dimensions of the location should normally allow.

The midrash continues that an identical phenomenon will occur in the end of times: And in the Future to Come, too, this phenomenon will occur, as it is stated (Yirmiyahu 3:17): "At that time people will call Yerushalayim 'The Throne of Hashem' and all the nations will be gathered to her in the Name of Hashem - to Yerushalayim." Bereishit Rabbah 5:7

Yirmiyahu prophecies that in future times all of the nations will gather together in Yerushalayim for the sake of Hashem. The spatially small Yerushalayim will be able to encompass the masses that will stream into it from around the world, similar to the oceans containing more water than is physically possible. This connection is underscored by the word-choice in both places. The word Yirmiyahu uses for "gathering" - "ve-nikvu" - is the same root of Hashem's command to the primordial water - "yikavu ha-mayim."

The linking of the six days of creation to the eschatological Yerushalayim highlights the significance of the latter. Perhaps, the midrash's association points to the fact that the very purpose of the creation of dry land and human

civilization which is built on it, is to arrive at the point in history when all of the nations will recognize Hashem in Yerushalayim

As the Ramban notes in his commentary to the Torah,² Hashem's purpose in creating the world is:

For the ultimate objective of all the commandments is that we should believe in our God and acknowledge to Him that He created us. And that is in fact the ultimate objective of the Creation itself...

The world was created for mankind to recognize, thank and praise its creator. Therefore, the Ramban attributes a crucial role to communal prayer in a shul setting: And the purpose of raising one's voice in the prayers, and the purpose of the synagogues and the merit of communal prayer is this: that people should have a place where they can gather and acknowledge to God that He created them and caused them to be, and where they can publicize this and declare before Him, "We are Your creations!" People gathering together to pray and recognize their creator is one of the highest fulfillments of the world's purpose.

While in our current fallen reality a shul is the ideal location for this mass proclamation, the ultimate place for it is Yerushalayim. In the end of times all of the nations will gather in Yerushalayim, Hashem's terrestrial capital, and proclaim His kingship. This will complete the story of creation by being the fulfillment of Hashem's initial goal.

May we soon witness all the nations proclaiming their allegiance to the one true God in Yerushalayim instead of the opposite which we currently endure.

From: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org date: Thu, Oct 8, 2015 at 5:11 PM

Parshat Bereishit — Reflections on the Divine Image

Excerpted from **Rabbi Norman Lamm's Derashot Ledorot: A Commentary for the Ages** — Genesis

Parashat Bereshit teaches us one of the most fundamental concepts of our faith. It is something we speak of often, and that is perhaps why we frequently fail to appreciate its depth and the magnitude of its influence. The concept of man's creation betzelem Elohim, in the image of God, is one of the most sublime ideas that man possesses, and is decisive in the Jewish concept of man.

What does it mean when we say that man was created in the image of God? Varying interpretations have been offered, each reflecting the general ideological orientation of the interpreter.

The philosophers of Judaism, the fathers of our rationalist tradition, maintain that the image of God is expressed, in man, by his intellect. Thus, Sa'adia Gaon and Maimonides maintain that sekhel, reason, which separates man from animal, is the element of uniqueness that is in essence a divine quality. The intellectual function is thus what characterizes man as tzelem Elohim.

However, the ethical tradition of Judaism does not agree with that interpretation. Thus, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, in his Mesilat Yesharim, does not accept reason as the essence of the divine image. A man can, by exercise of his intellect, know what is good - but fail to act upon it. Also, the restriction of tzelem Elohim to reason means that only geniuses can truly qualify as being created in the image of God. Hence, Luzzatto offers an alternative and perhaps more profound definition. The tzelem Elohim in which man was created is that of ratzon - the freedom of will. The fact that man has a choice - between good and evil, between right and wrong, between obedience and disobedience of God - is what expresses the image of God in which he was born. An animal has no freedom to act; a man does. That ethical freedom makes man unique in the creation.

But how does the freedom of the human will express itself? A man does not assert his freedom by merely saying "yes" to all that is presented to him. Each of us finds himself born into a society which is far from perfect. We are all born with a set of animal drives, instincts, and intuitions. If we merely nod our heads in assent to all those forces which seem more powerful than us, then we are merely being passive, plastic, and devoid of personality. We

are then not being free, and we are not executing our divine right of choice. Freedom, the image of God, is expressed in the word “no.” When we negate that which is indecent, evil, ungodly; when we have the courage, the power, and the might to rise and announce with resolve that we shall not submit to the pressures to conform to that which is cheap, that which is evil, that which is indecent and immoral – then we are being free men and responding to the inner divine image in which we are created.

The late Rabbi Aaron Levine, the renowned Reszher Rav, interpreted, in this manner, the famous verse from Ecclesiastes (3:19) which we recite every morning as part of our preliminary prayers. Solomon tells us, “Umotar ha’adam min habehema ayin,” which is usually translated as, “And the preeminence of man over beast is naught.” Rabbi Levine, however, prefers to give the verse an interpretation other than the pessimistic, gloomy apparent meaning. He says: “And the preeminence of man over beast is – ayin, ‘no.’” What is it that gives man his distinction? What is it that makes man different from the rest of creation, superior to the rest of the natural world? It is his capacity to say ayin, his capacity to face the world and announce that he will not submit to it, that he will accept the challenge and respond “no”. An animal has no choice – no freedom – and therefore must say “yes” to his drives, to the world in which he lives. But a human being can say “no” to that which is unseemly and beneath his dignity. And when he says “no” to all that is ungodly, he is being Godly. He is showing that he was created in the image of God.

Adam and Eve had to learn this lesson, and their descendants forever after must learn from their failure. We are nowhere told in the Torah that the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was in any way different from the fruit of the other trees in the Garden of Eden. Yet when she was tempted by the serpent, Eve looked at the fruit, and in her mind’s eye its attractiveness grew out of all proportion to reality. It looked more luscious, it looked more juicy, it looked more appetizing. She even imagined that this was some kind of “intelligence food.” Her instinct bade her to do that which was in violation of the divine command. But counter to this she had the capacity, as a free agent created in God’s image, to say ayin, to say “no” to her instinct and her temptation. But she forfeited her opportunity. The first human couple did not know how to say “no.” This was the beginning of their downfall.

Abraham was a great Jew – the first Jew. Yet in our tradition he is not famous so much for saying “yes” as he is for saying “no.” Abraham was the great iconoclast. It was he who said “no” to the idolatries of his day, who said “no” to his father’s paganism, who was the one man pitted against the entire world, shouting “no!” to all the obscenities of his contemporary civilization.

Moses was a great teacher. He gave us 613 commandments. When you investigate the commandments, you find that only 248 are positive – commanding us what to do. But 365 of them are negative – they say “no” to our wills and our wishes. For when we learn to say “no,” we are being free men and women under God. The famous Ten Commandments have only three positive laws; the other seven are negative. Indeed, it is only through these negatives that we can live and survive and thrive at all. Without “You shall not murder,” there can be no society. Without “You shall not steal,” there can be no normal conduct of commerce and business. Without “You shall not commit adultery,” there can be no normal family life. Without “You shall not covet,” the human personality must degenerate and man becomes nothing more than an animal, a beast.

“And the preeminence of man over beast is ayin” – it is this which gives man greater dignity and superiority over the animal – his power to say “no.” It is this freedom of the human personality taught by our Jewish tradition that we Jews must reassert once again in our own day.

The author Herman Wouk told me some time ago that a number of years earlier he was boarding a ship to go on a trip overseas. Several hours after he boarded, a cabin boy brought him a note from the apostate Jewish author Shalom Asch, asking Wouk to come to his cabin. There Asch complained to him and said, “I don’t understand you, Mr. Wouk. You are a young man –

yet you are observant and Orthodox. When my generation of writers was young, we were rebels, we were dissenters. We rejected tradition, we rejected authority, we rejected the opinions of the past. What happened to you? Why do you conform so blandly?” Wouk gave the older man an answer that I believe is very important for all of us to know. He answered, “You are making a terrible mistake, Mr. Asch. You seem to forget that the world we live in is not a paradise of Jewishness. You seem to forget that the world we occupy has become corrupted, assimilated, emptied of all Jewish content. In a world of this sort, one does not have to be a rebel at all in order to ignore the high standards of Judaism. If you violate the Sabbath, if you eat like a pagan, if you submit to the cheap standards of morality of the society in which we live, then you are being a conformist; you are merely allowing your own animal instincts to get the better of you. Today, if I and some of my contemporaries are observing the Jewish tradition, then it is because we are the dissenters, the nein-sagers. For we are the ones who say ‘no’ to the desecration of the Sabbath, ‘no’ to the creeping assimilation that ridicules all of Judaism and threatens its very life, ‘no’ to all the forces that seek to degrade our people and diminish the uniqueness of Israel that is its dignity and its preeminence. You are the conformist.”

This is the kind of force, the kind of courage, the kind of conviction that has sustained us throughout the ages. It is that which has given us the power to say “no” to the threats of Haman, the cruelties of Chmielnicki, the genocide of Hitler, as well as the sugarcoated missionizing of more enlightened enemies of Judaism. We demonstrated the image of God when we exercised our freedom and said “no” to all this.

I am not suggesting that we ought to be destructively negative. It is, rather, that when we fully exercise our critical functions and faculties, then the good will come to the fore of itself. It is because I have confidence in the innate powers of the good that I suggest we concentrate on denying evil. “Depart from evil and do good” (Psalms 34:15). If you put all your energies into negating evil, then good will be done of its own accord.

It is this power to say “no” that we must exercise in our relations with our fellow Jews in the State of Israel. For, in addition to all our constructive efforts on behalf of the upbuilding of the land, we must also be able to call a halt to the creeping paganism that plagues it.

When we find that in our own Orthodox community in Israel certain things are done which serve only to desecrate the name of God, we must not be shy. We must rise and as one say “no” to all those forces which would compromise the sanctity of the Torah and the sanctity of the Holy Land.

In our own American Jewish community, we must, here too, be the critics. And when, to mention just a seemingly trivial matter, certain artists and entertainers who are Jewish, and who rely upon the community as such for acceptance of what they have to offer, elect to entertain on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, we must say “no.” We must realize that it is no longer the domain of one’s own conscience, when the matter is a public demonstration of contempt for American Jewry. “And the preeminence of man over beast is ayin” – we must not sheepishly go along with everything that “famous people” are willing to tell us. We must be men, we must be human beings, we must use the freedom that God gave us when He created us in His image, and learn when to say “no.”

I conclude with the statement by one of the greatest teachers of Judaism, a man who indeed showed, in his life, that he knew the value of “no.” It was Rabbi Akiba, the man who was able to stand up to the wrath and the might of the whole Roman Empire and say “no” to tyranny and to despotism, who taught us, “Beloved is man that he was created in the image of God” (Avot 3:18). Beloved indeed, and precious and unique and irreplaceable is man when he has the freedom of will that is granted to him by his Creator. And furthermore, “Hiba yeteira noda’at lo shenivra betzelem” – a special love was given to man by God, it is a special gift when man not only has that freedom but when he knows that he has that freedom – and therefore uses it to combat evil and to allow the great, constructive forces of good, innate in himself, to come to the fore so as to make this a better world for all mankind.

From: **Rabbi Shlomo Riskin** <ohrtrahstone@otsny.org> date: Thu, Oct 8, 2015 at 4:48 AM subject: Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Bereishit 5776

Efrat, Israel - The beginning of our communal Torah readings once again with the Book of Genesis on the first Shabbat following the intensive festival period from Rosh Hashanah through to Shmini Atzeret-Simhat Torah is much more than a calendrical accident; the first chapters of Genesis serve as a resounding confirmation of the true nature of the human being on earth and what it is that God expects of him.

In his groundbreaking work *Family Redeemed*, my teacher and mentor Rav J.B. Soloveitchik typologically defines two aspects of the human being emanating from each of the first two chapters of Genesis. The first chapter is a majestic description of the Creation of the universe in six days (or epochs), with the human being emerging as an integral aspect of an evolutionary process of creation; the human may be the highest expression of this process, emerging as he does towards the conclusion of the sixth day after the earth has "brought forth every kind of living creature: cattle, reptiles and wild beasts of every kind" (Gen. 1:24), but he is and remains part and parcel of creature-hood nevertheless.

This becomes patently clear when the Almighty declares, "Let us make the human being in our image and as our likeness" (Gen.1:26), and Nahmanides (Spain, 12th century) interprets that God was addressing the animals and beasts: The human being will be subject to the same physical strengths and limitations, to the same cycle of birth, development, desiccation and death, to the same requirements of nutrition, procreation and elimination of waste, which characterizes the animal world formed together with him on that primordial sixth day.

Rav Soloveitchik calls this aspect of the human being *Natural Man*; I would suggest calling him *Bestial Man*. Herein lies the source for viewing the human being as no more than a complex animal, devoid of true freedom of choice to truly change himself or change the world; bestial man is naturally programmed, the world is based on a "survival of the fittest" and "to the victor belongs the spoils" mentality. War is an ideal because it tests physical prowess and courageous bravery, and the weak and feeble are there to be enslaved or snuffed out.

Morality is merely the hobgoblin of little minds and even weaker bodies, vainly attempting to curb the appetites of the truly powerful. This mind-set paves the way for totalitarian states, Aryan supremacy, Stalinist Soviet subjugation and the power of jihad to dominate the world. Might makes right. But this too must pass, for even the most powerful human being is, after all, only physical and mortal, a broken potsherd, a withering flower, a passing dream, so that a life becomes "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." ("Macbeth" by Shakespeare) Chapter 2, however, tells a very different story of the genesis of man, of a world created not only by a powerful Elohim but rather by a loving Hashem Elohim.

This chapter begins "when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted because there was no human being to till the earth" (Gen. 2:5), and so the loving "Hashem Elohim formed the human being from dust of the earth into whose nostrils He exhaled the soul of life." It is as though the entire physical world is waiting for the human being to activate it, to complete and perfect it, to redeem it; the human being, "the last for which the first was made." ("Rabbi Ben Ezra," a poem by Robert Browning).

And yes, the world is physical and the human being is physical, with all the strengths and the limitations of the physical, but it is an eternal and spiritual God who created the world, and it is an eternal and spiritual God who inspired part of His own spiritual being within the human physical form; and how meaningful are the words of the sacred Zohar and the Ba'al Ha-Tanya, "whoever exhales, exhales from within Himself, from His innermost, essential being" (as it were).

This is the creation of *Celestial Man*.

"The loving Hashem Elohim....placed (the human) in the Garden of Eden (the world at that time) to till it (le'abed, "to develop and perfect it") and to preserve it (le'shomrah, "to take responsibility for it"). Yes, the world is an imperfect creation, filled with darkness as well as light, with evil as well as good (Isa. 45:7) and the human being will engage in a perennial struggle between the bestial and celestial within himself. But the Bible promises that "at the door of life, until the very opening of the grave, sin crouches, its desire energized to conquer [the human], but the human will conquer sin, will overcome evil" (Gen. 4:7).

And so we conclude Yom Kippur with the exultant shout that Hashem is Elohim, the God of Love is the essence and the endgame of the God of Creative Power, that Right will triumph over might and Peace will trump jihad.

And every human being must find within himself the God-given strength to be an emissary towards perfecting this world in the Kingship of the Divine (Aleynu): to recreate himself, to properly direct his/ her children, to make an improvement within his/her community and society. May we not falter on this God-given opportunity to bring us closer to redemption.

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:

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Weekly Parsha Blog:: Rabbi Berel

Bereshith

The Torah at its onset here in the parsha of *Bereshith* describes itself as being "the book of the generations of humankind." Although the literal context of this verse of the Torah is referring to the generations and descendants of the first human being Adam, it has been widely interpreted by Jewish traditional scholars, in its broadest meaning, to refer to all of the generations and the human beings that have inhabited this planet over the many millennia.

Jewish tradition, in adopting this expansive interpretation, means to imply that all of the challenges, greatness, frailties and failures of our common ancestor Adam still exist in all of our societies and personalities. We are all trying somehow to get back into the Garden of Eden and we find the path to enter constantly blocked by fearsome angels.

In fact, if we wish to summarize all of human history it can be done by understanding the inability of humans and their societies to regain entrance into the paradise from which they were driven. In his classic work, *Paradise Lost*, John Milton summarized this theme. This loss of paradise haunts humankind till today.

It is what forces people and governments to search for scapegoats and to victimize others for the fact that we have not yet achieved entry into paradise. It is the source of war and violence, crime and terrorism and also of creativity, invention and the progress of technology. In a very simple metaphor, it describes the struggles of humanity in all ages and circumstances since the dawn of history.

In granting humanity the gifts of free will and action and of collective and personal memory, the Lord, so to speak, allowed human beings to remember that they were once in paradise and to allow them to pursue the goal of returning there once again. We all somehow remember ourselves as once being there. But the enormous frustration of not achieving this goal of returning distorts our lives.

The generations of Adam have always fallen prey to the weaknesses of temptation and immorality and are unable to regain their footing and begin their return trek to paradise. We cannot resist the temptations placed before us by the snake that is always there to entrap us. Every generation thrashes about with new ideas as to how to reach paradise or even, more dangerously, to redefine what paradise really is and what it should look like.

The Soviet Union called itself "the workers' paradise," even though it certainly was much more hell than heaven. All of the new social correctness,

that has so weakened the moral stature of human beings and religion over the past few decades, is only a feeble attempt to redefine paradise. It is another way to avoid the harsh challenge of finding our way back and standing against the fearsome angels who inhabit our personalities and mindsets. This entire preface to the story of Abraham and the beginnings of the Jewish people is meant to teach us that the Lord expects that the Chosen People will provide an example for the rest of humanity and mark the road that truly leads to the paradise of human happiness and serenity.
Shabat shalom

<http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/author/ben-tzion-spitz/>

The Blogs :: Rabbi Ben-Tzion Spitz

Bereshit: Planetary Design

It's a good thing that when God created the rainbow he didn't consult a decorator or he would still be picking colors. - Samuel Levenson
The Torah uses very broad brush strokes to describe the creation of the universe. In just one paragraph we are told about the setting of order within chaos, light within darkness, and life within an existential vacuum. How God went about determining the laws and the infinite details of nature are largely a mystery. Why does gravity work the way it does? Why does water have the magical properties that it does? Why are we at exactly the perfect distance from the sun to maintain comfortable conditions for life? Why are animals born with the instincts that they have? Why does our planet have the form and variety that it possesses?

There is an ancient Kabbalistic belief that the Torah was actually created before the creation of the physical universe (whatever that means). The Sfat Emet on Genesis 1, in his commentary for the year 5634 (1874) expands on this concept and explains that the world was actually created based on the Torah; that the Torah in some fashion was the blueprint for the physical world and therefore, one can find something of the Torah in all of creation. Every aspect of creation will contain secrets and lessons of the Torah, which is God's instruction manual for us.

The more one understands both Torah and creation, the more one can decode the hidden messages God left in His world and in the instruction manual. King Solomon, 3,000 years ago, already noted lessons from the animal kingdom that we can take as values: the hard work of the ant, the cleanliness of the cat and so forth. In our day and age, as we have begun to unlock some of the basic forces and sciences of our world, chemistry, physics, biology, subatomic particles, genetic engineering and so much more, shouldn't we be a bit wiser about understanding God's directions?

May we appreciate the divine creation that is our universe and pay closer attention to its beauty, mystery and lessons.

Shabbat Shalom,
Ben-Tzion

Dedication - To Hope. Hope for our world. We can't let the darkness and the death and the terror bring us down. We need to hope, plan and work for a better day, despite the enemies, obstacles and challenges.

Ben-Tzion Spitz is the Chief Rabbi of Uruguay. He is the author of two books of Biblical Fiction and over 400 articles and stories dealing with biblical themes

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Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Breishit: Cherishing Troubles

One of the more peculiar Talmudic statements concerns a document composed over two millennia ago entitled Megillat Ta'anit. This 'Scroll of

Fasting' lists 35 days in the year when one may not fast due to a joyful event that took place on that day. The majority of these minor holidays commemorate the rescinding of some evil decree against the Jewish people. The most well-known is the holiday of Purim, when the Jews of Persia were saved from Haman's plot to destroy them.

"Our Rabbis taught: Who wrote Megillat Ta'anit? Hananiah ben Hezekiah and his colleagues, who cherished the troubles (tsarot)." (Shabbat 13b)
What an unusual trait for a scholar - "who cherished the troubles"! Who likes troubles? What does this mean?

Rashi explains that they cherished the miraculous rescue from these persecutions; they valued the opportunity to express thanks and gratitude to God. But the literal interpretation of the phrase indicates that these scholars found value in the troubles themselves.

Guarding the Nation

Rav Kook suggests a bold theory, writing that these difficult events in fact play an important and positive role in the survival of Israel.

Counterintuitively, they have a part in the Divine providence which watches over the Jewish people, especially during their long and difficult centuries of dispersion and exile.

How do persecutions protect the people of Israel?

The continued existence of Israel depends on the love and connection that each individual Jew feels for God, for His Torah in our midst, and for the Jewish people in general. This is an innate love, flowing from the soul's natural inclinations, which is substantiated by the intellectual recognition of how fitting is this love for the entire people, with its Torah and special national mission.

When the nation is in exile, however, this innate love may wane. Ties to the Jewish people tend to weaken as individuals find their own path in life. They become fully engaged in their own personal goals and aspirations, without considering the holy ties binding them to God's covenant - a covenant granted to the collective, which reaches the individual through the collective. At such times, additional means are needed to bolster the connection of each individual to the nation.

Protecting the Family Unit

In an earlier age, Divine Providence provided a means to watch over humanity and its moral obligations. After the sin of Adam and Eve, the distinction between right and wrong became less obvious, and commitments to family and community less binding.

The punishments meted out after Adam's sin - "I will greatly increase your anguish and your pregnancy. With anguish you will give birth to children... You will derive food from [the land] with anguish all the days of your life" (Gen. 3:16-17) - these were not arbitrary punishments. They were meant to protect and strengthen the family unit. By increasing the difficulty in bringing children into the world and providing for them, they reinforced the natural love of parents for their children. More invested in their children, fathers and mothers would be more willing to suffer the burdens of raising children until they become independent.

A similar dynamic is at work with the Jewish people. It was critical that the connection to Torah, Jewish faith, and the nation of Israel should not be weakened as a result of dispersion and exile. This is particularly true when we witness many peoples, after losing their national independence and sovereignty, assimilate within great empires and disappear from the annals of history.

What will strengthen the natural love of Israel, so that even its lowliest members will recognize its value, and be willing to undergo the hardships of exile?

This is the function of troubles and persecutions. The challenges met and the dangers confronted for the sake of observing Torah, for the sake of Jewish faith, or merely for the sake of Jewish identity - they lead to an awakening of love and connection in the hearts of the children, throughout the generations. We learn to appreciate the heavy price which the Jewish national soul has

paid for its survival and the survival of its Torah. This very awareness bestows strength and resolve, a sense of connection and allegiance. With this in mind, these sages composed Megillat Ta'anit. They recognized the value that knowledge of these trials and tribulations in our national history would impart for future generations. "They cherished the troubles." (Adapted from Ein Eyah, Shabbat vol. 1 (1:62) on Shabbat 13)
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Eating before Kiddush

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

How can we read parshas Vayechulu in the Torah and not study something germane to the mitzvah of Kiddush!

Question #1: Reuven calls me: I have not been well, and I need to eat something shortly after awaking. On weekdays, I *daven* shortly after I wake up and then eat immediately afterwards, but there is no available *minyan* for me to attend early *Shabbos* morning. What should I do?

Question #2: Ahuva asks: It is difficult for me to wait for *Kiddush* until my husband returns from *shul*. May I eat something before he arrives home?

Question #3: Someone told me that a woman may not eat in the morning before she *davens*, but I remember being taught in *Beis Yaakov* that we may eat once we say the morning *berachos*. Is my memory faulty?

Answer:

When we recite *Kiddush* on Friday evening, we fulfill the Torah's mitzvah of *Zachor es yom hashabbos lekadsho, Remember the day of Shabbos to sanctify it.*

There is another *Kiddush*, introduced by our Sages, which is simply reciting *borei pri hagafen* and drinking wine prior to the *Shabbos* day meal. This article will discuss under what circumstances one may eat before reciting the daytime *Kiddush*.

First, we need to categorize that there are two related subjects here:

May one eat before reciting *Kiddush*?

May one eat before *davening* in the morning?

May one eat before reciting Kiddush, either at night or day?

May one eat or drink prior to reciting the Torah-required evening *Kiddush*? Although the Tanna, Rabbi Yosi, holds that someone eating a meal when *Shabbos* begins is not required to interrupt, but may complete his meal and then recite *Kiddush* afterwards, the *Gemara* concludes that we do not follow this approach. Once *Shabbos* arrives, it is forbidden to eat or drink anything until one recites or hears *Kiddush* (*Pesachim* 100a). The *poskim* conclude that one may not even drink water before *Kiddush* (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim* 271:4).

What is the *halacha* regarding eating or drinking before daytime *Kiddush*?

This matter is disputed by the two great pillars of *halacha*, the *Rambam* and the *Raavad*. The *Rambam* (*Hilchos Shabbos*, 29:10) declares that one may not taste anything before reciting the daytime *Kiddush*, whereas the *Raavad* contends that this prohibition applies only to the evening *Kiddush*, but not to the morning *Kiddush*.

What is the underlying issue of this difference of opinion? At first glance, it would seem that the *Rambam* and the *Raavad* are disputing the following question: When our Sages required *Kiddush* in the daytime, did they provide it with all the rules of evening *Kiddush*? After all, there is a general *halachic* principle *Kol detikun rabbanan ke'ein de'oraysa tikun, whatever the Sages instituted, they did so following the pattern of the Torah's mitzvos.* (For brevity's sake, I will henceforth refer to this concept simply as *Kol detikun rabbanan*.) *Kol detikun rabbanan* would indicate that just as one may not eat or drink before evening *Kiddush*, similarly one may not eat or drink before

morning *Kiddush*. It would seem that the *Rambam* is contending that *Kol detikun rabbanan* applies to daytime *Kiddush*, whereas the *Raavad* disputes this, for a reason that we will soon explain.

However, a careful reading of the *Rambam* demonstrates that this analysis is somewhat oversimplified, since the *Rambam*, himself, does not fully apply the concept *Kol detikun rabbanan* to daytime *Kiddush*. Whereas he introduces Chapter 29 of *Hilchos Shabbos* by stating: "It is a positive mitzvah of the Torah to sanctify *Shabbos* with words," when he begins discussing the daytime *Kiddush*, he says, "It is a mitzvah to recite a beracha over wine on *Shabbos* morning before one eats the second meal of *Shabbos*, and this is called *Kiddusha Rabbah*." Evidently, the daytime *Kiddush* is not a second mitzvah of *Kiddush*, but simply announces that the daytime meal is in honor of *Shabbos*. (The early commentaries note that the term *Kiddusha Rabbah* [literally, the great *Kiddush*] for the daytime *Kiddush*, whose origin is in the *Gemara* itself [*Pesachim* 106a], is intentionally overstated.) We could say that the evening *Kiddush* is a sanctification of *Shabbos*, whereas the daytime *Kiddush* is a proclamation about the coming meal.

Reciting Kiddush over Bread

Now that we understand that evening *Kiddush* and daytime *Kiddush* serve different functions, we can explain why there are other *halachic* differences between them. For example, one may recite evening *Kiddush* over the challah-bread that one is using for the meal, but one may not use the bread of the day meal as a substitute for the daytime *Kiddush*. After all, if daytime *Kiddush* is to proclaim that the coming meal is in *Shabbos*' honor, this proclamation must precede the meal and be somewhat extraordinary.

So now we need to ask: If daytime *Kiddush* serves a different function than evening *Kiddush*, why does the *Rambam* prohibit eating before daytime *Kiddush*? The answer is that he understands that some laws of *Kiddush* still apply in the daytime. The dispute between the *Rambam* and the *Raavad* is the degree to which daytime *Kiddush* is compared to evening *Kiddush*.

The Halacha

The accepted *halacha* follows the *Rambam*: that one may not eat before daytime *Kiddush* (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim* 289:1), although as we will soon see, the *Raavad*'s opinion is not completely ignored by later authorities. They often factor the *Raavad*'s opinion when other mitigating circumstances exist, a *halachic* concept called *tziruf*. For example, the *Elyah Rabbah* (286:9) rules that a weak person who has davened *Shacharis* and has no beverage available for *Kiddush* may rely on the *Raavad* together with another opinion who contends that there is no obligation to make *Kiddush* until one has completed *davening musaf*.

May one drink water before Kiddush?

In regard to the evening *Kiddush*, the *halacha* is that one may not drink anything, even water, after *Shabbos* begins and before reciting *Kiddush*. Does the same law apply to morning *Kiddush*? The *Tur* cites a dispute whether one may drink water before *davening* on *Shabbos* morning, since one has as yet not recited or heard *Kiddush*. He quotes the *Avi HaEzri* as prohibiting this, whereas the *Tur*'s own father, the *Rosh*, permitted drinking water before *Kiddush*, and he, himself, drank before *Shabbos* morning *davening*. The *Rosh* reasoned that drinking before *Kiddush* is prohibited only once the time for reciting *Kiddush* has arrived, which is not until one has davened. Prior to *davening*, one is prohibited from eating, and, therefore, it is too early for the *Shabbos* meal, and too early for *Kiddush*. As we will soon see, one may drink tea or coffee before *davening* on weekdays, and the *Rosh* permits this also on *Shabbos* morning.

May one eat before morning davening?

At this point, we can discuss the first question raised by Reuven above: I have not been well, and I need to eat something shortly after awaking. On weekdays, I *daven* shortly after I wake up and then eat immediately afterwards, but there is no available *minyan* for me to attend early *Shabbos* morning. What should I do?

Reuven's question involves an issue that we have not yet discussed: May one eat before *davening* in the morning?

The Gemara states: "What do we derive from the verse, *You may not eat over blood*? That you may not eat (in the morning) before you have prayed for your 'blood'... The verse states, in reference to someone who eats and drinks prior to praying: *You have thrown me behind your body* (*Melachim* 14:9). Do not read *your body* (in Hebrew *gavecha*), but *your arrogance* (*gai'echa*). The Holy One said: *After this person has indulged in his own pride* (by eating or drinking), *only then does he accept upon himself the dominion of heaven* (*Berachos* 10b)!?"

The *halacha* that results from this Gemara is codified by all authorities. To quote the Rambam: "It is prohibited to taste anything or to perform work from *halachic* daybreak until one has prayed *shacharis*" (*Hilchos Tefillah* 6:4).

Would you like tea or coffee?

Although all *poskim* prohibit eating and drinking before morning *davening*, we find early authorities who permit drinking water before *davening*, since this is not considered an act of conceit (*Rosh* quoting the *Avi HaEzri*; the *Beis Yosef* cites authorities who disagree, but rules like the *Avi HaEzri*). Most later authorities permit drinking tea or coffee, contending that this is also considered like drinking water, but the *poskim* dispute whether one may add sugar to the beverage. The *Mishnah Berurah* and others prohibit this, whereas the *Aruch Hashulchan* and most later authorities permit it. They are disputing whether adding sugar to the beverage promotes it to a forbidden beverage, or whether it is still considered water that one may imbibe before *davening*.

Hunger

The Rambam rules that someone who is hungry or thirsty should eat or drink before he *davens*, so that he can *daven* properly (*Hilchos Tefillah* 5:2). Similarly, some authorities contend that, for medical reasons, one may eat or drink before *davening*. They explain that the Gemara prohibited only eating or drinking that demonstrates arrogance, whereas medical reasons, by definition, do not express arrogance (*Beis Yosef*, quoting *Mahari Abohav*). This approach is accepted as normative *halacha* by the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chayim* 89:3).

I will be hungry!

What is the *halacha* if someone is, as yet, not hungry, but he knows that he will be so hungry by the end of *davening* that it will distract him from *davening* properly. Is he permitted to eat before *davening*, so that the hunger does not distract him? This question impacts directly on Reuven's question. The answer to this question appears to lie in the following Talmudic discussion:

Rav Avya was weak and, as a result, did not attend Rav Yosef's lecture that transpired prior to *musaf*. The next day, when Rav Avya arrived in the *Yeshiva*, Abayei saw Rav Avya and was concerned that Rav Yosef may have taken offense at Rav Avya's absence. Therefore, Abayei asked Rav Avya why he had failed to attend the previous day's lecture. After which the following conversation transpired:

Abayei: *Why did the master (addressing Rav Avya) not attend the lecture?*

Rav Avya: *I was not feeling well and was unable to attend.*

Abayei: *Why did you not eat something first and then come?*

Rav Avya: *Does the master (now referring to Abayei) not hold like Rav Huna who prohibits eating before davening musaf?*

Abayei: *You should have davened musaf privately, eaten something and then come to shul* (*Berachos* 28b).

We see from Abayei's retort, that someone who is weak should *daven* first and then eat, even if this means that he *davens* without a *minyan*. Based on this passage, several noted authorities rule that someone who will not be able to wait until after *davening*, and cannot find an early *minyan* with which to *daven*, should *daven* privately (*beyechidus*), eat and then attend *shul* in order to hear the Torah and fulfill the mitzvos of answering *Kaddish* and *Kedusha* (*Beer Heiteiv* 89:11; *Biur Halacha* 289; *Daas Torah* 289 quoting *Zechor Le'Avraham*; *Shu"t Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim* 2:28 at end of *teshuvah*). Thus, it seems that we can positively answer Reuven's question: If he cannot

wait to eat until *davening* is over, he should *daven beyechidus*, make *Kiddush* and eat something, and then come to *shul* to answer *Borchu, Kedusha, Kaddish* and hear *kerias Hatorah*.

May a woman eat before Kiddush?

At this point, we have enough information to discuss Ahuva's question: It is difficult for me to wait for *Kiddush* until my husband returns from *shul*. May I eat before he arrives home?

Of course, Ahuva may recite *Kiddush* herself and eat something before her husband returns home. To fulfill the mitzvah, she needs to eat something that fulfills the *halacha* of *Kiddush bimkom seudah*, a topic we will have to leave for a different time. However, Ahuva either does not want to recite *Kiddush*, or does not want to eat something to accompany the *Kiddush*. Is there a *halachic* solution to permit her to eat or drink before *Kiddush*?

There are some authorities who suggest approaches to permit Ahuva to eat or drink before *Kiddush*. Here is one approach:

Although most authorities obligate a woman to recite the daytime *Kiddush* and prohibit her from eating before she recites *Kiddush* (*Tosafos Shabbos* 286:4, 289:3; *Pri Megadim, Mishbetzos Zahav* 289:1; *Mishnah Berurah* 289:6), this is not a universally held position. One early authority (*Maharam Halavah, Pesachim* 106, quoting *Rashba*) contends that women are absolved of the requirement to recite daytime *Kiddush*, for the following reason: Since the daytime *Kiddush* is not an extension of the mitzvah of evening *Kiddush*, but is to demonstrate that the meal is in honor of *Shabbos*, this requirement does not devolve upon women. Although this approach is not *halachically* accepted, some authorities allow a woman to rely on this opinion, under extenuating circumstances, to eat before reciting morning *Kiddush* (*Shu"t Minchas Yitzchak* 4:28:3).

When does a married woman become obligated to make Kiddush?

Rav Moshe Feinstein presents a different reason to permit a married woman to eat before *Kiddush*. He reasons that since a married woman is required to eat the *Shabbos* meal with her husband, she does not become responsible to make *Kiddush* until it is time for the two of them to eat the *Shabbos* meal together, meaning after *davening* (*Shu"t Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim* 4:101\2). However, the *Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasah* (Chapter 52, note 46) quotes Rav Shelomoh Zalman Auerbach as disputing Rav Moshe's conclusion that a married woman has no obligation to make *Kiddush* before the *Shabbos* meal. Firstly, he is unconvinced that she is *halachically* required to eat her meal with her husband, and, even if she is, that this duty permits her to eat before *Kiddush*.

If we do not follow the lenient approaches mentioned, when does a woman become obligated to recite *Kiddush* and, therefore, at what point may she no longer drink tea, coffee, and water? The *Acharonim* debate this issue, but understanding their positions requires an understanding of a different topic.

What must a woman pray?

All authorities require a woman to *daven* daily, but there is a dispute whether she is required to recite the full *shemoneh esrei* (I will call this the "*Ramban's* opinion"), or whether she fulfills her requirement by reciting a simple prayer, such as the morning *beracha* that closes with the words *Gomel chasadim tovim le'amo Yisrael*. (I will refer to this as the "*Magen Avraham's* opinion.") Allow me to explain.

When may she eat?

According to the *Ramban's* opinion that a woman is required to recite the full *shemoneh esrei*, she may not eat in the morning without first *davening* (see the previous discussion), whereas according to the *Magen Avraham's* opinion that she fulfills her requirement once she has recited a simple prayer or morning *berachos*, she may eat once she recited these *tefilos*.

Some authorities rule that a woman becomes obligated to hear *Kiddush* as soon as she recites *berachos*, since she has now fulfilled her requirement to *daven* and she may therefore begin eating. According to this opinion, once she recited *berachos* on *Shabbos* morning, she may not eat or drink without first making *Kiddush* (*Tosafos Shabbos* 286:4, 289:3). This approach contends that before she recites morning *berachos*, she may drink water, tea

or coffee, but after she recites morning *berachos*, she may not even drink these beverages without first reciting *Kiddush*.

There is another view, that contends that a woman can follow the same approach that men follow, and may drink water, tea or coffee even after she recited *berachos* before she has *davened* (*Pri Megadim, Eishel Avraham* 289:4 as understood by *Halichos Beisah* page 204).

At this point we can address the third question I raised above:

"Someone told me that a woman may not eat in the morning before she *davens*, but I remember being taught in *Beis Yaakov* that we may eat once we say the morning *berachos*. Is my memory faulty?"

Many authorities contend that although a woman should *daven shemoneh esrei* every morning, she may rely on the opinion of the *Magen Avraham* in regard to eating, and may eat at home after reciting morning *berachos*. In many institutions, this approach was preferred, since it accomplishes that the *tefillah* the girls recite is a much better prayer, and they learn how to *daven* properly.

Conclusion

According to Rav Hirsch, observing *Shabbos* and declaring its holiness means recognizing that the arrival of *Shabbos* signifies that man's activity has attained its goal. Now, it is time to recognize Hashem's creation and devote ourselves to developing our spirituality. When we recite *Kiddush*, we should internalize this message.