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from: torahweb@torahweb.org to: weeklydt@torahweb.org date: Thu, Oct 27, 2016 at 10:07 PM subject: Rabbi Hershel Schachter - Tzelem Elokim

**Rabbi Hershel Schachter
Tzelem Elokim**

The Torah tells us that man was created b'zelem elokim. The Rambam (in Moreh Nevuchim) points out that this clearly cannot mean that man has the same physical features as Hashem since Hashem has no body at all. The Meshech Chochma interprets this to mean that human beings have bechira chofshish[1]. Many psychologists do not believe in bechira chofshish. They think that when a baby is born his mind is already set regarding what type of a life he will live, what type of a person he will marry, and what type of an occupation he will pursue. This opinion is contrary to our religion. We believe that just as Hashem is an original thinker and is creative, so too every normal person was given bechira chofshish, i.e. the ability to decide on his own which route to pursue in life.

The Rambam points out that if without bechira chofshish there would be no room for sechar v'onesh. The righteous only deserve to be rewarded and the sinners only deserve to be punished if they could really choose between different options. The Gemarah tells us that when every baby is born the angel who is "in charge of babies" determines whether that particular child will be intelligent, wealthy, or strong; but no decision is made by the angel whether the child will be a tzaddik or a rosha. When people make decisions in life, there are always conflicting considerations taken into account. While some people have tendencies in one direction or another, all healthy and normal individuals still have bechira chofshish to choose to ignore those tendencies and some of the considerations and be a tzaddik. This is why the novi (Yirmiyahu 9:22-23) tells us that a wealthy person should not brag about his wealth and a strong person has nothing to brag about with respect to his strength and a smart person should not brag about how bright he is. The only thing a person deserves praise for is his decision to be a tzaddik because that decision was made solely by him. The strength, the wealth and the brains were decided by the angel.

The Gemarah (Berachos 33b) tells us that all aspects of human life are determined from heaven with the sole exception of yiras shomayim. The

Rambam takes the term "yiras shomayim" to refer to all human activities where one exercises his bechira chofshish.

The Torah instructs us to go in the ways of Hashem in order to preserve the tzelem Elokim that was implanted within us at birth. Included in that mitzvah is that we should make decisions for ourselves. Many resha'im feel that they are exercising their bechira chofshish to a greater extent than the tzadikim because they are daring enough to be so original as to go against the wishes of Hashem. This is clearly a misjudgment. Years ago this story used to be told about a couple that had their neighbors in their home to play a card game. The wife, who always dominated her husband, instructed when the bell rang, "Max, go answer the door". When the company sat down to play their game, the wife instructed her husband, "Max, bring in some drinks". Every two minutes she was giving her husband instructions and he was following all of her orders. In the middle of the card game, the wife wanted to show the company how obedient her husband is so she instructed him, "Max, go climb under the table and sit on the floor". Max followed orders once again. After several minutes the wife said to the husband, "Max you can come out from under the table and sit on your chair". The husband did not budge and after another two minutes she said, "Max, you can come up now". Max did not budge but stuck his finger out from under the table and said, "Tillie, I will not come out! I will show you who is boss." and he continued to sit on the floor under the table!

We all have bechira chofshish and are the "ba'alim" over our lives. Yes, we can decide with impunity to violate Hashem's mitzvos, and thereby have the feeling as if we are exercising our bechira to a greater extent than the tzadikim; but this type of showing "who is boss" is like Max's ridiculous decision to continue to sit on the floor under the table with all the company present. Yes, he showed his wife who was the "boss", but he did so in a very silly inappropriate way.

We should all imitate the ways of Hashem by exercising our bechira chofshish in a most positive, constructive and creative fashion.

[1] See also Freedom of Choice - Editor.

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From: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> to: ravfrand@torah.org
date: Thu, Oct 27, 2016 at 1:48 PM subject: Rav Frand - Blessings Require Prayer & Appreciation / Building A Bayis Ne'eman B'Yisrael

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: CD #959 – The Case of the Mixed Up Wedding Ring. Good Shabbos!

The Blessings Are There Waiting...But We Have To Pray For Them And Appreciate Them

The pesukim in the second chapter of Sefer Bereshis say, "These are the products of the heavens and the earth when they were created on the day of Hashem G-d's making of earth and heavens. Now any tree of the field was not yet on the earth and any herb of the field had not yet sprouted, for Hashem G-d had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to work the soil." [Bereshis 2:4-5]

A very important Rashi on this pasuk teaches us two novel ideas:

On the words "for Hashem G-d had not sent rain", Rashi comments: "And what is the reason that He had not sent rain? Because 'there was no man to work the soil' and there was none who could recognize the goodness of rain." Up until this point, there was no vegetation. There was no vegetation because there was no rain and there was no rain because there was no human being to appreciate the rain!

The Maharal in the Gur Aryeh elaborates: Why not bring rain anyway (even though there was no one to appreciate it)? The answer is because it is forbidden to do a kindness for a person who does not recognize it as a favor. Therefore, as long as there was no man, no rain fell. It is not worth giving a

gift or favor to someone who does not even have the ability to appreciate what you are doing for him.

Most of us would have assumed the opposite from the Maharal. Our natural instinct would be to say, “No, give the favor anyway, even if it will not be appreciated. Be a nice guy and do the tova [favor], even though it is not appreciated! The Maharal infers a principle of proper behavior from this Rashi: Do not do a favor for a person who cannot appreciate it.

Rashi then presents another idea: “When Adam came and realized that they (i.e. – the rains) are a necessity for the world, he prayed for them and they came down, and the trees and types of vegetation sprouted.” Rav Shimshon Pincus, z”l, in his wonderful sefer, She’arim B’Tefilla, makes the following comment: All this vegetation was right there – the shrubs, the trees, the grass, the plants, the flowers, the beautiful earth – but it was necessary for someone to pray for it. Once Adam prayed for it, then that tremendous favor (of rainfall) comes automatically.

The lesson is that sometimes the Master of the World is ready to shower a bounty on us, but unless we pray for it, we will not receive it. That was the situation over here. The Ribono shel Olam intended that there should be a creation with plants and trees and shrubs and grass and flowers, but He was not prepared to “release them” until someone was there to (a) appreciate them and (b) actually pray for them. There are tremendous favors from Heaven that may await us, but we need to ask for them, we need to daven that G-d’s favors be “released” to us.

The Secret To Building A Bayis Ne’eman B’Yisrael

Following the creation of Chava, Adam states: “This time it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This shall be called Woman (isha), for from man (ish) was she taken”. [Bereshis 2:23]. Then the Torah writes “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife and they shall become one flesh.” [Bereshis 2:24]. This last pasuk is the basis of the institution of marriage throughout the world.

Not long ago, I read the autobiography of Rav Yisrael Meir Lau, who has held different Rabbinic positions in Eretz Yisrael, among them the Ashkenazik Chief Rabbi. He has had a fascinating life and wrote an autobiography entitled Do Not Raise A Hand Against the Boy (in the original Hebrew “Al Tishlach Yadcha El Ha’Naar”) [based on Bereshis 22:120].

Rav Herschel Schachter (1918-2013) — who was an Orthodox army chaplain with the U.S. Army during the liberation of the camps — found the young Rabbi Lau among a pile of dead bodies. Rabbi Lau became a “poster child” for liberation from the concentration camps. His picture was seen throughout the world — the five-year-old child who survived the concentration camps! He was one of the youngest survivors when the camps were liberated – a five year old child in Buchenwald! Both his parents had been killed. Rabbi Lau had a sixteen-year-old brother who saved him during all the trials and tribulations and horror of the concentration camp. It is a very poignant book.

Rabbi Lau traces his whole history of how he got to Eretz Yisrael and how he was taken in by an aunt and an uncle; how he went to Cheder and then how he went to Yeshiva Kol Torah and later the Ponnevezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. It is a fascinating book.

Rabbi Lau writes that it came time for him to get married. He was and is a very charismatic, capable, and talented individual. He must have had quite a reputation as a single Yeshiva bochur. There was a Jew at the time who was the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, Rav Yitzchak Yedidiah Frankel. He was interested in Rav Lau as a son-in-law. He invited Rabbi Lau over for a meal, took him out to the balcony of his home, and began telling him a “vort” [a brief Torah thought]:

Rav Frankel asked him – what does the pasuk mean, “Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother”? The Torah appears to be rubbing the idea that people leave their parents when they get married into people’s faces. What kind of business is this? Parents put in 20-25 years of blood, sweat, and tears in raising their child. Then comes the wedding and it’s “bye, bye!”

It is almost as if the Torah makes it an obligatory commandment to leave one’s parents after getting married. Why does the Torah write this?

I have personally had the privilege of being under many Chupahs; inasmuch as I am often asked to be mesader kiddushin [officiate] at the weddings of my students. There is a universal emotion that I invariably notice. The Chosson and Kallah are all smiles and the parents are bawling their eyes out.

I always think of telling the young couple: “Wait, 20+ years from now, you are going to be the ones who are bawling your eyes out!” What is the reason for this ubiquitous emotion?

Of course, there is an element of these being “tears of joy”; but there is so much effort and so much emotion put into the endeavor of raising a child that invariably there is sadness at the event marking the child’s permanent departure from the parental home. In a certain sense, the parents have the feeling – “It is over.” That stage of life has now ended.

So what is the purpose of this pasuk (al ken ya’azov ish es aviv v’imo)? Why does the Torah emphasize it?

Rav Yitzchak Yedidiah Frankel told his future son-in-law, homiletically, that while in Hebrew the root of the word “azav” means leave, the Hebrew word for ‘inheritance’ is also the word izavon. Therefore, he suggested that the interpretation of the pasuk “al ken ya’azov...” is that everyone should leave their parents, but that he should take with him the izavon – the heritage of his parents. The pasuk is not talking about the monetary inheritance of one’s parents, but rather the values of what he saw in his parents’ house. To be successful in building a new Jewish home, a man must take with him the values he has seen in his own parental home.

Why did Rav Frankel tell the young Rabbi Lau this vort? He told him, “You are a fine eligible young man; but you are an orphan. You were raised in an institution. My only worry about you is that you won’t have a tradition from your parents of how to build a home. You were not old enough to appreciate how your father treated your mother, to see how your mother treated your father, to see how you treat siblings, and so on and so forth. This is my worry about you.”

Rabbi Lau writes that he almost choked up on the spot when Rabbi Frankel told him this and I do not understand why Rabbi Frankel needed to tell this to his future son-in-law. The concept is a beautiful concept: Every Jewish child, in order to be able to build a new home, must take with him the izavon, the heritage of his family. This is the precondition for being able to successfully cling to one’s wife and to build a new home on one’s own. This is the secret to success in building a Bayis Ne’eman B’Yisrael.

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From: **Chanan Morrison** <ravkooklist@gmail.com> reply-to: rav-kooklist+owners@googlegroups.com to: Rav Kook List <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com> date: Wed, Oct 26, 2016

Rav Kook Torah

Breishit: The Hidden Light of Creation

Ohr Ha-Ganuz

The very first act of Creation, as recorded in the Book of Genesis, was the creation of light. “And God said: There shall be light” (Gen. 1:3). What kind of light was this?

It cannot be the light that we are familiar with, the light emanating from the sun and the stars. These heavenly bodies were created much later, on the fourth day of Creation. The Sages called this primordial light Ohr Ha-Ganuz, “the Hidden Light.” Too pure for the current state of the universe, God concealed it for a future, more deserving world.

What is the nature of this special illumination introduced at the beginning of Creation?

The Sages taught (Shemot Rabbah 15:22) that certain topics mentioned cryptically in the Torah were later elucidated by David in the book of Psalms. For example, Psalm 104 speaks poetically of the creation of the heavens:

“[God] wrapped Himself in light like a garment and spread out the heavens like a curtain.” (104:3) In this instance, however, it is difficult to claim that the verse in Psalms explains the Torah’s account; in fact, it contradicts it. The Torah states that God created light after creating heaven and earth (Gen. 1:1-3). In Psalms, however, the order is reversed: God first created the light, and only afterward the heavens.

Chomer and Tzurah

The philosophers distinguished between chomer, matter, and tzurah, the form or function of an object. For example, wood is a raw material (chomer) that may be used to produce many different functional objects. Once it is designated for use as a table, the wood also has tzurah, form, having acquired a particular purpose.

At the very beginning of Creation, there was only chomer. God created numerous elements, but they were without tzurah. They lacked function and purpose. This state of disorder and dissonance is referred to as darkness - “darkness on the surface of the depths” (Gen. 1:2). The Torah calls this unstable primeval stage Tohu and Bohu, indicating that it was chaotic and empty of form.

Then God created the Ohr Ha-Ganuz. This special light played a critical role in Creation. Just as regular light allows us to see and relate to our surroundings, the Hidden Light enabled the different elements of creation to interact with one another. It dispelled the initial state of darkness, when all objects were isolated and disconnected from one another.

To use the terminology of the philosophers, the illumination created on the first day of Creation stamped a functional tzurah on the material chomer. Through this special light, the universe’s myriad objects acquired purpose and function and were able to work together towards a common goal.

To Wear Light

The Midrash (Breishit Rabbah 3:4) elucidates the verse in Psalms, explaining that “God wrapped Himself in light like a garment and illuminated the splendor of His glory from one end of the world to the other.”

What does it mean that “God wore light”?

This phrase indicates that the light took on God’s qualities of oneness and unity, just as a garment takes on the shape of the one wearing it. When “God wrapped Himself in light,” this means that He introduced an underlying unity into all aspects of creation, “from one end of the world to the other.”

In summary: the description in Psalms does not contradict the account in Genesis. At first, God created heaven and earth in an isolated state, as chomer without form and purpose. This was the unstable state of Tohu and Bohu described in Genesis, when the diverse elements of creation existed in chaotic darkness, lacking an underlying unity.

Then God said, “There shall be light,” creating the special Ohr Ha-Ganuz, the Hidden Light with which He bound the matter together with a common purpose. God “wrapped Himself in the light,” thereby giving the light His trait of oneness and making it a unifying force. After creating this unifying light, God “spread out the heavens” and stabilized the universe. The continuation of the psalm describes the stability of the world after the

creation of light: “He founded the earth on its foundations, so that it will never falter” (104:5).

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Midbar Shur, pp. 95-96)

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The Time Shabbos Ends

Rabbi Michael Taubes

After describing what Hashem created on the first day of Creation, the Torah indicates that the day came to an end and uses the phrase “vayhi erev vayhi voker...,” “and there was evening and then there was morning...” (Beraishis, 1:5). This phrase is repeated following the description of the creation which took place on each of the other five days of Creation (ibid. Pesukim 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). The Mishnah and Gemara in Chulin (83a) understood from this phrase, as explained by Rashi (ibid. s.v. “ma’aseh Beraishis”), that according to the Torah, the new day begins at night, meaning that in considering the 24 hour day, the night-time precedes the day time. When night begins, then, a new calendar day has begun as well.

The question is precisely how to define the beginning of night, and consequently, the end of the previous day according to Halacha. This is a question which obviously has ramifications for a great many Mitzvos and Halachos which depend upon the end of the old calendar day or the beginning of the new one, and is the subject of much more discussion among Rishonim and Acharonim. For example, regarding the latest time one may daven Minchah in the afternoon, the Mishnah in Berachos (26a) quotes one view that it may be done until evening, that is, until the end of the day. Rashi (ibid. s.v. “ad ha’erev”) understands this to mean until nightfall, while Rabbeinu Yonah (ibid. 18a in the pages of the Rif s.v. “tefillas hamincha”) learns that it means until sunset. The discussions relating to the first topic of Maseches Berachos, focusing on the time for Maariv and the evening Kerias Shema, also touch on this question.

HaRav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik discusses the precise definitions of day and night and their application to various Halachos in an article on this very subject in one of his Seforim (Shiurim lizecher Abba mari z”l vol. 1, beginning on pg. 91). He mentions the interesting point there (pg. 102) that the Torah itself seems to leave us in doubt as to when the old day ends and the new day begins. In this Parsha, the first Posuk cited above (ibid. Posuk 5) declares that Hashem called the light “yom”, day, and He called the darkness laylah”, night. The implication of this Posuk is that the day is defined by the presence of light, and the night by the presence of darkness.

Thus, even after the sun has set, the night (and hence a new calendar day) has not yet begun because it’s still light out; night begins only once it’s dark.

However, another Posuk in this Parsha (ibid. Posuk 16) states that the sun is to be out during the day and the moon during the night. The implication of this Posuk is that the day is defined by the presence of the sun; once the sun has set, the day is over and the night begins, even though it is still light out. In short, the basic questions are what moment defines the end of the old day, whether when the sun sets or when the sky gets dark, and how we treat the time known as “Bein HaShemashos”, or twilight, when the sun has already set, but the sky is not yet dark.

Another important question is how to precisely define nightfall. Even if we assume that the new day begins not at sunset but when it gets dark, how exactly can one figure out when that is? How long after sunset is this time? One of the many issues that depends upon this question is the issue of when Shabbos is over. Because of the aforementioned doubt about whether the new day begins as sunset or nightfall, we observe the Shabbos (and Yom Tov) on both ends: Shabbos begins at sunset on Friday afternoon, but does not end until it gets dark on Saturday night; the Mishnah Berurah (Orach Chaim siman 261 seif katan 23) and the Kaf HaChaim (ibid. os 1) elaborate

on some of the details about this. The question is how long after sunset one must wait.

The Gemara in Pesachim (94a) states that the time from sunset until it gets dark is equivalent to the time it takes to walk for “Mil”. Exactly how long that takes is the subject of another dispute among the Poskim, as presented by the Mishnah Berurah (Orach Chaim siman 959 seif katan 15), and elaborated on in the Biur Halacha (ibid. s.v. havi). The Vilna Gaon (Beur HaGra ibid. s.v. vishiur) and the Chok Yaakov (ibid seif katan 10) discuss this matter at length. The most widely accepted view is that one “Mil” can be walked in 18 minutes; the time between sunset and darkness, which is four “Mil”, would thus be 72 minutes.

The Gemara in Shabbos (35a), however, implies that from sunset to nightfall is only $\frac{3}{4}$ of a “Mil”, which is only 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes, as explained in Tosafos there (ibid. s.v. trei). To resolve this contradiction, Tosafos there (ibid.) and in Pesachim (ibid. s.v. Rav Yehuda) quotes Rabbeinu Tam who explains that there are actually two stages to sunset. The first is what people commonly call sunset and what he calls “the beginning of sunset”, and actual nightfall takes place four Mil (72 minutes) after this, as the Gemara in Pesachim (ibid.) indicates. But then there is what he calls “the end of sunset”, which takes place $\frac{3}{4}$ of a Mil (3 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes) before this actual nightfall, and this is the stage which the Gemara in Shabbos (ibid.) refers to when stating that from sunset to nightfall is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a Mil. It seems clear from Tosafos in Menachos (20 b. s.v. nifsal), though, that Rabbeinu Tam considers the time until the last $\frac{3}{4}$ of a Mil before this actual nightfall (that is, until 58 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes after what people commonly call sunset) to be daytime for all Halachos. This is followed by 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes called Bein HaShemashos, and finally, 72 minutes after what people commonly call sunset, comes nightfall. Consequently, on then, after those 72 minutes, would Shabbos be over.

Although many Poskim accept this view, including the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim siman 261 seif 2), the Vilna Gaon (Beur HaGra ibid. s.v. shehu) questions it, saying that one can tell by looking outside that darkness falls long before 72 minutes after what people commonly call sunset, and it’s difficult to consider the entire period of 58 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes after that sunset to be daytime when it’s obviously already dark out. He therefore concludes that sunset has only one stage, and when the sun sets, Bein HaShemashos begins immediately and lasts for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a Mil, or 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes, after which comes nightfall, as the Gemara in Shabbos (ibid.) states. The 4 Mil period of the Gemara in Pesachim (ibid.) is the time from sunset until a later time at night, when all the stars are visible, which is relevant for other purposes. The Gaon (ibid.) adds, however, that this $\frac{3}{4}$ of a Mil represents Bein HaShemashos only in Eretz Yisrael and Bavel, and only at certain times. In other locations, depending on their latitude and longitude and depending on the time of year, the time between sunset and nightfall would be different, and nightfall can be determined by seeing three small stars in the sky (see ibid. in Beur Halacha ibid. s.v. mitechilas). In the New York area, it is generally assumed that at least with respect to the end of Shabbos, nightfall is about 42 minutes after sunset according to this view, which is commonly followed.

Nonetheless, many people do wait longer to conclude Shabbos, following the view of Rabbeinu Tam. Again, there is much discussion as to what he meant by 72 minutes after sunset, and whether that time too varies with one’s location and the time of year, and hence there are different customs. The Mishnah Berurah, while in general accepting the Vilna Gaon’s definition of sunset (see siman 233 ibid. seif katan 14) recommends in the Biur Halacha (ibid. siman 261 s.v. shehu) that one should wait 72 minutes after sunset before ending Shabbos, seemingly regardless of location or season, although he quotes other views. Rav Moshe Feinstein (shu”t Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim vol. 1 siman 24) suggests this as well. It should be noted that it is always proper to add a few minutes on to Shabbos both at the beginning and at the end, as indicated by the Gemara in Rosh HaShana (9a) and implied by the Gemara in Shabbos (118b), and as codified in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim ibid. siman 261 and siman 293 seif 1).

From: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> Oct 27, 2016

The Faith of God

Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

There is a deep question at the heart of Jewish faith, and it is very rarely asked. As the Torah opens we see God creating the universe day by day, bringing order out of chaos, life out of inanimate matter, flora and fauna in all their wondrous diversity. At each stage God sees what He has made and declares it good.

What then went wrong? How did evil enter the picture, setting in motion the drama of which the Torah – in a sense, the whole of history – is a record? The short answer is man, Homo sapiens, us. We, alone of the life forms thus far known to us, have freewill, choice and moral responsibility. Cats do not debate the ethics of killing mice. Vampire bats do not become vegetarians. Cows do not worry about global warming.

It is this complex capacity to speak, think and choose between alternative courses of action, that is at once our glory, our burden and our shame. When we do good we are little lower than the angels. When we do evil we fall lower than the beasts. Why then did God take the risk of creating the one form of life capable of destroying the very order He had made and declared good? Why did God create us?

That is the question posed by the Gemara in Sanhedrin:

When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create man, He created a group of ministering angels and asked them, “Do you agree that we should make man in our image?”

They replied, “Sovereign of the Universe, what will be his deeds?”

God showed them the history of mankind.

The angels replied, “What is man that You are mindful of him?” [Let man not be created].

God destroyed the angels.

He created a second group, and asked them the same question, and they gave the same answer.

God destroyed them.

He created a third group of angels, and they replied, “Sovereign of the Universe, the first and second group of angels told You not to create man, and it did not avail them. You did not listen. What then can we say but this: The universe is Yours. Do with it as You wish.”

And God created man.

But when it came to the generation of the Flood, and then to the generation of those who built the Tower of Babel, the angels said to God, “Were not the first angels right? See how great is the corruption of mankind.”

And God replied (Isaiah 46:4), “Even to old age I will not change, and even to grey hair, I will still be patient.” [Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 38b]

Technically the Gemara is addressing a stylistic challenge in the text. For every other act of creation in Genesis 1, the Torah tells us, “God said, ‘Let there be’ ... And there was...” In the case of the creation of humankind alone, there is a preface, a prelude. Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness ...” Who is the “us”? And why the preface?

In their seemingly innocent and childlike – actually subtle and profound – way the sages answered both questions by saying that with (to quote Hamlet) an enterprise of this pith and moment, God consulted with the angels. They were the “us”.

But now the question becomes very deep indeed. For, in creating humans, God brought into existence the one life form with the sole exception of Himself, capable of freedom and choice. That is what the phrase means when it says, “Let us make mankind in our image after our likeness.” For the salient fact is that God has no image. To make an image of God is the archetypal act of idolatry.

This means not just the obvious fact that God is invisible. He cannot be seen. He cannot be identified with anything in nature: not the sun, the moon, thunder, lightning, the ocean or any of the other objects or forces people worshipped in those days. In this superficial sense, God has no image. That, wrote Sigmund Freud in his last book, *Moses and Monotheism*, was

Judaism's greatest contribution. By worshipping an invisible God, Jews tilted the balance of civilisation from the physical to the spiritual.

But the idea that God has no image goes far deeper than this. It means that we cannot conceptualise God, understand Him or predict Him. God is not an abstract essence; He is a living presence. That is the meaning of God's own self-definition to Moses at the Burning Bush: "I will be what I will be" – meaning, "I will be what I choose to be." I am the God of freedom, who endowed humankind with freedom, and I am about to lead the children of Israel from slavery to freedom.

When God made humanity in His image, it means that He gave humans the freedom to choose, so that you can never fully predict what they will do. They too – within the limits of our finitude and mortality – will be what they choose to be. Which means that when God gave humans the freedom to act well, he gave them the freedom to act badly. There is no way of avoiding this dilemma even for God Himself. And so it was. Adam and Eve sinned. The first human child, Cain, murdered the second, Abel, and within a short space of time the world was filled with violence.

In one of the most searing passages in the whole of Tanakh, we read at the end of this week's parsha:

God saw that man's wickedness on earth was increasing. Every impulse of his innermost thought was only for evil, all day long. God regretted that He had made man on earth, and He was pained to His very core. (Gen. 6:5-6)

Hence the angels' question, the ultimate question at the heart of faith. Why did God, knowing the risks and dangers, make a species that could and did rebel against Him, devastate the natural environment, hunt species to extinction, and oppress and kill his fellow man?

The Talmud, imagining a conversation between God and the angels, is suggesting a tension within the mind of God Himself. The answer God gives the angels is extraordinary: "Even to old age I will not change, and even to grey hair, I will still be patient." Meaning: I, God, am prepared to wait. If it takes ten generations for a Noah to emerge, and another ten for an Abraham, I will be patient. However many times humans disappoint Me, I will not change. However much evil they do in the world I will not despair. I despaired once, and brought a Flood. But after I saw that humans are merely human, I will never bring a Flood again.

God created humanity because God has faith in humanity. Far more than we have faith in God, God has faith in us. We may fail many times, but each time we fail, God says: "Even to old age I will not change, and even to grey hair, I will still be patient." I will never give up on humanity. I will never lose faith. I will wait for as long as it takes for humans to learn not to oppress, enslave or use violence against other humans. That, implies the Talmud, is the only conceivable explanation for why a good, wise, all-seeing and all-powerful God created such fallible, destructive creatures as us. God has patience. God has forgiveness. God has compassion. God has love.

For centuries, theologians and philosophers have been looking at religion upside down. The real phenomenon at its heart – the mystery and miracle – is not our faith in God. It is God's faith in us.

From: Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com> reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com date: Wed, Oct 26, 2016 at 3:37 PM subject:

Parshat Bereshith 5777- Rabbi Berel Wein

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

One of the wisest and most astute comments of the rabbis of the Talmud regarding life is that "all new beginnings are difficult." That certainly is true regarding the beginning of human civilization as described for us in this week's Torah reading. Everything that seemingly could go wrong did go wrong. Death, murder, fratricide, autocracy and oppression all make their due appearance in the biblical narrative of this week. All in all, the narrative gives us a very depressing view of human life and subliminally raises the question of why did and does God bother, so to speak, with the whole project. Nevertheless, the Torah emphasizes the resilience of human beings

that has marked the trajectory of civilization from the beginning of time until today. Kayin, in spite of his great crime, ends up building cities and fathering generations. And in the midst of all of the evil and wicked people, there do appear righteous personalities who point to a better future and to a more noble society. The Torah emphasizes a lesson here that it will repeat many times in its descriptions of human events. The lesson is that it is not the numerical superiority of evil people that determines the course of human events but rather it is that the dearth of good people who are willing to proclaim goodness as a way of life that determines the eventual fate of society. That was true in the generations of early human kind, in the generation of Sodom and in the events of the past century as well. Our task is to be that good person – the Abraham figure – who stands in opposition to the evils that always abide in human society. A person should never say to oneself: 'Of what value am I and what's the difference what I do or say?' The rabbis have taught us that the reason that human kind stems from one ancestor is to teach the value of one person...and that one person can tip the scales of heavenly justice and human life. The rabbis have also taught us that one should always say to one's self that the world was created for me alone. Now, naturally, overdoing this idea leads to hubris and arrogance and sin itself. But in proper measure, it is the necessary ingredient to making life meaningful and to propel us on the path of accomplishment and worthiness. The realization by an individual of one's own importance in the heavenly scheme of life and generations is the key to one's sense of self-worth. Without that sense, one can almost never achieve either spiritual or temporal success. It is this feeling of self-worth and the importance of an individual that creates the resilience that so characterizes human behavior and the history of human civilization. I think that this is one of the most important messages that this week's Torah reading can communicate to us. Especially in these turbulent times when nothing is clear to us any longer, we need to strengthen ourselves in our beliefs and our service to God and man. Shabbat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

From: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to: Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com> date: Thu, Oct 27, 2016

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

Hashem Elokim called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" (3:9)

At face value, this was not a question. Hashem certainly knew Adam's whereabouts. Hashem was initiating a dialogue with Adam, so that he would not be afraid to repent. This, obviously, is a lesson for us when approaching someone - a student, a child, a friend who has erred - not to pounce upon him, "Why did you do it? How could you have acted so badly?" but rather, begin a conversation, get the subject relaxed, then ease into the reproof in such a manner that he will open up and be willing to repent.

The word Ayeca, "Where are you?" has been interpreted in a number of ways. It has the same letters as Eichah, which implies, "How could you?" Ayeca, "Where?" also intimates, "Do you know where you are; Do you realize that you sinned in Gan Eden?" These expositions each present an understanding of the gravity of sin, its roots, and effect on those in the proximity of the sinner.

From a well-documented incident which occurred concerning the Baal HaTanya, zl, we derive a deeper explanation of the word Ayeca and its implication to all of us. The Alter Rebbe (Baal HaTanya) had been jailed in St. Petersburg, the result of being slandered to the government by insecure people who felt threatened by his success. This occurred during the nascent days of Chassidus, when any form of worship that deviated from the tried and true was immediately suspect of involvement with Shabbthai Tzvi messianism. In Russia, Chabad Chassidus, established by the Baal HaTanya, was most prominent. While the Rebbe was imprisoned, he was visited by a

minister, an assimilated Jew, who was in charge of prisoner interrogations. The minister knew a holy man when he saw one, and he understood that the prisoner sitting before him deeply engrossed in thought, was no ordinary prisoner. While he was foolish in abandoning his religion, the minister was no fool. He was astute and well-versed in Torah literature, having attended yeshivah prior to apostatizing himself. He turned to the Rebbe and said, "I have long been bothered by a question on the Torah for which I have never received a satisfactory answer. When G-d entered the Garden of Eden, He spoke to Adam, asking him, 'Where are you?' Is it possible that He did not know the whereabouts of Adam?"

The Baal HaTanya listened to the question, and then asked the minister, "Tell me, do you believe that the Torah is eternal and that it will be around for all time?" "Yes," replied the minister. He might have been an apostate, rejecting the Torah, but he was well aware that the Torah exists and that it is G-d's communication with man.

"G-d's question of Adam," the Rebbe began, "was a question that each and every one of his descendants must ask themselves, Ayeca - 'Where are you?' - Every person is granted a specific amount of time to live. He is mandated to carry out Hashem's mitzvos and perform acts of kindness to his fellow man. He is asked, Ayeca - 'Where do you stand with your G-d-given mission? How much of your mission have you completed?'" The Rebbe then asked the minister, "In the x number of years (the Rebbe knew how old the minister was) that you have lived, did you achieve your Heavenly designated goals - or did you fall short? This is what G-d asks each and every one of us: Ayeca?"

Perhaps Ayeca has a dual interpretation: one which addresses the individual himself; and one which implores the individual to ask concerning others. Each and every one of us has a path of life in which we are the products of our own personal history, a series of events in our background in which we have interacted with people, both very close - such as parents and family - and others, who have played significant roles in our life stories. We should ask ourselves Ayeca - How did I get here? What have I gone through to reach this point? What were the factors that have influenced my life - both positive and negative? Now that you realize how it has all led up to this moment, what are you going to do about it? Are you a success, or is your life a mess? How did this happen? What led up to this point? The same piercing questions apply to the way we view other people. Do we judge them according to their present demeanor, or do we ask Ayeca - How did you get here? What events and people have catalyzed your success or failure?

Adam HaRishon had sinned. The first step toward reconciliation was teshuvah, repentance. In order to repent a sin, one should first introspect the root of his behavior, the pathology that led up to that moment. Likewise, a young person, a middle-aged or older individual who has fallen on hard times and distanced himself from Hashem, must first make a self-diagnosis as to how he had plummeted to this low point. We should not judge people according to the here and now, but Ayeca - How did they get here?

Allow me to present the following vignettes, one of which saw the pages of Peninim a number of years ago, but its message is timeless. First story: Rebbetzin Dessler, wife of the Michtav MeiEliyahu, was in Lithuania together with her young daughter (the future Rebbetzin Geltzeiler) when World War II broke out. They could not return home to England since their host country was at war with Germany. As a result, they were displaced to Australia, which was neutral. This became their home for the duration of the war years.

One day, mother and daughter took a walk and passed a pawn shop which had a number of jewelry pieces displayed in its picture window. When the young girl oohed and aahed over the jewelry, her mother responded that while it was true that each piece was quite beautiful, even captivating, every item in the window had a history. Someone had been forced to sell her jewelry for economic reasons. This might have been a cherished family heirloom, but the family had fallen on hard times and bread had become

more important than jewelry. "We should not take pleasure from someone else's misfortune," the Rebbetzin told her daughter.

The simple lesson to be derived herein is how far one person's sensitivity for another human being can extend. She saw a necklace in the store window and was immediately aware that it represented another human being's misfortune. Others saw dazzling jewelry. She saw the history of the jewelry. It represented a person's economic fall. It reflected someone's need. This is how this special woman viewed a piece of jewelry in a pawnshop. Ayeca? How did it get here? Everything/everybody has a history. Take it into consideration.

The second story is taken from a tribute rendered by Horav Aharon Lopiansky, Shlita, to the memory of his father, a student of Slabodka Yeshivah, where they taught gadlus ha'adam, the greatness of man, the overriding significance of every individual as being a creation of Hashem. They would daven in one of the large old shuls that graced New York. These shuls were also home to a number of homeless Jews who had fallen on hard times and would use the shul as their "base of operations."

A lively group of ten-year-old boys accompanied their fathers to shul. Since davening took a long time, and the boys were bored, they searched for things to do. One of their favorite pastimes was chasing a wretched, homeless man who used the shul's furnace room as an "apartment." Like many others like him, his clothing smelled, he was slightly unhinged, and he survived on the handouts that kind people gave him. The children would delight in rousing his ire and running away as he hurled epitaphs after them.

One day, Rav Lopiansky's father noticed this and called his son over. No angry yelling; no loud rebuke - just soft and gentle words. "You see this man?" his father asked. "He was born a cute little baby whose mother stroked him lovingly. She cooed to him and delighted when he cooed back and smiled at her. His father secretly hoped that he would achieve a position and stature in life, which he regrettably had not. He himself began dreaming and fantasizing about what he would be one day. He had brothers and sisters who played and fought with him, as all siblings do.

"And now look at what has become of him. Is it not a tragedy? Should one not be moved to tears at what happened to him? And you are compounding the tragedy by taking a tzelem Elokim, a person who was created in Hashem's image, and making 'dirt' out of him." With these words, his father softly concluded his rebuke.

We have all met the type of person that fits this description. Every community is graced with people who, instead of achieving the aspirations and dreams of their parents, become "glitches" in the system, relegated to living a life of loneliness, supported by the kindness of decent, kind-hearted people, who recognize the significance of Ayeca? How did you get here? Sadly, many of us tend to ignore these people, because they make us uncomfortable. I am not sure if the people themselves make us uncomfortable or is it their history, the reason that they are here today under such wretched circumstances, that makes us uncomfortable. Indeed, there, if not for the grace of G-d, go I. We are lucky. They have not been so fortunate. By asking, Ayeca? more often, we might prevent the next person from becoming a statistic.

Hashem turned to Hevel and his offering, but to Kayin and his offering He did not turn... this annoyed Kayin exceedingly, and his countenance fell... Kayin rose up against his brother Hevel and killed him. (4:8)

The Chasam Sofer, zl, teaches us a profound lesson, which, coming at the beginning of the Torah, should serve as a guide for us on how to view life through the lens of Torah. Hevel offered a korban, sacrifice. Hashem was pleased with Hevel's offering. At the end of the day - where did this korban get him? What benefit did Hevel accrue as a result of Hashem's turning to his korban? [This is a question likely to be asked by someone whose belief in Hashem and faith in the Torah system are, at best, deficient. A believing Jew does not ask such questions, because he has faith in Hashem.] Now, let us see what his korban achieved for Hevel. On page two, we see Hevel lying on

the ground, bleeding to death from all of the stab wounds inflicted upon him by his jealous brother, Kayin. So, to wrap up Hevel's short life: Hashem turned to His korban. This was followed by Hevel's untimely demise in the most painful manner. He left the world alone, leaving over no wife, no progeny, no legacy, nothing by which to be remembered. This is the seeming end of a very sad story.

Let us now look at Kayin, Hevel's brother and murderer. Hashem did not turn to Kayin's korban. This catalyzed Kayin's envy and ire, resulting in his murder of his brother, Hevel. He escaped and was on the "run" for seven generations, during which time his family propagated. He saw the birth of thousands of his descendants, the homes they built, the cities they had established. In the end, he, too, died - but after having lived a full life replete with nachas and seeing the transmission of his legacy (whatever it was worth). It almost makes one wonder: Hevel the tzaddik, righteous and pious, dies an untimely, miserable death, leaving hardly anyone to mourn him. Kayin, his messed up brother, lived for seven generations and was the progenitor of thousands of descendants. Is it fair?

The Chasam Sofer asks us to turn the page and view the Hevel/Kayin tragedy from the Torah's perspective. Hevel died, but his pure, holy neshamah ascended to Heaven to be misgalgel, transmigrating of the soul, into Shes, son of Adam and Chavah, who established the world. True, it took 130 years for this to take place, but Hashem has His reasons. After Shes died, Hevel's neshamah returned in the body of none other than Noach ish tzaddik, who played a leading role in the saving of the world. Noach, too, died, but Hevel's neshamah returned once again after hundreds of years, this time in the body of our quintessential leader, Moshe Rabbeinu! Not bad for a legacy! The word neshamah is an acronym for: nun - Noach; shin - Shes; mem - Moshe; Hay - Hevel! By the way, do you know what happened to all of Kayin's thousands upon thousands of descendants? They perished in the Mabul, Flood! So, who had the legacy - Kayin or Hevel?

This teaches us, explains the Chasam Sofer, that it is all about Olam Habba, the World to Come. What we see here - or do not see here - is meaningless. It is what we will one day see (if we are worthy) in Olam Habba that matters.

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Small Tastings of Torah, Judaism and Spirituality
From Rav Binny Freedman
(Portion of Bereishit)

He was a tough kid, with obvious 'stuff' going on inside; always getting into fights, spending a fair amount of time in the hallway, and always with that sad, lost look.

Many years ago, when I was first exploring the world of education and teaching, I decided to try my hand at different types of teaching to see who and what I would most enjoy teaching, and what really spoke to me.

Formal and informal, in schools and summer camps, for a few years I taught just about every type of audience I could find, with an eye towards discovering the type of teaching I truly loved and could spend the rest of my life with. One year, I took a job teaching first graders; to see what it would be like.

As part of that experience, I underwent a one day seminar designed to train young inexperienced teachers how to look for tell-tale signs of abuse at home

This was probably why I became suspicious when Gilad (not his real name) missed yet another day of school due to an accident at home. This time he had fallen down and hurt his wrist, but when he came in a couple days later with a note from home, I noticed a couple of bruises that did not seem to match his story, and decided to report the case to the school principal as well as the social worker. Once I shared my concerns I was pretty much taken out of the loop, and would never have known the parents had been called in for an interview but for the father's accosting me in a school hallway upon realizing I was the teacher who had made the initial report.

That incident confirmed my suspicion that poor little Gilad had been a victim of abuse for some time, and it obviously caused me to review all of my experiences with this sad five year old boy in a different light. Can you blame a kid for getting into fights when he learns such violence at home? Is there even a point to trying to teach him book smarts when he is experiencing such life pain? It became clear that my goals for this student were completely misplaced. Rather than attempting to see him walk away from first grade with a love of Torah, he first needed to discover a love for himself.... It's hard to focus on the appropriate end goal, if you are missing the beginning

Endings and beginnings; where did it begin, and where will it end? On Simchat Torah, Judaism celebrates the conclusion of the weekly reading of the entire Torah (the five books of Moses) with the reading of the last portion, Ve'zot Ha'Beracha. And then, just when we have finally finished, before leaving our synagogues, we start all over again. Interestingly, rather than celebrate a beginning, we celebrate an ending and then a beginning, which seems almost to deny the beginning its rightful celebratory place.

Then, the following Shabbat, we indeed do begin again and read the entire first portion of Bereishit, to actually give the beginning of the Torah its due. All of this seems to imply there is a deep connection between the end of the Torah, Ve'zot Ha'Beracha, and its beginning portion Bereishit. But a closer look at the content of these two portions, despite being the 'bookends' of the Torah, seems to bely this assumption.

Ve'zot Ha'Beracha shares the final blessings of Moshe to the tribes as they are about to enter the land of Israel, as well as the passing of leadership to Joshua (Yehoshua) who will assume the mantle of leadership after Moshe's death, also poignantly described here.

Bereishit, on the other hand, shares the creation story including the creation of Adam and Eve, the garden of Eden and the forbidden fruit, the story of the first murder (Cain and Abel), the debacle of the Tower of Babel, 2 and the descent of mankind into violence and pagan idolatry leading to the destruction of the world in the following portion of Noach. Is there a thematic connection hidden here? One interesting connection does exist, at least in some of the commentaries:

Rashi (France; 1040-1105) asks an interesting question regarding the nature of the book we call the Torah. Clearly, the Torah is not a history book, as there are major parts of history missing from its pages, and small amounts of time take up far too disproportionate a part of its space for it to be focused on history. Rather suggests Rashi (Genesis 1:1), this is a book of laws (Mitzvoth) given to the Jewish people; the recipe for how we are meant to live the life Hashem (G-d) created us to live. In that event, however, one wonders why the Torah begins with the creation of the world rather than with the first mitzvah (laws) given to the Jewish people in the story of the Exodus from Egypt?

Rashi's solution is that the Torah is telling us that Hashem created everything and thus has the right to give it to whomever he chooses. And one day (recall Rashi is writing in Medieval Christendom in the period of the Crusades ...) when the Jewish people retake possession of the land of Israel, the nations will say we are thieves who have stolen the land, at which point we will respond that Hashem (G-d) created the land and can give it to whomever he so chooses.

Putting aside for the moment how incredible it is that Rashi, nearly a thousand years ago, is describing exactly what is happening today, why is this the answer to his question? Why, at the beginning of the Torah, is it important to know that the land of Israel is ours because G-d gave it to us?

And at the other end of the Torah it seems there is also an unexpected focus on the land of Israel: many of the blessing Moshe gives to the tribes all seem to be focused on land: Beginning with Moshe's last experience seeing the entire borders of Israel (Deuteronomy (Devarim) 34:1-6) "Dan... springs from the Bashan..." (33: 22) "Naftali ... shall inherit sea and south ..." (33: 23) "Blessed is he who elongates Gad (to the East...)" (33:20) And somehow what seems most important to Moshe at the end of his life is to see

the land, and remind the Jewish people of their covenant to inherit it ... (34:1-6)

Why the focuses on the land of Israel from the beginning of the Torah till its end? There is a detail in the portion of Bereishit which may serve to enlighten us. After murdering his brother Abel (Hevel), and being sentenced by G-d to wander the land, Cain (Kayin) has a son whom he names Hanoch (Chanoch) , and he actually builds a city and names it as well Hanoch. (4:17). Strange; though forced to wander, he builds a city? And why name it after his son?

The word Chanoch in the Torah also means education (as in “Chanoch la’naar al pi darko” “ Educate a child according to what best suits him...” Proverbs (Mishlei) 22:6) .

Perhaps Kayin, after murdering his brother did not necessarily wander in the physical sense, but rather deep inside.... How does a man come to murder his own brother? The Torah does not actually specify the reason, but one imagines Kayin must have spent the rest of his life struggling with this question. Perhaps Kayin names 3 his son, and even builds a city to promote the idea, that at the root of all our mistakes is the education we receive. It all begins and ends with education.

In fact, the reason the Jewish people need to exist in their own land in the first place is because we are meant to educate the world; to be a role model of how society can be; something which cannot happen unless we are in our own land, living according to our own system of behavioral norms and ethics. In order to be a role model for the world, we have to be visible; to be seen. Part of a healthy education is the environment in which it takes place and the ability to create healthy educational goals. And three thousand years ago, as the family of Yaakov was transformed into the nation of Israel it needed to establish a society of ethics in the land G-d intended for us: the land of Israel. Because that is part of accomplishing the educational and transformational goal of the entire Torah.

Think about it: all the problems in the world today are rooted in education. ISIS, the Iranians, Jewish assimilation, gun control, environmental challenges, crime; they are all simply symptoms of educational challenges.

Ban Ki Moon, the United Nations and the Europeans can preach the need for us to sit down and discuss peace with the Arabs from here to eternity; as long as the Arab schools are teaching their children to hate there is almost no point. Imagine a garden full of beautiful flowers that blossom and grow, only to die after a short time, because someone keeps watering them with acid. It does not matter how beautiful the flowers (or ideas for peace) are, unless someone changes the liquid (or education of their children) in the watering can. Arabs are killing people and blowing themselves up all over the world because they are being educated to hate and to murder; they are learning intolerance as children, something which is very difficult to undo.

Incidentally this is something the Allies seemed to understand at the end of World War II: they refused to accept anything less than unconditional surrender, because there was no one to talk to. And after the war both in Germany and in Japan, they took over the schools and excised hatred and intolerance and Aryan supremacy from the educational system. This is why, seventy years later, with all the challenges we face we are still at peace with Germany and Japan. Nazi ideology and Japan’s imperial dictatorship needed to be obliterated, and only when children started learning tolerance and peace were they ready to live it. Perhaps this year as we celebrate this incredible recipe we call the Torah and engage again in its magnificent messages and goals, it is time to consider whether the battles on the battlefield need to be accompanied by a ‘takeover’ in the classrooms as well....

Wishing a Shabbat Shalom, from Jerusalem
Binny Freedman

from: Rabbi Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Tue, Oct 25, 2016 at 12:19 PM subject: The Melachah of Setting Fires

The Melachah of Setting Fires By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Aside from our parsha teaching of the very first Shabbos, the brocha upon fire is recited motza’ei Shabbos because we then regain its use. This definitely provides reason to discuss:

Question #1: Why the pasuk? “Why does the written Torah mention specifically that we may not kindle a flame on Shabbos?”

Question #2: Out of order “Why does the Mishnah mention that extinguishing, mechabeh, is a melachah, before it mentions that kindling, mav’ir, is a melachah? One must kindle a fire before one extinguishes it!”

Question #3: Bothered by a blech “Why must we use a blech on Shabbos?”

Answer: All three of the above questions involve laws that result from the Torah’s prohibition against kindling fires on Shabbos; lo seva’aru eish bechol moshevoeichem beyom hashabbos, “Do not kindle fire in all your places of residence on Shabbos” (Shemos 35:3). The Torah prohibition includes not only kindling a flame, but adding fuel or stoking a fire, so that it burns better. Similarly, adjusting the wick of a burning lamp on Shabbos so that it produces clearer light also violates the Torah’s prohibition.

Hav’arah is counted by the Mishnah as one of the 39 melachos. This melachah was performed during the construction of the Mishkan when they built fires under the pots used to create the vat dyes required for the curtains and the vestments of the kohanim (Rashi, Shabbos 73a s.v. mechabeh).

Why a special pasuk? There is a question here: Why does the written Torah mention, specifically, that we may not kindle a flame on Shabbos? Other melachos are not singled out with a special mitzvah in the written Torah.

The Gemara (Shabbos 70a) records a dispute between tanna’im why the written Torah especially mentions the melachah of hav’arah. Rabbi Yosi rules hav’arah lelav yatzas, meaning that hav’arah is singled out to mitigate it. Whereas the other melachah prohibitions of Shabbos are capital offenses, hav’arah is a somewhat lesser Torah transgression, only a regular lo saaseh. (Certainly, we should treat it with full seriousness, even according to Rabbi Yosi. The difference in practical halachah is that, according to Rabbi Yosi, one who violated hav’arah negligently does not bring a korban chatas as atonement, whereas someone who transgressed negligently one of the other melachos does.)

Rabbi Nosson disagrees with Rabbi Yosi, contending that kindling is considered a regular melachah of Shabbos like all the others, but that hav’arah lechaleik yatzas, hav’arah is singled out to teach that the 39 melachos of Shabbos are considered 39 different prohibitions. This means that someone who violated more than one melachah on a single Shabbos is punished as if he had violated several prohibitions of the Torah. He might be required to offer more than one chatas offering.

The accepted halachah follows Rabbi Nosson, that kindling is considered a regular melachah of Shabbos.

Injunctions because of hav’arah Although we are all aware that it is prohibited to kindle or to increase a flame on Shabbos, we may not realize that many of the regulations that we observe on Shabbos were established by Chazal out of concern that someone not violate the prohibition of hav’arah. For example, the reason that we use a blech to warm food on Shabbos or to keep it warm is because Chazal prohibited using an open fire for these purposes. This would involve two different rabbinic prohibitions, that of chazarah, returning food to a fire on Shabbos, and shehiyah, leaving food to cook or keep warm from before Shabbos on an open flame. Chazal prohibited shehiyah because of concern that someone might mistakenly stoke coals. According to some authorities, the prohibition of chazarah was also so that someone warming his food on Shabbos not err and inadvertently stoke the coals of the flame. Similarly, Chazal prohibited hatmanah, wrapping or insulating hot food before Shabbos in a way that increases the heat on Shabbos. All of these are prohibited because of concerns that one may

mistakenly stoke a flame on Shabbos (Shabbos 34b; Tosafos, Shabbos 36b s.v. lo).

Chazal also prohibited reading or doing other activities involving detailed work by the light of an open flame on Shabbos, because of concern that one will adjust the flame (Rashi, Mishnah Shabbos 11a). For this reason, on Shabbos, one may not use an oil lamp to assist choosing between two items of clothing that look similar (Shabbos 12a), or use it to check tzitzis (Magen Avraham 275:1).

Permitted Chazal permitted using oil lamps on Shabbos when they were not concerned that someone might errantly adjust the light. For example, they permitted two people to read the same text together by oil lamp, reasoning that each would pay attention that his partner not inadvertently adjust the flame (Shabbos 12b). Similarly, even in situations when it is prohibited to use a lamp for meticulous work, one may appoint a shomer to make sure that one does not adjust the flame by mistake. This shomer must be someone who is not currently doing any meticulous work – otherwise, we are concerned that he, himself, may forget his job as shomer.

Chazal also permitted students studying under the direction of their rebbe to study and read in their usual fashion. The reason is that since they know that their rebbe is supervising them, they keep in mind to be careful (Shabbos 12b). The rebbe himself is permitted to glance at the seforim to tell the students where to start, although he is not permitted to continue reading the material. For a similar reason, when the Seder night falls on Shabbos, one may read the hagadah by lamplight. The halachic assumption is that most people are fairly familiar with the hagadah and use the printed book just to make sure that they don't inadvertently skip parts (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 275:9). This is considered similar to the halachah that the rebbe of cheder students is permitted to glance at the seforim to tell the students where to start.

There are a few other instances in which Chazal permitted reading on Shabbos using the illumination of an open oil lamp: One may read the Mishnah of the second chapter of Shabbos, Bameh Madlikin, which describes these concerns. Since the chapter itself emphasizes these laws, it serves as a reminder to be careful (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 275:7). Similarly, accepted practice was to allow people to read from a machzor on Yom Kippur by lamplight, since the fear of Yom Kippur will remind a person not to errantly adjust the lamp (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 275:8).

Candlelight Is reading by the light of a candle the same as reading by the light of an oil lamp? Are we less concerned that someone will attempt to adjust a candle to provide better light?

Indeed, we find a dispute among early authorities whether one may read by candlelight on Shabbos, some contending that it is unlikely that someone would mistakenly adjust this lighting (Hagahos Ashri, Shabbos 1:27; Beis Yosef, Shulchan Aruch and commentaries, Orach Chayim 275; Taz, Orach Chayim 278). The prevalent custom is to be lenient (see Biur Halachah 275:1 s.v. le'or). Therefore, we may certainly be lenient regarding electric lights, although there are individuals who follow a stringent position even in this regard. Those who follow this stricter approach assign someone to be the shomer of the Beis Medrash – his job is to not learn and to be responsible that no one inadvertently try to adjust the lights.

What is burning? We find a very interesting dispute between acharonim concerning what is the definition of the melachah of mav'ir: is it the increase of the fire or is it the consumption of fuel? Some contend that the melachah is the creation or increase of the fire or flame (Graz, Orach Chayim 495 in Kuntros Acharon), whereas others dispute this analysis and define the melachah as the consumption of fuel that transpires when a flame burns (Shu"t Avnei Neizer, Orach Chayim 238:8). Although this dispute seems like a theoretical and almost philosophic debate, there seems to be a difference in halachah that is contingent on this dispute. Does heating metal to a glow involve the melachah of hav'arah? If hav'arah is defined as the consumption of fuel, then the heating of metal, which does not create any

noticeable destruction of fuel, should not violate hav'arah. On the other hand, if hav'arah is defined as the increase of a flame, then heating metal should violate hav'arah.

This could perhaps explain a dispute between the Rambam and the Raavad (Hilchos Shabbos 12:1) whether heating metal is prohibited because it is considered hav'arah or because it is included under the melachah of bishul, cooking, but it is not considered hav'arah.

This dispute could then affect what melachah is involved when turning on an incandescent light. According to those who consider heating metal to be bishul, then this would violate bishul, whereas according to those who categorize heating metal as hav'arah, then turning on an incandescent light is included under the melachah of hav'arah. There are a few practical differences that result from this dispute, but, unfortunately, explaining this will take us far afield from our topic. (This is without getting involved in the separate dispute as to whether use of electricity violates the melachos of either boneh [constructing] or makeh bepatisch [completing an item].)

Out of order At this point, let us explain the second of our opening questions:

“Why did the Mishnah mention that extinguishing, mechabeah, is a melachah before it mentions that kindling, mav'ir, is a melachah?” When the Mishnah lists the 39 melachos, it mentions extinguishing before it mentions kindling. Is this not counter-logical, since it is difficult to extinguish a fire unless someone has previously kindled it?

Among the various standard commentaries, I found two approaches to answer this question. The Meiri explains that when preparing a vat dye, you sometimes need to lower the flame so that the dye does not burn and then you need to increase the size of the fire afterwards. Lowering such a flame on Shabbos would violate extinguishing, and increasing the heat of the fire afterwards is included under the Torah's prohibition of mav'ir. Since the preparation of dye in the construction of the Mishkan involved extinguishing before kindling, the Mishnah mentions the two melachos in this order. (An alternative answer is mentioned by the Tiferes Yisroel in his Kalkeles Shabbos introduction to Mesechta Shabbos, Meleches Mav'ir #37).

In conclusion Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (Shemos 20:10) notes that people mistakenly think that work is prohibited on Shabbos in order that it should be a day of rest. He points out that the Torah does not prohibit doing avodah, which connotes hard work, but melachah, which implies purpose and accomplishment. Shabbos is a day that we refrain from constructing and altering the world for our own purposes. The goal of Shabbos is to allow Hashem's rule to be the focus of creation, by refraining from our own creative acts (Shemos 20:11).