

BS"D



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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON BEREISHIS - 5765

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HARISHON

If we look through the entire sefer Torah, we find, very interestingly, that the Nachas escorts the world from its very creation until the eve of Bnei Yisrael's entrance into Eretz Yisrael. It is the Nachas who causes the downfall of Adam and Chava by convincing them to eat from the Etz Hada'at. When Yosef's brothers throw him into the pit, we find the Nachas once again. The passuk says, regarding Yosef's pit, "And the pit was empty, there was no water in it" (Bereishit 37:24). Chazal (Shabbat 22a) comment, "There was no water in the pit, but there were snakes and scorpions." We again find the Nachas in Moshe's very first encounter with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Moshe argues that there is no point in sending him to talk to Am Yisrael in Mitzrayim, since they would not believe that Hakadosh Baruch Hu appeared to him. Thereupon, Hakadosh Baruch Hu instructed Moshe to throw his staff to the ground, at which point it transformed into a snake. Moshe grabbed the snake by the tail and it transformed back into Moshe's staff. The Nachas makes one more appearance on the eve of Bnei Yisrael's entrance into Eretz Yisrael, as mentioned earlier. Am Yisrael complains that there is no bread and water, so Hakadosh Baruch Hu punishes their lack of emunah with a plague of snakes, killing many of the Jews. Moshe constructs a Nachas Nichoshet according to Hakadosh Baruch Hu's instruction, and thereafter any Jew who was bitten by a snake would be healed by simply looking at the Nachas Nichoshet. Why does Hashem choose the snake to appear in these different places and times ranging from Briyat Haolam all the way through Knisat Eretz Yisrael?

When Hakadosh Baruch Hu punished the Nachash for enticing Adam and Chava to eat from the Etz Hadaat, the Torah tells us that the Nachash was given two curses, "On your stomach shall you crawl," and, "The dust of the ground will you eat all your days." The curse of "Vi'afar Tochal" is very clear: Since dirt can be found almost anywhere, the Nachash would never be without food and would thus never need to turn to Hakadosh Baruch Hu for help. In other words, the curse of "ViAfar Tochal" meant that the Nachash was completely cut off from Hakadosh Baruch Hu. The curse of "Al Gichoncha Telech" is somewhat more perplexing. Is this punishment the removal of the Nachash's legs? This isn't much of a punishment, considering that snakes can move quite fast on their stomachs, even without legs. Rather, this punishment is also one of cutting off. An animal that crawls on its stomach can only move in a zigzag. A snake therefore cannot move in a straight line. When a person walks in a zigzag, everyone who sees him avoids him, since this strange way of walking suggests deviousness. The curse of "Al Gichoncha

Telech," then, serves to distance the Nachash from the rest of "society" in addition to being distanced from Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Understanding the Nachash's curses, we can now move a step further in analyzing the concept represented by the Nachash. We find the Nachash once more in Parashas Shemini, listed among the non-kosher animals. The passuk says, Kol Holech Al Gachon... Lo Tochlum Ki Sheketz Hem "Any animal which crawls on its stomach...do not eat, for they are abominations" (Vayikra 11:42). The letter Vav in the word Gachon is larger than the rest of the letters, which brings Chazal to expound that this letter is at the very center of the Torah (Kidushin 30a). This, Chazal explain, is the chiddush that the Kadmonim revealed to us, and it is the reason they are called Sofrim, because they counted all the letters and taught us that this letter is in the very middle of the Torah. This chiddush is difficult to understand, though, because seemingly anybody with a little patience could count all the letters in the Torah and come to the realization that this Vav is the halfway point of the Torah. The explanation, rather, is that the Kadmonim were not revealing technical and numerical facts of the Torah, but the lesson that everything that happens in life, whether to the Yachid or the Tzibur, can be seen in one of two ways. We can look at these events through our own emotions and understanding, in which case a person might see things one way at the time it happens, differently after a few months, and even more differently after several years. His views oscillate rather than remain constant. Alternatively, one can look at these events not through his own emotions and feelings, but rather through the teachings of his rabbanim, which they received from their rabbanim – the Mesorah. Through this way of looking at life, one realizes that even if the journey is challenging and difficult to understand, perhaps even illogical at times, when he ultimately looks back on his life he will find that the entire way he had gone straight, living a life of Yashrut. This is the central point of the Torah. If a person follows his own heart and his own feelings, he will find himself crawling on his stomach on a crooked path. If he follows the Mesorah, the guidance and direction of his rabbanim, he will find himself on a path straight like a Vav. Here lies Man's choice.

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

This was also the lesson Hakadosh Baruch Hu taught Moshe when he doubted that Bnei Yisrael would listen to him. Hakadosh Baruch Hu transformed his staff into a snake and back in order to teach Moshe that if you follow your own beliefs, you will find yourself going in a zigzag like a snake, but if you follow Me, even when it seems difficult, even if you don't understand, you will be on a path as straight as the staff in your hand. And with this very staff, representing straight, unwavering emunah, Moshe struck Mitzrayim with the Makot and brought about the miracles of Yetziyat Mitzrayim.

Am Yisrael was taught this lesson on the eve of their Knisah La'aretz, when the nation, openly displaying their lack of bitachon in Hakadosh Baruch Hu, complained about the lack of bread and water. Hakadosh Baruch Hu sent the Nachash to show them exactly what they resemble. Appropriately, the cure for the bite of the snake was to look at the Nachash Nichoshet and be Mishtabed L'Hakadosh Baruch Hu. This lesson was necessary before the entrance into Eretz Yisrael, because you cannot enter Eretz Yisrael without emunah, and you cannot live there without bitachon in Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

We now understand why the Nachash escorts the world from the time of Creation until Bnei Yisrael's entrance into Eretz Yisrael. The concept represented by the Nachash is expressed by Noach as well. When Noach left the teivah, the Torah says, "Vayachel Noach Ish Haadama Vayita Kerem Vayesht Min Hayayin Va'yishkar (Bereishit 9:20-24) The

Gemarah (Sanhedrin 70a) says that the letter Vav appears 13 times (attached to verbs) in these pesukim. The explanation is that Noach had the opportunity to start a new world in a Yashar way, enabling the world to last forever, yet the moment he got off of the teivah he began with the Gefen, which, while it has a positive side, providing Yayin for Kiddush and Havdalah, also has a negative side Shikrut, drunkenness. In this way, Noach lost the opportunity to start the new world with Yashrut. Planting the Gefen was an expression of Noach's worldview, as the Gefen is the only tree that grows crooked, in a zigzag. This is hardly the tree with which he should have begun the new world. Amazingly, the same gemara in Sanhedrin brings R' Meir's opinion that the Etz Hadaat, from which

Adam Harishon ate improperly, was the Gefen. Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Adam Harishon, "Every tree is a reflection of you, "Ki Haadam Etz Hasadeh, For Man is the tree of the field" (Dvarim 20:19), except for the Gefen. Every tree is Yashar, except for the Gefen."

Adam Harishon and Noach were both lowered because of the Gefen, but then Avraham came along. The Torah tells us that Avraham planted an Eshel, a tree, bringing Yashrut back into the world. It is because of his Yashrut that Avraham is called Amudo Shel Olam, the pillar of the world. From Avraham's tree, Yaakov took some branches on his way down to Mitzrayim, understanding that the way out of Galut is to exhibit Yashrut in one's relations with his fellow man and with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Yaakov planted those branches in Mitzrayim, where they sprouted other trees, from which Bnai Yisrael built the Mishkan, the place of Hashra'at Hashechinah, of Atzei Shitim Omdim, representing emunah, bitachon, and Yashrut. This is why Sefer Bereishit is called Sefer Hayashar, as the Netziv writes in his hakdamah, because the essential quality of the Avot was not their Tzidkut or their Chasidut, but their Yashrut. With Yashrut, you can attain everything, and without Yashrut, even if you have everything, there is nothing.

How do we acquire this Yashrut? The Torah teaches us in Shirat Haazinu. The passuk says, "Recall the days of old, contemplate the earlier years; ask your father and he will relate it to you, your elders and they will tell you" (Devarim 32:7) The Torah commands us here to learn the history of the world and to turn to our elders for their experience. Certainly the Torah doesn't mean here that we should simply learn about the destruction of the Dor Hamabul, the Dor Haflagah, and Anshei Sedom. The simple history is written explicitly in the Torah, Zil Kari Bei Rav Hu and is not something one would have to ask his elders about. Rather, the Torah wants us to examine the potential of the earlier generations, what these generations failed to bring into the world. Let us analyze what exactly this potential was.

The Dor Hamabul had the potential to receive the Torah. The gemara (Zvachim 116a) says that when Bnai Yisrael received the Torah, Hakadosh Baruch Hu's voice was so loud that the Umot Haolam, who were not fit to receive the Torah, thought another Mabul was coming to the world. In other words, we see that a Mabul comes in the absence of Kabalat Hatorah. The gemara (Chulin 139b) asks "Moshe Min Hatorah Minayim?" Where is Moshe's Makor the Torah?" The gemara brings the passuk immediately before the Mabul "For he is flesh and his days shall number one hundred twenty years" (Bereishit 6:3) Rashi explains that Bishegam is Moshe in Gematria, and Moshe in fact lived for one hundred twenty years. If the Dor Hamabul had the potential to receive the Torah, Moshe Rabbeinu must also be there in potential form. How amazing also that Moshe was named Moshe because "Min Hamayim Mishitihu" From the water I drew him" (Shmot 2:10) What water was he saved from? From the water of the Mabul, where he would have emerged had the Dor Hamabul fulfilled its potential, he was saved for a later generation. The Dor Haflagah had the potential to explain the Torah. "Vahihi Kol Haaretz Safa Achat, The entire world spoke one language." They could have used this gift of clear communication to explain the Torah truthfully, but instead they used it to rebel against Hakadosh

Baruch Hu by coming together to build Migdal Bavel. We see that this was the potential of Bavel, because years later Bavel produced the Talmud Bavli, which remains with us to this day, explaining the Torah Shebichtav. Unfortunately, however, this potential was not realized by the Dor Haflagah.

Anshei Sdom had the ability to create strong connections between man and fellow man as well as between man and Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Instead, however, they did the opposite, completely perverting any concept of Bein Adam Lichaveiro and Bein Adam Lamakom. Their failed potential was realized many years later, when David Hamelech, a descendant of Moav (through Rut), who was born as a result of Mahapeichat Sdom, said, "Viani Tfilah, I am prayer" (Tehilim 109:4) Tefilah is a connection between man and Hakadosh Baruch Hu and between man and fellow man, as we constantly pray for the Tzibur and for individuals in the Tzibur

We see from this that the pillar of the world is Torah, the way to understand Torah is through Torah Shebeal Peh, and once you understand this you can build great relationships with your fellow man and with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. These three things together create Yashrut. This is Kol Torat Chayeinu, the eternal Torah. Our task is to remember that we were created on Yom Vav and are therefore all Yisharim like a Vav. Man was created Yashar. We must fix the crookedness of the Nachash. The harder we strive for this, the faster we will approach the Geulah Ha'atidah. This is why the Kadmonim tell us that Nachash in Gematria is Mashiach. The harder we try to fix the crookedness of the Nachash and live our lives with yashrut, emet, and bitachon in Hakadosh Baruch Hu, especially in our times, when we really see everything coming apart and the only thing that stands strong is the Yashrut of Torah, the more we will merit to walk the straight path and bring more Kavod Shamayim, becoming Atzei Shitim Omdim, standing straight for all eternity.

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From: TorahWeb.org [torahweb@torahweb.org] Sent: Tuesday, October 05, 2004 2:49 PM To: tw477@torahweb.org Subject: The Central Role of Eretz Yisrael in Torah Life - Rav Michael Rosensweig to subscribe, email weekly@torahweb.org to unsubscribe or for anything else, email: torahweb@torahweb.org the HTML version of this dvar Torah can be found at: <http://www.torahweb.org/thisWeek.html>  
RAV MICHAEL ROSENSWEIG

#### THE CENTRAL ROLE OF ERETZ YISRAEL IN TORAH LIFE

The Torah begins with the account of Creation. While the Ramban (1:1) and others note that the theological and philosophical implications of Divine creation ex nihilo (creation from nothing) constitute an ideal opening, Rashi, citing the midrash, perceives the choice as problematic. Rashi notes that it would have been more appropriate to begin the Torah with the commandment of sanctifying the new moon. The Sifsei Chachamim elaborates Rashi's perspective. He explains that the Torah is essentially a halakhic work, not a historical chronicle or even a theological-philosophical treatise. Thus, one would have anticipated that halakhic norms would set the tone from the outset. He further explains that kiddush ha-chodesh (contrasted with milah and gid ha-nasheh) constitutes the first mitzvah addressed to the Jewish people as a community, qualifying it as the proper halakhic institution to initiate the Torah narrative. Elsewhere (TorahWeb, Parshat ha-Hodesh, 5761) we have suggested that kiddush ha-hodesh epitomizes Klal Yisrael's input and responsibility in the halakhic process. This mitzvah, then, conveys the ideal of a halakhic partnership with Hashem, certainly a worthy foundation for all of Torah. In any case, Rashi concludes that the selection of the history of creation rather than kiddush ha-chodesh as the

first chapter of the Torah was designed to unequivocally establish our rights to Eretz Yisrael by underscoring Hashem's creation and sovereignty.

Rashi's approach raises some fundamental questions. Does the fact that our claim to Eretz Yisrael has been challenged by other nations justify the need to project the basis of our sovereignty as the very first principle of the Torah, even at the expense of establishing the Torah's halakho-centricity? Moreover, even if it was necessary to ground our rights to Eretz Yisrael by means of the creation narrative why did the Torah not immediately return to the theme of kiddush ha-chodesh to accentuate the pivotal role of public halakhic institutions and of the collective status and stature of Klal Yisrael?

Upon further reflection, however, it appears that the urgency to establish our rights to Eretz Yisrael is precisely due to the centrality of Eretz Yisrael in the halakhic and hashkafic identity of Klal Yisrael. It is surely no coincidence that Eretz Yisrael is also the subject of the first imperative ("lech lechah") addressed to Avraham Avinu, the father of the nation ("av hamon goyim"), and that the first individual to be born as a Jew, Yitzchak, was destined to live his entire life in Eretz Yisrael.

Eretz Yisrael plays a major role in several crucial halakhic contexts. Though it equally affects all of the Jewish world, the determination of the halakhic calendar through the institution of kiddush ha-chodesh is itself ideally linked to Eretz Yisrael. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 11b; Berachot 63b) cites various pesukim ('Ki mi-Tziyon teitzei Torah'; "le-Shichno tidrashoo " etc.) that convey the general impact and potential of life in Eretz Yisrael as the basis of this conclusion. A parallel phenomenon exists with respect to the halakhic institution of semichah (rabbinic authority) which is indispensable to communal Jewish life. Semichah produces rabbinic judges who may adjudicate in any Jewish community (Makkot 7a), but it can only be bestowed in Eretz Yisrael (Sanhedrin 14a). The gemara in Sanhedrin (43b) concludes that the extraordinary responsibility that one Jew has for another (areivut), which stems from the concept of community that every Jew shares, began only when the nation entered its homeland, Eretz Yisrael. The gemara (Horayot 3a) rules that only the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael represents the collective community of Klal Yisrael with respect to the laws of par helem davar shel zibbur (the single korban brought for the entire community when the majority living in Israel succumb to a judicial error of the great Sanhedrin), though the effects of this law, too, extend to Jews in all geographic locations.

It is possible then that the emphasis on our rights to Eretz Yisrael right at the beginning of the Torah exemplifies the transcendent halakhic and hashkafic role of the community of Klal Yisrael, as this theme embodies the very values that make kiddush ha-chodesh an ideal introduction to the Torah. The role of Eretz Yisrael in kiddush ha-chodesh and its centrality in other pivotal institutions that affect all of Jewish life and that have little or nothing to do with the technical sanctity of the soil of the Land stems precisely from the same idealistic concept of Jewish communal life that symbolically qualify kiddush ha-chodesh for a central role! Thus, the Torah did not abandon the motifs of halakho-centricity and of the opportunities and aspirations of halakhic national life by first grounding our claim to Eretz Yisrael, but actually reinforced these principles. The Torah conveys that our identification with our homeland is a component that is critical to our identity and to our spiritual-halakhic aspirations as a people.

The Sifrei in parshat Eikev (also cited by Rashi and Ramban Devarim 11:18) strongly implies that our performance of halakhic norms outside of Eretz Yisrael serves a preparatory function as we await a return to a more ideal life in our national homeland. This perspective seems puzzling, as the mitzvot cited as examples- tefilin, mezuzah - do not have any obvious link to Eretz Yisrael. Indeed, the Gera (Kol Eliyahu, Eikev) and others (Beit ha-Levi 3:1) proposed alternate explanations of the Sifrei. However, it is possible that the Sifrei needs to be understood

precisely within the context of the second section of keriyat shema where it appears. It is evident as Rashi (11:13) also notes that this section (contrasted with the first part of Shema in Vaetchanan), which focuses on kabbalat ol mitzvot (Berakkhot 13a- the commitment to implement the Torah's norms), is addressed collectively to the entire nation. Even mitzvot that devolve upon individuals are enhanced in a national-collective setting. The Sifrei declares that this communal dimension of personal mitzvot is primarily attained only in Eretz Yisrael, although as individual performances there is no particular link to the Land. [The fact that areivut applies to the performance of individual mitzvot, as evidenced by the rule of yatza motzi reflects this enhanced collective dimension.]

The Ramban (Behalotekhah) postulates that there might not have been an obligation of korban Pesach in the desert, (with the exception of the first anniversary). He does not explain why this mitzvah should be confined to Eretz Yisrael. [Although this perspective fits the Ramban's general position developed throughout his commentary on the Torah and in Sefer ha-Mitzvot regarding the overriding centrality of Eretz Yisrael in the halakhic and historical life of the Jewish people.] However, there is abundant evidence that korban Pesach reflects the national commitment of the Jewish people to the berit (covenant) with Hashem that parallels the mitzvah of berit milah on an individual plane. If so, the link to Eretz Yisrael, the exclusive national headquarters of the Jewish people, is compelling.

The crucial role of Eretz Yisrael in Jewish life, established according to Rashi in the very beginning of the Torah, has never been more evident than in our own era. The multiple pivotal roles that the reborn State of Israel has played in the aftermath of the Holocaust and in subsequent decades must not be taken for granted. The absorption of distressed and threatened Jewish communities, the restoration of Jewish hopes and aspirations, the identification of marginally committed Jews with the State, the efflorescence of Jewish learning in Eretz Yisrael and the Diaspora have transformed Jewish life in our time. Ironically, the most recent historical chapter of the overriding, even incalculable impact of the national center of Jewish life has occurred in an environment in which the international community has doggedly persisted in questioning our claim to our homeland.

At this crucial juncture in our history when Israel is being subjected to many pressures, it is vitally important that we remain vigilant in our efforts to safeguard the military and political integrity of our national homeland. Our commitment to Eretz Yisrael transcends even the importance of a particular mitzvah or group of mitzvot. It constitutes a litmus test of our dedication to the totality of our halakhic-spiritual aspirations as a nation. This is the Torah's first and most enduring lesson.

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Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

RABBI DR. JONATHAN SACKS

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago]

Bereishith Three Stages of Creation

Thus unfolds the most revolutionary and the most influential account of creation in the history of the human spirit.

Rashi, however, begins his commentary with a remarkable question: "Rabbi Yitzhak said: The Torah should have opened with the verse, 'This month shall be to you the first of months' (Shemot12: 2), which is the first command given to Israel. Why then does it commence with the creation?"

The logic of Rabbi Yitzhak's question is this. The name we give the book of books is not 'The Bible' (from the Greek and Latin *biblia*, meaning, 'the books.'). It is Torah, meaning, 'law, instruction, teaching.' The name itself defines what the book is meant to be - not a store of information: history, fact, scientific explanation. It is something else: a book of laws, of guidance, of proper conduct and behaviour. The question to which Torah is an answer is not, 'How did what is, come to be?' but, 'How then shall I live?' Even a fact as fundamental as creation does not, in and of itself, justify its presence in the Torah. Instead, suggests Rabbi Yitzhak, the Torah should have begun with the first command to Israel, in Egypt, as they were awaiting the exodus. How, then, are we to understand the opening chapter of the Torah, not as fact but as teaching?

Rabbi Yitzhak gives one answer: to justify the gift of the land of Israel to the people of Israel. The creator of the world is ipso facto owner and ruler of the world. His gift confers title. The claim of the Jewish people to the land is unlike that of any other. It does not flow from arbitrary facts of settlement, historical association, conquest or international agreement (though in the case of the present state of Israel, all four apply). It follows from something more profound: the word of G-d Himself - the G-d acknowledged, as it happens, by all three monotheisms: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Rabbi Yitzhak gives a political reading of the chapter. Let me suggest another (not incompatible, but additional) interpretation.

One of the most striking propositions of the Torah is that we are called on, as G-d's image, to imitate G-d. "Be holy, for I, the Lord your G-d, am holy" (Vayikra 19:2):

The sages taught: "Just as G-d is called gracious, so you be gracious. Just as He is called merciful, so you be merciful. Just as He is called holy, so you be holy." So too the prophets described the Almighty by all the various attributes: long-suffering, abounding in kindness, righteous, upright, perfect, mighty and powerful and so on - to teach us that these qualities are good and right and that a human being should cultivate them, and thus imitate G-d as far as we can.

(Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, De'ot, 1:6).

Implicit in the first chapter of Bereishith is thus a momentous challenge: Just as G-d is creative, so you be creative. In making man, G-d endowed one creature - the only one thus far known to science - with the capacity not merely to adapt to his environment, but to adapt his environment to him; to shape the world; to be active, not merely passive, in relation to the influences and circumstances that surround him:

The brute's existence is an undignified one because it is a helpless existence. Human existence is a dignified one because it is a glorious, majestic, powerful existence . . . Man of old who could not fight disease and succumbed in multitudes to yellow fever or any other plague with degrading helplessness could not lay claim to dignity. Only the man who builds hospitals, discovers therapeutic techniques, and saves lives is blessed with dignity . . . Civilized man has gained limited control of nature and has become, in certain respects, her master, and with his mastery he has attained dignity as well. His mastery has made it possible for him to act in accordance with his responsibility. (Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith*)

The first chapter of Bereishith therefore contains a teaching. It tells us how to be creative - namely in three stages. The first is the stage of saying "Let there be." The second is the stage of "and there was." The third is the stage of seeing "that it is good." What does this mean?

THE FIRST TEACHES US something counter-intuitive. What is truly creative is not science or technology per se, but the word. What singles out *Homo sapiens* among other animals is the ability to speak.

(Targum Onkelos translates the last phrase of Bereishith 2: 7, "G-d formed man out of dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living creature" as "and man became *ruach memallelah*, a speaking spirit.") Because we can speak, we can think, and therefore imagine a world different from the one that currently

exists. Creation begins with the creative word, the idea, the vision, the dream. Language - and with it the ability to remember a distant past and conceptualize a distant future - lies at the heart of our uniqueness as the image of G-d. Just as G-d makes the natural world by words ("And G-d said . . . and there was") so we make the human world by words, which is why Judaism takes words so seriously ("Life and death are in the power of the tongue," says the Book of Proverbs (*Mishlei* 18:2). Already here, at the beginning of creation, is foreshadowed the Jewish doctrine of revelation, that G-d reveals Himself to humanity not in the sun, the stars, the wind or the storm but in and through words, sacred words ("Torah from heaven") that make us, with G-d, co-partners in the work of redemption.

"AND GOD SAID, LET THERE BE . . . and there was." This, the second stage of creation, is for us the most difficult. It is one thing to conceive an idea, another to execute it. "Between the imagination and the act falls the shadow." Between the intention and the fact, the dream and the reality, lies struggle, opposition, and the fallibility of the human will. It is all too easy, having tried and failed, to conclude that nothing ultimately can be achieved, that the world is as it is, and that all human endeavour is destined to end in failure.

This, however, is a Greek idea, not a Jewish one: that hubris ends in nemesis, that fate is inexorable and we must resign ourselves to it. Judaism holds the opposite, that though creation is difficult, laborious and fraught with setbacks, we are summoned to it as our essential human vocation: "It is not for you to complete the work," said Rabbi Tarfon, "but neither are you free to desist from it." There is a lovely rabbinic phrase: *machashvah tovah mitzrafah Hakadosh barukh Hu le-maaseh*. This is usually translated as "G-d considers a good intention as if it were the deed." I translate it differently: "When a human being has a good intention, G-d joins it in helping it become a deed," meaning - He gives us the strength, if not now, then eventually, to turn it into achievement.

If the first stage in creation is imagination, the second is will. The sanctity of the human will is one of the most distinctive features of the Torah. There have been many philosophies - the generic name for them is determinisms - that maintain that the human will is an illusion. We are determined by other factors - genetically encoded instinct, economic or social forces, conditioned reflex - and the idea that we are what we choose to be is a myth. Judaism is a protest against determinism in the name of human freedom and responsibility. We are not pre-programmed machines; we are persons, endowed with will. Just as G-d is free, so we are free, and the entire Torah is a call to mankind to exercise responsible freedom in creating a social world which honours the freedom of others. Will is the bridge from "Let there be" to "and there was."

WHAT, THOUGH, of the third stage: "And G-d saw that it was good"? This is the hardest of the three stages to understand. What does it mean to say that "G-d saw that it was good"? Surely, this is redundant. What does G-d make that is not good? Judaism is not Gnosticism. Nor is it an eastern mysticism. We do not believe that this created world of the senses is evil. To the contrary, we believe that it is the arena of blessing and good. Perhaps this is what the phrase comes to teach us: that the religious life is not to be sought in retreat from the world and its conflicts into mystic rapture or nirvana. G-d wants us to be part of the world, fighting its battles, tasting its joy, celebrating its splendour. But there is more.

In the course of my work I have visited prisons and centres for young offenders. Many of the people I met there were potentially good. They had, like you and me, dreams, hopes, ambitions, aspirations. They did not want to become criminals. Their tragedy was that often they came from dysfunctional families in difficult conditions. No one took the time to care for them, support them, teach them how to negotiate the world, how to achieve what they wanted through hard work and persuasion rather than violence and lawbreaking. They lacked a basic self-respect, a sense of their own worth. No one ever told them that they were good.

To see that someone is good and to say so is a creative act - one of the great creative acts. There may be some few individuals who are inescapably evil, but they are few. Within almost all of us is something positive and unique, but which is all too easily injured, and which only grows when exposed to the sunlight of someone else's recognition and praise. To see the good in others and let them see themselves in the mirror of our regard is to help someone grow to become the best they can be. "Greater," says the Jerusalem Talmud, "is one who causes others to do good than one who does good himself." To help others become what they could be is to give birth to creativity in someone else's soul. This is done not by criticism or negativity but by searching out the good in others, and helping them see it, recognize it, own it, and live it. "And G-d saw that it was good" - this too is part of the work of creation, the subtlest and most beautiful of all. When we recognise the goodness in someone, we do more than create it, we help it to become creative. That is what G-d does for us, and what He calls us to do for others.

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From: dan@zomet.org [mailto:dan@zomet.org] Sent: October 04, 2004  
Subject: Shabbat Be Shabbato- Breishit  
"THAT IT IS GOOD" - TWO TIMES -  
BY RABBI AMNON BAZAK -

In the first part of the description of the creation of the world (Bereishit 1:3-10), five key elements of the foundation of the world are encountered - day, night, heaven, earth, and the seas. The key phrase in this section is "He called..." - repeated for each of these basic elements. "And G-d called the light day and He called the dark night... And G-d called the firmament heaven... And G-d called the dry land earth, and He called the gathered waters the seas." In fact, these elements existed before the process began, but they were intermingled with each other. The process of creating them was basically an act of separation. "And G-d separated between the light and the dark... And He separated between the water under the firmament and the water over the firmament." The earth and the sea were created in a similar way: "Let the water under the heaven be gathered into one place, so that the dry land will be seen." As opposed to this, in the next section (1:11-31), the phrase "He called..." no longer appears, and the focus changes to creation of objects to fill the basic elements that came into existence in the first part of creation. The five main elements continued to serve as a basis for the rest of creation. On the fourth day, "Let there be lights in the heaven in order to separate between day and night... There were lights in the heaven, providing light on the earth." On the fifth day, "Let the water bring forth living creatures, and let birds fly over the earth, before the firmament of the heaven... And G-d blessed them, saying, be fruitful and multiply, and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth." And on the sixth day, "Let the earth give forth every species of living creature: animals, crawling creatures, and animals of the earth, every species separately." In the end, the role of man is defined as being linked to the five basic elements: "Let us make a man in our image, and let him rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the animals and all the earth, and everything that crawls on the earth."

What is remarkable about this change in focus is that it occurs in the middle of the third day. There are two separate acts of creation on this day (the phrase "G-d said" appears twice). The first one refers to giving names to the earth and the heaven, and it is part of the activity of the first two days of creation, while the second one, "let the earth give forth grass," is related more to the actions of the last three days. Why did this change in focus take place in the middle of the third day?

Evidently the third day is indeed an expression of the "borderline" between the first and last days of creation. The fact that the transformation between the two approaches takes place on a single day in two parts - giving the earth its name and commanding the grass to grow from the earth - emphasizes that neither part of creation can stand

on its own. The basic elements can be created but they have no meaning if they do not have a practical application. The land is "earth" only if it is a basis for the growing of fruit trees, the sea and the heaven have meaning only if they serve as the sites for sun and moon, as well as for the birds and the animals. This is evidently also the meaning of the double appearance of the phrase "it was good" on the third day - the combination of basic creation and practical use of the results for the appropriate goal is the ultimate objective of creation.

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From: Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalist@shemayisrael.com]  
Sent: Tuesday, September 28, 2004 8:38 PM To: Peninim Parsha  
PENINIM ON THE TORAH  
BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM

PARSHAS BEREISHIS And there was evening and there was morning. (1:5) The Midrash interprets the reference in the pasuk to night and day from a different perspective. "It was night" denotes the activities of the wicked, while "it was morning" is a reference to the actions of the righteous. Hashem asserts that the light is good. It seems strange that the Torah would have to tell us that Hashem favors the actions of the righteous, symbolized by the light. Such a statement is not novel. Certainly, Hashem prefers the activities of the righteous. We do not need a Midrash to teach us this lesson.

The Dubno Maggid, zl, gives a practical exposition of Chazal. People learn Torah and perform mitzvos in different ways, with varying attitudes. One can go to a school in order to witness the failure of the greater society around him. The scene epitomizes the breakdown of society. It is so destructive that no good can be derived from the situation. He, therefore, chooses the positive approach of learning Torah and mitzvah observance.

His counterpart may look at the lifestyle of the tzaddikim, the righteous, who devote themselves and their lives to acting positively, to a life of harmony within themselves and in their families. He sees the contentment and happiness, the serenity and satisfaction within their lives and in terms of their achievements.

Yes, there are two approaches: looking at the positive, the approach of light; and the converse, the negative approach, viewing evil in its entirety, including its consequences. They both bring results, but which is preferable? Hashem says in regard to the light: "It is good."

Let us make Man in Our image, after Our likeness. (1:26)

What is the meaning of man being formed in G-d's image? Certainly man has a corporeal form, quite unlike Hashem, Who has no corporeality. Furthermore, what is meant by the phrase, "Let us make Man" ? Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita, gives a compelling explanation. The concept of man, as he was created, is not limited to what we see with our human eyes. Man was designed to be much more than a two-legged creature. Man is "man" only when he lives up to his spiritual potential and integrates his spiritual dimension with his physical entity. This is consistent with Chazal's dictum, Atem kruiyin Adam, "You, (Klal Yisrael) are called Adam, Man, and not the gentile world." The potential in spirituality allows Hashem to refer to each of us as an adam, a man.

How does this transpire? What must one do in order to achieve the appellation of a "man." When a man performs mitzvos and maasim tovim, good deeds, he enhances the spiritual dimension within himself; he creates the true "man." This is the meaning of Naase Adam, "Let Us make Man;" "Us" is a reference to Hashem and man himself. The sum total of man and his actions comprise the "man" component of the "Us" in the phrase, "Let Us make man."

The tzelem Elokim is man's spiritual image, the way in which he appears in the Olam Ha'Ruchani, spiritual world. When we perform what is demanded of us and enhance our performance with hiddur mitzvah, with exacting and meticulous observance, we refine our spiritual image. The focus of man on this world is to develop and embellish his spiritual persona, to live as a "man" and not as an animal, thereby completing the process of creation that Hashem has initiated.

With this in mind, we now have a new understanding of the meaning of man. There has to be something different, something special and unique, something striking, about the person. This can only be actualized by focusing on the spiritual facet of

an individual. This, in turn, will manifest itself in a countenance and demeanor that reflects the true man, as willed by Hashem.

The gedolei Yisrael, Torah leaders, were individuals who truly transcended the realm of the physical. Each manifested total control over his physical dimension; his complete devotion to everything spiritual was reflected in his total demeanor. To gaze upon his countenance was to observe the earthly state of a tzelem Elokim at its zenith. Horav Isser Zalman Meltzer, zl, was an individual whose gadlus, greatness, in Torah was matched by his empathy for the feelings of each and every Jew. He was a rosh yeshivah par-excellence whose concern for the plight of his fellow Jew was personal. Their pain was his pain; their joy was his joy. In "Touched By A Story," Rabbi Yechiel Spero relates a poignant incident that occurred concerning Rav Isser Zalman in which this virtue was manifest.

Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, was the Rosh Hayeshivah in Kletzk, Poland, and also a son-in-law of Rav Isser Zalman. As the war clouds became more and more imminent over Europe, Rav Aharon decided that the yeshivah in Kletzk would be forced to move to America. Yet, he felt that with a future filled with uncertainty, it would be best that he send his son Shneur, the future gadol and his spiritual heir, to his grandfather in Eretz Yisrael. Rav Shneur spent the war years under the watchful eye of his revered grandfather, who doted on him. Rav Isser Zalman imbued his grandson with an ahavas Torah and ahavas Yisrael, love of Torah and love for every Jew, which became his hallmarks.

When the war ended and life was beginning to return somewhat to normalcy, Rav Aharon decided it was time to send for his son. The news obviously brought a bittersweet reaction from the grandparents, as (Rav) Shneur had been their pride and joy for the past five years. Life must go on, however, and the young bachur had to go home to his parents. Arrangements were made, and the day on which - (Rav) Shneur was to go home arrived. The taxi that would take him to the ship that was sailing to America pulled up to the curb, as Rav Isser Zalman and his rebbeztzin waited with their grandson outside their apartment.

It was now time to say goodbye. The rebbeztzin hugged her beloved grandchild and blessed him one last time. Rav Isser Zalman, normally an individual who did not conceal his emotion, stuck out his hand and bid his grandson a safe journey and hatzlocha, good luck, in the future. Rav Shneur entered the taxi and left.

A man of Rav Isser Zalman's stature was always surrounded by his students. This time was no different. They watched incredulously as their beloved rebbe gave a "cold" goodbye to his grandson. They knew him to be a warm and sensitive person, traits which were inconsistent with the way he had just acted. Surely, a grandson deserves more than a handshake!

Students must learn, and the only way to grow is to ask - which they did. "Rebbe, not even a hug?" Rav Isser Zalman looked at his students and smiled, as he wiped away a tear from his eyes, responding, "My dear students, yes, I wanted to hug and kiss Shneur with all my heart. Trust me, it was quite difficult to contain my emotions, but I felt it would be wrong to publicly express my true emotions.

"You see, there are many grandfathers who can no longer feel the loving embrace of a grandson. Likewise, there are many grandchildren who can no longer experience the warmth and caring that a grandfather has to offer. Many of our people have perished during the war. I felt that in some way I had to share in their pain and suffering. If I refrain from hugging my beloved grandson, perhaps I can sensitize myself, ever so slightly, to what these unfortunate Jews are going through."

We now have a glimpse of what it means to transcend the physical and develop one's tzelem Elokim.

Hashem blessed the seventh day. (2:3)

The Midrash relates that the Roman Caesar once went out for a stroll. In the course of walking, he entered the Jewish neighborhood. It was Shabbos, and the aroma of delicious Shabbos foods permeated the air. The Caesar was enchanted by the essence. He sent for Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya, a leading sage, and asked, "Why do the Jewish foods have such a savory fragrance to them? I have never smelled anything so delectable." Rabbi Yehoshua replied, "We have a unique spice called Shabbos that creates a sweet aroma in our food."

"Please obtain this spice for me, so that I can also partake and enjoy my food," the Caesar requested.

"I am sorry, my Caesar, but this spice is available only to he who observes the Shabbos. One who does not observe Shabbos does not benefit from its aroma."

I feel this Midrash is conveying a critical lesson regarding mitzvah observance in general. One cannot grasp the profound delight captured through mitzvah observance unless he experiences the observance firsthand. In attempting to reach out to the unaffiliated, one does not succeed by arguing his point, since each individual feels that his is the correct approach. The correct approach is to learn with the individual, to get him actively involved, so that he directly experiences the

ideas that we want to transmit. Once he learns, his ability to see what we see is enhanced. He no longer needs explanation; he has his own experiences.

What if this approach does not work? What if he learns, and it does not change him? What if his character remains the same as it had been before? What if the experience has not transformed him? The Dubno Maggid, zl, addresses this question and responds, in his imitable manner, with a parable:

A salesman arrived in a city with his case of samples, which he mistakenly left in the train station. When he checked into the hotel, he asked the bellboy to please arrange to have his suitcase retrieved from the station. The bellboy asked, "How much does it weigh, since if it is heavy, it will cost more to pick it up?"

"It is very light, only about five pounds," the salesman replied.

A few hours later, the bellboy appeared at the salesman's room, exhausted, sweaty and reasonably upset. "You told me the suitcase was light. It must weigh at least sixty pounds! Can you imagine how difficult it has been for me to carry it all the way here?"

The salesman looked at the boy incredulously and asked, "Are you sure that bag weighs sixty pounds and not five pounds?" "I am absolutely certain," the bellboy replied.

"Then, young man, you have brought me the wrong suitcase. My bag weighs no more than five pounds. If you are exhausted, it is because you have the wrong bag!"

A parallel idea applies to Torah study. If after studying Torah, one has not changed, his character remains as deficient as it was before, then there is something very wrong with the manner in which he is learning. It is not the right package. This applies equally to mitzvah observance. If one does not sense a change after he has experienced the mitzvah, then he did not experience it correctly - or his response to experiencing the mitzvah was flawed.

There are some things that simply cannot be conveyed verbally; they must be experienced personally in order to be effective. There are certain emotions that the human psyche must experience before the mind can accept them intellectually. Horav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, zl, the legendary menahel of Mesivta Torah Vodaath, was an individual who did not simply perform or observe mitzvos; he lived them. Carrying out a mitzvah was an experience that penetrated his entire essence. Once, as a group of his students returned from Tashlich on Rosh Hashanah, Rav Shraga Feivel summoned them to come over. He was already sick at the time, nearing the end of his life. He said to them, "After an entire day of davening, I still do not feel that I have reached the level of Malchiyos, of declaring the total sovereignty of Hashem. Please help me. Perhaps together we might arouse ourselves to sense a taste of Malchiyos."

He then began to sing slowly from the Rosh Hashanah davening: V'yaida kol pa'ul ki Atah Po'alto, "Let everything that has been made know that You are his Creator," drawing the students into the niggun, melody, with him. They sang one niggun after another, and then Rav Shraga Feivel drew them into a dance to the words, V'al kein nekaveh Lecha, "Therefore we put our trust in You." They sang and danced with pure ecstasy. When they concluded, Rav Shraga Feivel thanked his students for helping him to achieve his goal. The students also achieved a goal as tears of hisorerus, spiritual arousal, streamed down their faces. They had gone beyond reciting the words; they had experienced the declaration of Hashem's sovereignty.

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