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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON BEREISHIS - 5772

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Outlooks & Insights by **Rabbi Zev Leff** - Parshas Bereishis Shema
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Parshas Bereishis

Why is it "In the Beginning?"

In the beginning of God's creating the heavens and the earth (Bereishis 1:1). R' Yitzchak said: "It was not necessary to begin the Torah [here] but rather with "This month shall be to you," the first mitzvah commanded to the Jewish people (Rash) to Bereishis 1:1).

Rashi begins his classic commentary to Chumash with the question of R' Yitzchak. R' Yitzchak's question is not immediately understood. The Torah is not, after all, a compendium of mitzvos. Even after the giving of the first mitzvah, many entire parashiyos are primarily narratives of the events in Egypt and the desert. If so, why was it so apparent to R' Yitzchak that the Torah should start with the first mitzvah?

To fully appreciate R' Yitzchak's question requires an understanding of the purpose of the Torah. Rambam (Hilchos Melachim 12:2) casts much light on this issue. The Torah, he writes, gives few hints concerning the coming of Mashiach. The details were not revealed either to the prophets or the Sages. Because these details were obscured, says Rambam, they should not form the focus of one's learning. Rambam then adds: "For these details do not bring one to love or fear of God." Rambam, it would seem, is explaining why there is no clear tradition concerning these details. The purpose of the Torah is to bring one to the love of God or fear of God.

The word Torah is derived from hora'ah (guidance) and hints at the Torah's role as a guide to coming closer to the Creator. Only that which furthers this goal is contained in the Torah. Everything else is excluded. Matters of only historic or scientific interest have no place.

Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky, zt"l, made a similar point concerning the penultimate verse of Megillas Esther: "All the great deeds of Mordechai are recorded in the history books of the royalty of Persia and Medea." Why did the Megillah refer us to the history books of Persia and Medea for further information concerning Mordechai? Did anyone ever read them? Were they ever available for our perusal? The intent of this verse, says Rabbi Abramsky, is to put Megillas Esther into perspective. If you seek historical information, the Megillah tells us, then read the royal histories of Persia and Medea. Megillas Esther, however, is not the source of such information, but rather a source of fear of Heaven.

In this light, we can understand the puzzling differences between two almost identical portions of the Torah. At the end of parashas Bereishis,

the Torah records the ten generations between Adam and Noach, and at the end of parashas Noach it similarly records the ten generations between Noach and Avraham. But the two accounts differ. In the first, the Torah provides us with three basic facts concerning the representative of each generation: how old he was at the birth of his principal child, how long he lived after that birth, and his age at death. But of those mentioned in parashas Noach, we are not told their age at death or even that they died at all.

The Mishnah (Pirkei Avos 5:2-3) relates that there were ten generations between Adam and Noach and also ten generations between Noach and Avraham. The parallel beraita in Avos d'Rav Nasan asks why this information is necessary and answers: the first ten generations teach us how long-suffering and slow to anger Hashem is; the second ten teaches us that one person such as Avraham can reap the entire reward of ten generations of people who did not fulfill their purpose in the world.

In order to convey the lesson of God's patience, it was important to know that the ten generations between Adam and Noach lived, had children, and died at a ripe old age. Therefore the first genealogy contains information concerning the age at death of the representatives of each generation. But to convey that Avraham received all the reward of ten generations, we need know nothing about the ages at death of the ten preceding generations. Since it is irrelevant to the message the Torah wishes to convey, it is omitted.

The purpose of the Torah also explains why the Biblical narrative does not follow a straight chronological order. Because that purpose is to inculcate yiras shamayim (fear of Heaven), not to teach history, the most effective way to convey the lesson governs the order of the Biblical narrative.

There is an essential difference between Torah and chachmah (wisdom). Wisdom, Chazal tell us, is found among the nations; Torah is not. Wisdom need not influence the behavior of the one who possesses it. There have been great geniuses in the arts, humanities and sciences, whose personal characters were nevertheless reprehensible. (Indeed, that seems more the rule than the exception.) Their lack of integrity did not detract from their wisdom, and their wisdom added nothing to their character. When Bertrand Russell, then a professor of ethics at City College in New York, was accused of leading a singularly immoral life, he responded that just as he did not need to be triangle to teach geometry, neither did he have to be a moral person to teach ethics.

Torah, on the other hand, must influence the behavior and character of the one who studies it to qualify as Torah. A person possesses wisdom; Torah possesses the person. Torah is compared to fire, for like fire it must leave an imprint. Where study of the Torah does not transform the student, whatever knowledge he obtains is not Torah but secular wisdom.

The blessing recited upon seeing one who possesses exceptional secular wisdom is "Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the universe, Who has given of His knowledge to human beings." The wisdom is given unconditionally, its recipient remains flesh and blood. On the other hand, the blessing recited over an exceptional Torah scholar is "Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the universe, Who has apportioned of His knowledge to those who fear Him." Torah is not given but apportioned out. It remains attached to its Divine source, and is therefore reserved only for those who are God-fearing.

A talmid chacham is the embodiment of Torah by virtue of having made its lessons part of himself. The creation of such people is the very purpose of the Torah. For this reason, Chazal cast scorn on the foolishness of those who rise for a sefer Torah but not for a talmid chacham, for the latter is a living sefer Torah.

The Written Torah was given in such a way that it could not be understood without the Oral Torah to insure that it would not be confused with book knowledge-something which can be read, mastered

and memorized. Rather, Torah must be learned from a teacher who is a living sefer Torah.

My Rosh Hayeshivah, Rabbi Mordechai Gifter, has observed that our Sages are not called chachamim (wise) but talmidei chachamim (students of the wise). They do not merely possess wisdom but are guided by it; they are its students

Now R' Yitzchak's question can be understood. Since the purpose of every word of the Torah is to guide those to whom it was given, its very essence is mitzvos, commandments. As the Zohar says, the narratives of the Torah are merely mitzvos disguised in the garb of narrative.

When one writes a book, it is normal to begin by acquainting the reader with the nature of the material contained within. Since all of the Torah is mitzvos, it would have been logical to start with the first clear-cut mitzvah to establish the pattern for all that would follow, and thereby make clear that even the narratives are included only for their eternal message of ahavas Hashem (Love of God) and yiras Hashem (Fear of God). By starting with the narrative of Creation there was a risk that the true function of the Torah as a source of guidance would be insufficiently understood. That is what provoked R' Yitzchak's question.

Every time we begin the Torah again, we must constantly keep in mind that every letter of Torah is an eternal lesson in ahavas Hashem and yiras Hashem. If at first glance the lesson is not perceived, then one must delve deeper. "For it [the Torah] is not something empty from you" (Devarim 32:47). If it appears empty, it is "from you," - i.e., from your lack of understanding and not the absence of meaning.

The Answer A Preface to Torah

If the nations of the world say to you that you are thieves because you conquered the lands of the seven nations, say to them, "All the world is HaKadosh Baruch Hu's. He created it and He gives it to whomever it is good in His eyes. By His Will He gave it to you, and by His Will He took it from you and gave it to us (Rash) to Bereishis 1:1).

Rashi answers the question of why the Torah begins with an account of the Creation by quoting the verse (Tehillim 111:6): "The power of His deeds He related to His nation to give them the inheritance of nations." If the nations of the world contest our claim to Eretz Yisrael and charge us with stealing it from the seven Canaanite nations, we will be able to answer that all of Creation belongs to God. He created it and apportioned it out to whom He pleases. Originally His will was to give Eretz Yisrael to the seven nations, and subsequently His will was to take it from them and give it to us.

Thus it would seem that the entire reason that the Torah begins with the Creation is to provide us with a claim to Eretz Yisrael. This is hard to understand for many reasons. First, it is far from clear that this response will have any effect on those to whom it is ostensibly directed. How can we expect the nations of the world to accept this answer when they do not believe in the Torah? Were the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations to quote R' Yitzchak, it is highly improbable that the Arab world would relinquish its claim to Eretz Yisrael.

When, in fact, the Canaanite nations laid claim to Eretz Yisrael in front of Alexander the Great, on the grounds that the Torah itself calls it Eretz Canaan, Gevia teen P'sisa did not answer them by citing Bereishis. Rather he argued that Canaan is a slave to his brothers, and all that a slave acquires reverts to his master (Sanhedrin 91a). If the entire account of Creation was recorded only to be used as a response to a claim by the nations, why was it not utilized when the claim was in fact made?

Moreover, the answer does not satisfactorily explain why the Torah has to begin with Creation and not merely include an account of Creation.

And there is a deeper question raised by this response. Why did God ordain that we should conquer Eretz Yisrael from seven nations who had inhabited it for hundreds of years? Why was it necessary that we wipe out those nations? Why did Eretz Yisrael have to become ours in a manner so open to challenge that the Torah had to start from Bereishis just to provide the answer?

If we carefully scrutinize Rashi's words, we find that in fact the Torah does begin with the first mitzvah-hachodesh hazeh lachem. Bereishis is not the beginning, but rather the preface (pesichah) to the Torah. "Why did the Torah open (pasach) with Bereishis?" is the question Rashi addresses.

The answer is that this preface is not for the sake of the nations of the world; it is for us. God told us the power of His deeds. We must know this fact; we must be convinced that we are not thieves. Hashem sought to teach us a lesson so significant that it is the foundation of the entire Torah. Without this preface we are not ready to approach the first mitzvah.

Understanding this lesson requires a clear understanding of the role of the Jewish people. The ultimate purpose of Klal Yisrael is to be "a nation of kohanim (priests), a holy nation." As kohanim we are Hashem's representatives in this world, and that requires us to be a holy nation. That holiness must permeate every aspect of life, from the ostensibly mundane-eating, sleeping, dressing in the morning - to the most elevated. Each of the Divinely decreed actions of Hashem's Chosen People must proclaim His existence.

To achieve this goal, we must be a nation that dwells apart, insulated from other cultures. This isolation and insulation from the world is part of our very essence, an inescapable reality.

The Midrash tells us that the Jewish people are compared to oil, and the nations of the world to water. By their very nature they cannot mix. When we recognize the importance of maintaining our unique, holy existence in isolation, we experience the promise "The Jewish people will dwell in security alone, apart" (Devarim 33:28). The oil flows calmly on the water, and the two coexist in peace.

But if we seek to assimilate into the foreign cultures, we will be forced to read, "How do you dwell apart?" to the lament of Eichah. As Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin so poignantly expressed it "Either the Jew makes Kiddush or the gentile makes havdalah." History has shown that when we sanctify ourselves- Kiddush-and dwell apart, we lead a life of holiness in secure isolation. When we attempt to assimilate and adapt foreign lifestyles -as in Egypt or Spain or Germany-our host nations eventually make havdalah and remind us that we are different.

Sifra comments on the verse, "I separated you from the nations of the world to be mine" (Vayikra 20:2) "If you are separated, then you are Mine. If not, you belong to Nevchadnezzar and his cohorts." The obvious meaning seems to be that if we separate ourselves, we will merit Divine protection; and if not, Hashem will deliver us into the hands of our enemies. I would like, however, to suggest an alternative reading in closer conformity to the literal wording of the Sifra.

A non-Jew is required to observe only seven mitzvos. As long as he observes the minimal ethical code dictated by Hashem for civilization, he has a share in the World to Come. One might think that a Jew living the same type of life, although remiss in the observance of the rest of the mitzvos, would nevertheless be judged no worse than his non-Jewish neighbor.

Sifra informs us otherwise. The Jew exists for an entirely different purpose,-to create a Mikdash, a place of sanctity, a place where the Divine Presence will be felt. This Mikdash finds potential expression in the person of every Jew. Thus any Jew who fails to sanctify himself, to lead a life of exceptional holiness, as defined by the Torah's commandments, is in fact destroying his personal Mikdash. He has joined the ranks of Nevchadnezzar and his cohorts, destroyers of the Mikdash. He "belongs" to Nevchadnezzar.

One who observes six hundred and thirteen mitzvos but does not understand the underlying, all-encompassing lifestyle they seek to engender, one who ignores the implications of those mitzvos in creating a Torah outlook, personality and weltanschauung, one whose goals, standards and values remain basically secular-such a person does not have six hundred and thirteen mitzvos, but rather six hundred and

thirteen problems. Mitzvos cannot be observed in a framework foreign to Torah ideals.

Upon returning from his twenty year sojourn with Lavan, Yaakov told his brother Esav, "I dwelt with Lavan, but I kept all six hundred and thirteen mitzvos and did not learn from his evil ways." It seems superfluous for Yaakov to add that he did not learn from Lavan's evil ways, after stating that he kept all six hundred and thirteen mitzvos. Assimilation, we learn from Yaakov's words, means not only rejecting mitzvos but adopting values and lifestyles foreign to Torah. Even if one observes all the mitzvos, if his values remain those of the surrounding culture, he is merely a glatt kosher gentile. We must create a total Torah environment to insulate ourselves and our families from the influences of the secular society in whose midst we temporarily find ourselves.

To promote our being a nation that dwells apart, Hashem measured every land and found no land more suitable for the Jewish people than Eretz Yisrael, and no people better suited to Eretz Yisrael than Am Yisrael (Vayikra Rabbah 13). Eretz Yisrael is a holy land, the land that Hashem personally supervises at all times, the land that Hashem calls His own. And Am Yisrael is a nation that Hashem calls a holy nation, the nation that merits direct Divine Providence, the nation that Hashem calls His own. Hence, Eretz Yisrael and Am Yisrael complement each other perfectly.

Eretz Yisrael provides a setting where we can develop our potential to be a uniquely sanctified nation. (This, it should be noted, is the very antithesis of secular Zionism, which envisions Eretz Yisrael as a setting for us to develop at long last into a nation like all other nations.) Thus, the answer to R' Yitzchak's question is not for the nations. It is we who are supposed to see clearly that Eretz Yisrael is legitimately ours, given to us by Hashem.

Hashem gave us Eretz Yisrael as He did to teach us the one lesson upon which all else depends: all our moral and ethical standards have only one source—Hashem Yisborach. If He tells us to conquer and kill, that is by definition ethical and moral. And similarly, where He mandates mercy and peace, then that is ethical. Our value system has no basis other than the Written and Oral Torah.

The seven Canaanite nations had forfeited their right to Eretz Yisrael by their abominations. Hashem could have destroyed them by Himself without any action on our part. But He told us to conquer the land so that we would be forced to recognize His will as the source of all morality. He is the Creator of all that exists, and only He can dictate proper conduct among the nations. That is why our conquest constituted neither murder nor theft.

The Torah, at the very outset, is laying the framework for all mitzvah observance. It is not incidental that this lesson is taught through Eretz Yisrael. Our holy books emphasize that only in the Land of Israel can a Torah society uninfluenced by foreign values and standards be created—a society dwelling apart and enhanced by the special qualities of the land.

Since Eretz Yisrael is given to us to place all mitzvah observance in proper perspective, we have a legitimate claim to it only if we accept God as the arbiter of every aspect of our lives. If, however, we adopt the standards of the nations, we are murderers and thieves with no claim to the Land. Without that acceptance, the Land is, in fact, useless to us.

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Bereishit

The Philosophy of the Snake
Excerpted from Shem MiShmuel by the Sochatchover Rebbe, rendered into English by Rabbi Zvi Belovski.

The central part of this parsha involves the story of Adam and Chavah's brief stay in Gan Eden. God gave them permission to eat all the fruits in the garden,

except for the fruit of the eitz hada'as tov va'ra (tree of knowledge of good and evil). The snake came to Chavah and persuaded her to eat of the forbidden fruit. The Torah provides us with the exact conversation:

The woman said to the snake, "We may eat from the fruit of the trees in the garden. But God has told us that we may not eat nor touch the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, lest we die." The snake said to the woman, "You will surely not die." (Bereishis 3:2-4)

You will surely not die — he shoved her until she touched the tree, then said to her, "Just as you didn't die from touching it, so too, you won't die by eating from it." (Rashi loc. cit.)

The snake's logic appears flawed. Chavah was pushed against the tree by the snake, and no adverse consequence resulted. The snake claimed that this proved that eating the fruit of her own volition would also not have a bad outcome. But the touching was unavoidable; the eating would be deliberate. How can they be compared? The following principle should surely apply:

The Torah exempts from punishment those who act under duress. (Nedarim 27a)

There is another problem. God had promised Adam and Chavah that if they ate from the fruit, on the day that you eat from it, you will surely die. (Bereishis 2:17)

How could the snake know (or claim to Chavah) that death would not ensue from eating the fruit? Perhaps only that day Chavah would die from touching the tree. After all, the "day" mentioned by the verse was not yet over. Let us try to resolve this by considering an important quote from the Rambam.

Understanding the Consequence of Mitzvos

The majority of mitzvos are advice from afar...to fix one's ideas and to straighten all actions. (Rambam, Yad, Hilchos Temurah 4:13)

Put into ordinary terms, this means that the actual mitzvah may be several stages away from its consequence. For example, forbidden fat is not actually poisonous, and so a Jew who eats it will not suddenly be struck down with fatal symptoms. Instead, consuming the fat has some slight effect, which in turn affects something else, and so on, until the punishment mandated by the Torah manifests itself. All the mitzvos work like this. Overall, the consequence of mitzvah observance is to push our actions and general spiritual disposition toward the Torah ideal, and, conversely, the consequence of failure and sin is that we are pushed away from that ideal. One must believe that the consequence of a particular action described by the Torah will eventually manifest itself, whether for good or otherwise. But it is clear that no instant results should be expected.

The Twisted View of the Snake

This view of the mitzvah system and the way it functions was rejected by the snake. Indeed, the Rashi we quoted above contains enough information for us to deduce the snake's entire, twisted Weltanschauung. The snake's claim, as expressed by his words, was that causes have immediate effects. He saw the world in an apparently more simplistic way than we have described: if the tree and its fruit are prohibited under pain of death, then as soon as one touches it or eats from it one should die. If one doesn't die, reasoned the snake, then the punishment is not going to happen at all.

This Weltanschauung has a converse, a viewpoint espoused not only by the snake, but by wicked people throughout the ages: a mitzvah, if valid, should produce an immediate result. If it doesn't, this reasoning continues, then it's not worth performing mitzvos at all; they just don't achieve anything. Of course, this totally omits the more subtle rationale offered by the Rambam.

Blurring the Distinction

If one looks at the claim of the snake a little more deeply, an interesting and unexpected consequence emerges. Consider the case of two people who fell into a fire. One jumped in deliberately, and the other slipped and fell in by accident. Each is equally badly burned, regardless of how he came to be in the fire in the first place.

Likewise, if two people take poison, one deliberately and one accidentally, they will both die, irrespective of the circumstances. The snake saw mitzvah observance in this light. An action produces an immediate effect. This means that he blurred the distinction between those acts perpetrated deliberately and those committed accidentally. After all, the action produces a result. If death was promised for eating the fruit of the forbidden tree, then of what relevance is it whether the act was deliberate or not? It's like taking poison by accident — you still die! At the very least, symptoms which will result in death should manifest themselves as soon as the act is committed.

The Snake's Logic

It should now be clear why, according to the snake's viewpoint, his logic was sound. We recall that he said to Chavah,

You will surely not die — he shoved her until she touched the tree, then said to her, "Just as you didn't die from touching it, so too, you won't die by eating from it." (Rashi, Bereishis 3:4)

Effectively the snake said to Chavah, "When I shoved you against the tree, you saw that nothing happened to you. You are just as healthy as before. If the punishment that God had promised is valid, then you would have died, or at least fallen ill straight away. As you didn't, there's nothing to be afraid of — you can even eat the fruit with no concern."

So by expecting immediate results from actions and blurring the distinction between deliberate and accidental acts, the snake persuaded Chavah to eat the fruit. It is important to realize that the snake expressed a totally warped view of reality to make an apparently logical case to Chavah.

Seeing the Goodness in the Fruit

This analysis can help us resolve another difficulty in the story. The narrative continues:

The woman saw that the tree was good to eat, desirable to the eyes, and that the tree was pleasant to the intellect, and she took from its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband with her and he ate. (Bereishis 3:6)

The difficulty here is obvious. How can one describe a taste with the sense of sight? The quality of taste is determined by the tongue, not the eyes. But now that we understand the snake's Weltanschauung, we can deal with this problem. We can assume that since Chavah went ahead and ate the fruit she accepted the claim of the snake and therefore the philosophy which lay behind it. She reckoned that as she had not been affected by touching the tree, then eating from it would also do her no harm.

It is with her sense of sight that she detected that the fruit was harmless, as it is this sense which loses its full capacity when illness and death approach. Since she could still see the tree, her sense of sight operating at full capacity, she deduced that its fruit was in fact "good to eat," that is, completely free from danger.

The Curse of the Snake

After the episode of the fruit, God cursed the snake in the following way:

May you be cursed over all the animals and all the beasts of the field. You shall crawl on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life. (Ibid., 14)

In his Aramaic translation and elaboration on this verse, Rabbi Yonasan ben Uziel remarks:

...and deadly poison shall be in your mouth. (Targum Yonasan ben Uziel loc. cit.)

This is poetic justice. The snake claimed, as we have seen, that when God promises a punishment for a certain act, it means that performing that act is like taking lethal poison — it will kill immediately. Therefore, it is most fitting that the snake's punishment forevermore is to have the taste of deadly poison permanently in his mouth. He must realize the wicked consequences of his twisted life philosophy by tasting the real effects of poison for eternity.

Excerpted from Shem MiShmuel by the Sochatchover Rebbe, rendered into English by Rabbi Zvi Belovski.

From [Rabbi] Menachem Leibtag tsc@bezeqint.net to Pareg <par-reg@mail.tanach.org>, Lite1 <par-lite@mail.tanach.org> date Tue, Oct 18, 2011 at 12:23 PM subject [Par-reg] For Parshat Breishit Parshat Breishit

(To prepare for this shiur, see the questions for self study.) How many stories of Creation are there in Parshat Breishit, one or two? Although this question is more often discussed by Bible critics than yeshiva students, its contains a significant spiritual message.

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

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

Section I - The Creation in Seven Days (see 1:1-2:3) Section II- Man in Gan Eden (see 2:4-3:24) In our shiur, we will first explain what makes each section unique. Afterward we will discuss how they complement one another.

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

Begins with the phrase: "Va'yomer Elokim...", heralding a new stage of creation (see 1:3,6,9,14,20,24) [see board #1]; Continues with "Va'yar Elokim ki tov" (see 1:4,10,12,18,21,25) [see board #2]; Concludes with "Vayhi erev vayhi boker, yom..." (see 1:5,8,13,19,23,31) [see board #3]. Furthermore, within this section, God's Name is exclusively "shem Elokim" (in contrast to the use of "shem Havaya" in the next section). Finally, the use of the verb "bara" (to create ex nihilo - something from nothing) is also unique to this section.

In addition to its the special structure, the content of Perek Aleph also indicates that it is a self-contained unit. It presents a complete story of creation. For example, note how the introductory sentence is 'matched' by the finale:

The section opens with:

"Breishit (in the beginning), bara Elokim - God created shamayim and aretz..." (1:1-2). And concludes with:

"Vaychulu [then came the completion of] ha'shamayim v'ha'aretz... "asher bara Elokim" - that God created." (2:1-3) [See board #4]

While this 'match' provides us with a 'technical' reason to treat 1:1 through 2:3 as a distinct unit, their content provides with a thematic reason as well. Let's explain:

Note how the opening two psukim first describe the pre-creation state of tohu va'vahu - total chaos (see 1:1-2). In contrast to this original chaos, at the conclusion of the six days of creation we find a structured universe in a state of perfect order. This is emphasized by the closing statement in 2:1-3 where God blesses the seventh day... for on it He ceased from all of His work.

Perek Bet The next unit is 2:4-3:24, better known as Perek Bet. As you review these two chapters, note how they appear to present a conflicting account of the story of Creation. For example, note that: 1) Nothing can grow before God creates man (see 2:5), therefore: 2) God creates man first (2:15); 3) God commands man re: what he can/cannot eat (2:16-17); 4) God creates animals for the sake of man (2:18-20) 5) God creates a wife for man, from his own rib (2:21-25). Clearly, the order of creation is very different. In Perek Bet we find that man is created first, and everything afterward (i.e. the plants and the animals) are created for him. In contrast, even though Perek Aleph places man the pinnacle of God's Creation, it does not depict man as its primary purpose (see board #5).

In addition, there are several other obvious differences between these two sections: Throughout this section, God's Name is no longer simply Elokim, rather Hashem Elokim ("shem Havaya") [see board #6]. In contrast to the consistent use of verb "bara" in Perek Aleph, Perek Bet uses the verb "ya'tzar" (creation 'something from something') (see 2:7,19) [see board #7]. Although it is possible to reconcile these apparent contradictions (as many of the commentators do), the question remains - Why does the Torah present these two accounts in a manner that at least appears to be conflicting?

We obviously cannot accept the claim of the Bible critics that these two sections reflect two conflicting ancient traditions. As we believe that the entire Torah was given by God at Har Sinai (and hence stems from one source), we must conclude that this special manner of presentation is intentional and should carry a prophetic message. Since this is a very fundamental point, let's take a minute to explain why.

What is "Nevuah" Before opening a book of any sort, the reader will usually have some idea of what to expect, based on the type of book that he has chosen. For example, when you read a history book, you expect to find history; in a science book you expect to find scientific facts; and when you read a novel you expect to find drama and/or entertainment. In a similar manner, when one reads (or studies) Chumash, he should expect to find "nevuah"; but what does that mean?

The popular translation of "nevuah" - prophecy - may be misleading, for it implies the ability to see (or predict) the future. In Tanach, that is not the primary mission of a prophet. Technically speaking, a "navi" is a 'spokesman' [usually for God]. Even though this may at times include the prediction of certain events, his primary job is to deliver God's message to man. [Similarly, a "navi Baal" - is a spokesman for the Baal god. A "navi sheker" is one who claims to be speaking in the name of God, but instead is making it up himself. In other words, anyone speaking for any type of a god can be called a "navi".]

[Note that the Hebrew word "niv" - a 'saying' - stems from the same root - see also Yeshayahu 57:19 - "borev niv s'fatayim"]

To clarify this point, let's take an example from God's appointment of Moshe Rabeinu to be His "navi".

Recall how God first commanded Moshe: "... Speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, everything that I tell you" (6:29); i.e. to become His "navi" = spokesman. Moshe first declines, explaining: "... see I am of impeded speech [aral s'fataim], how then would Pharaoh listen to me?" (see 6:30).

To solve this problem, God offers a compromise of sorts. Moshe will remain God's spokesman, but now due to his 'speech problems', Moshe himself needs a spokesman - towards that purpose Aharon is appointed to become Moshe's navi. Note how the Torah explains this:

"And God responded to Moshe, see - I have appointed you as [a spokesman of] God to Pharaoh, but Aharon your brother will be your navi - i.e. your spokesman. You will say [to Aharon] everything that I command you, and Aharon your brother will speak unto Pharaoh..." (see 7:1-2) Hence, a sefer of "nevuah" must be a book that delivers a message from God to man, delivered by His spokesman - the "navi". Therefore, when we study a book of "nevuah", we should expect it to contain a

message from God to man. Therefore, as we study Sefer Breishit, we must assume that purpose of the Torah's presentation of the story of Creation must relate to the nature of his relationship with God. Two renowned Torah scholars of this century have discussed this issue of the two creations stories at length. The analytical aspect, the approach of "shte bechinot" (two perspectives), has been exhausted by Rabbi Mordechai Breuer in his book Pirkei Breishit. The philosophical implications have been discussed by Rav Soloveichik ZT"L in his article 'The Lonely Man of Faith' (re: Adam I & Adam II).

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

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

Perek Aleph - The Creation of Nature As we mentioned above, each day of creation in Perek Aleph begins with the phrase "va'yomer Elokim" followed a description of what God creates on that day (see board #1). As your review this chapter, note that there is one primary creation that is introduced by each "va'yomer". [Note also that days three and six have two "va'yomer" stages!] The following list summarizes what was created on each day, based on each introductory "va'yomer...":

- | | |
|------|---|
| Day | God Created... |
| I | "Or" = Light |
| II | "Rakiya" - separating: |
| A. | the mayim above [=shamayim], and |
| B. | the mayim below [=yamim]. |
| IIIa | "Yabasha", called the aretz (the land) - |
| IIIb | Vegetation (on that aretz) |
| A. | seed-bearing plants: "esev mazria zera" |
| B. | fruit-bearing trees: "etz pri oseh pri" |
| IV | Lights in the shamayim (sun, moon, stars etc.) |
| V | Living creatures: |
| A. | birds in the sky [=rakiya shamayim] |
| B. | fish in the sea [=mayim] |
| VIa | Living creatures who live on the aretz (land) |
| | animals - all forms |
| VI | Man b'tzelem Elokim blessed by God to dominate all other living creatures |
- Then, God assigns the appropriate food for these living creatures:
1. Man - can eat vegetables and fruit (see 1:29)
 2. animals - can eat only vegetables (see 1:30)
- VII Shabbat
God rested, His Creation was complete.

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

Days 1 - 3	Days 4 - 6
I. Light	IV. Lights in the heavens
II. Rakiya (above)	V. Living things
Shamayim (above)	Birds in the Shamayim
Mayim (below the sea)	Fish in Mayim
III. Aretz (land)	VI. Animals & Man on the Aretz
Seed bearing plants	Plants to be eaten by the Animals
Fruit bearing trees	Fruit of trees to be eaten by Man

This suggests that the potential of God's creation in the first three days is actualized in the last three days, but the deeper meaning of this parallel is beyond the scope of the shiur. For our purposes, this shows once again how Perek Aleph must be considered a distinct unit that describes the creation of a very structured universe. This established, we must now ask ourselves what precisely was created in these six days, and what can we learn from this style of its presentation.

Divine Evolution We mentioned earlier that Perek Aleph contains a complete story of the process of Creation. In contrast to a primal state of total chaos, after six days we find a beautifully structured universe containing all of the various forms of life that we are familiar with; including plants, animals, and man.

Note that the Torah emphasizes that each form of life is created in a manner which guarantees its survival, i.e. its ability to reproduce: a. plants: "esev mazria zera" - seed-bearing vegetation "etz pri oseh pri" - fruit-bearing trees (1:11-12) b. fish & fowl: "pru urvu" - be fruitful & multiply (1:22) c.

Man: "pru urvu..." - be fruitful & multiply (1:28) One could summarize and simply state that the end result of this creation process is what we call nature - in other words - the exact opposite of *tohu va'vahu*. What Perek Aleph describes then, is God's creation of nature, the entire material universe and its phenomena. It informs us that nature itself, with all its complexities and wonders, was a willful act of God. By keeping Shabbat, resting on the seventh day, as God did, we assert our belief that God is the power behind nature.

This analysis helps us understand why the Torah uses God's name -Elokim - throughout this entire chapter. As Ramban explains (toward the end of his commentary on 1:1), the Hebrew word "el" implies someone with power (or strength) and in control. Therefore, "shem Elokim" implies the master of all of the many forces of nature. [This explains why God's Name is in the plural form- for He is all of the powers / see also Rav Yehuda ha'Levi, in Sefer Kuzari, beginning of Book Four.] This end result of this creation process is what we call nature -- the exact opposite of *tohu va'vohu*. What Perek Aleph describes then, is God's creation of nature, the entire material universe and its phenomena. It informs us that nature was not always there, rather its creation was a willful act of God. By keeping Shabbat, resting on the seventh day, as God did, we assert our belief that God is the power behind nature.

This understanding can help us appreciate the Torah's use of the verb "bara" in Perek Aleph. Recall that "bara" implies creation ex-nihilo, something from nothing. Now, note the three times active uses of "bara" in Perek Aleph. They are precisely where we find the creation of each of the basic forms of life (i.e. plants, animals, and man), reflecting the three fundamental steps in the evolutionary development of nature:

Step I - All matter and plants "Breishit bara Elokim et ha'shamayim v'et ha'aretz" (1:1) This includes everything in the shamayim and on the aretz, i.e. the creation of all "domem" (inanimate objects) and "tzomeyach" (plants). Note that this takes place during the first four days of Creation.

Step II - The animal kingdom "va'yivra Elokim - and God created the taninim and all living creatures... by their species"(1:21) This includes the birds, fish, animals, and beasts etc. which are created on the fifth and sixth days.

Step III - Man "va'yivra Elokim et ha'adam..." (1:27) The creation of man b'tzelem Elokim, in God's image. The Torah's First Story Now we must ponder what may be the Torah's message in telling man that the creation of nature was a willful act of God?

In his daily life, man encounters a constant relationship with nature, i.e. with his surroundings and environment. Man does not need the Torah to inform him that nature exists; it stares him in the face every day. Nor, can man avoid nature, rather he must constantly contemplate it, and struggle with it.

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

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

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

Now we must explain how this relates to man himself.

Man - In Perek Aleph Note that this is God's blessing to man, and not a commandment! One could consider this 'blessing' almost as a definition of man's very nature. Just as it is 'natural' for vegetation to grow ["esev mazria zera"], and for all living things to reproduce ["pru urvu"], it is also 'natural' for man to dominate his environment; it becomes his natural instinct.

The Torah's use of the verb "bara" at each major stage of creation, and then to describe the creation of man may shed light on this topic. When contemplating nature and his relationship with the animal kingdom, man might easily conclude that he is simply just another part of the animal kingdom. He may be more advanced or developed than the 'average monkey', but biologically he is no different. The Torah's use of the verb "bara" to describe God's creation of man informs us that man is a completely new category of creation. He is created "b'tzelem Elokim", in the image of God, i.e. he possesses a spiritual potential, unlike any other form of nature. [See the Rambam in the very beginning of Moreh N'vuchim (I.1), where he defines "tzelem Elokim" as the characteristic of man that differentiates him from animal.]

Perek Aleph teaches man to recognize that his nature to dominate all other living things is also an act of God's creation. However, he must ask himself, "Towards what purpose?" Did God simply create man, or does He continue to have a relationship with His creation? Is the fate of man out of His control, or does a connection exist between man's deeds and God's "hashgacha" (providence) over him?

The answer to this question lies in Perek Bet!

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

No vegetation can grow before man is created (2:5) God plants a special garden for man to live in (2:8) God 'employs' man to 'work in his garden' (2:15) God creates the animals in an attempt to find him a companion (2:19; compare with 2:7!) God creates a wife for man (2:21-23)

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

"And God took man and placed him in Gan Eden - l'ovdah u'l'shomrah - to work in it and guard it." (2:15) [see board #8] Most significantly, in Perek Bet man enters into a relationship with God which contains reward and punishment, i.e. he is now responsible for his actions. For the first time in Chumash, we find that God commands man:

"And Hashem Elokim commanded man saying: From all the trees of the Garden you may eat, but from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad you may not eat, for on the day you eat from it you will surely die" (2:16-17) This special relationship between man and God in Gan Eden, is paradigmatic of other relationships between man and God found later on in Chumash (e.g. in the Mishkan).

God's Name in Perek Bet - Hashem Elokim (better known as "shem havaya") - reflects this very concept. The shem havaya comes from the shoresh (root) - "Thiyot" (to be, i.e. to be present). This Name stresses that Gan Eden is an environment in which man can recognize God's presence, thus enabling the possibility of a relationship.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"There is a great need to begin the Torah with the story of Creation, for it is the "shoresh ha'emunah", the very root of our belief in God." Understanding man's potential to develop a relationship with God on the spiritual level, while recognizing the purpose of his placement in a physical world as well, should be the first topic of Sefer Breishit, for it will emerge as a primary theme of the entire Torah.

Shabbat Shalom, Menachem

Lord Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

Faith Lectures: What is Faith?

26 September 2000

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

(unedited)

Howard Jackson: Dear friends: Welcome to the Chief Rabbi's new lecture series on faith and thank you all for coming. We are very grateful to the Chief Rabbi for giving of his time to prepare and deliver lectures to us over the coming months.

This is a six-part lecture series and, whilst each lecture stands alone, the most benefit will be attained from attending all six. This series is in response to overwhelming demand from young members of the Jewish community who, recognising the need for regular inspiration through education, contacted the Chief Rabbi. Thanks very much to all those who initiated and promoted this lecture series.

After the Chief Rabbi's lecture we will take two or three questions from the audience. Please keep the questions relevant to this evening's topic. Additionally, please feel free to place in the box at the back of the room any written feedback and questions that you would like the Chief Rabbi to deal with in future lectures.

Now, if you have all turned off your mobile phones, we present: "What is faith?" by the Chief Rabbi, Professor Jonathan Sacks. [Applause]

Chief Rabbi, Professor Jonathan Sacks: Howard, thank you very much and my thanks to you and to the steering committee who have been working with you for asking me to do this, and especially, thanks to all of you who have agreed to at least join with me for the beginning of a journey which, for me, is the most exciting kind of journey we can have. That is - a journey of ideas.

Let me begin with a story that I love, about an English philosophy professor who is invited to deliver a philosophy lecture in Beijing in China. Not knowing Chinese, he was of course provided with an interpreter. He began his lecture and, after a sentence or two, stopped in order to let the translator translate. But the translator waved him on. He said, "Carry on; I'll tell you when to stop." So he carried on, uninterrupted, for about 15 minutes. After 15 minutes the Chinese interpreter turned to the audience and said four words in Chinese. You'll have to excuse my Chinese. It's not that great! Something like, "Hoy hi wa chiho". Four words, and then "Carry on. Carry on."

The same thing happens after the next 15 minutes. He speaks for 15 minutes, complicated philosophical stuff and, at the end of it, the translator says four words. The same thing happens after 45 minutes and, at the end, the translator gives three words in Chinese. As the audience files out, the English philosophy professor turns to the Chinese interpreter and says, "That was unbelievable! I gave the most complicated lecture on metaphysics and you compressed it into those few words. What did you say?"

And the translator said, "Oh well, that was easy. After 15 minutes I said, 'So far he hasn't said anything new.' After 30 minutes I said, 'He still hasn't said anything new.' After 45 minutes I said, 'I don't think he's going to say anything new,' and after an hour I said, 'I was right.' [Laughter]

Now, friends, I want to do a very risky thing. I've never done anything like this before, but I want to do a risky thing. I want to see if it is possible to say something new - even systematically and radically new - about a religious tradition that is twice as old as Christianity, three times as old as Islam and whose history covers three-quarters of the entire history of human civilisation.

Can we say something new about Judaism?

I believe we can and I believe we ought to try. I wish every one of you a shanah tovah. But just think about that one Hebrew word shanah. You know that leshanot, the verb from which shanah comes, means - what? Leshanot. It means, on the one hand, 'to repeat' - mishneh. To do something a second time exactly as you did it before. But leshanot also means 'to change', to do something a second time differently from the way you did it before. In other words, two words that are contraries, even contradictories, in most languages - 'repetition' and 'change' - in Hebrew are represented by the same word.

In other words, every time we repeat our experience of Judaism we find in it something new. What is new is old: what is old is also new. I want to see if we can do that in the course of lectures that I am about to begin this evening.

For me, obviously, this is a huge adventure. I mean - I'm going to turn up each time to see what I'm going to say because I haven't got a clue where we're going to land up! But I do know this: I am going to try and do what I never did before - to express my own personal philosophy. Judaism as it has become clear to me over the years. I will not engage in apologetics. That is, simply defending Judaism or Jewish tradition against its critics. I think that is an admirable thing to do but I am not going to spend any time doing that. Nor am I going to deliver polished lectures

which, as it were, represent something that we all - or I personally - knew in advance.

I am, as I say, going to take a risk. Work in progress; thoughts that I am currently thinking. And if I succeed, I will say "Baruch haShem" and if I fail I will say, in those lovely words of the great mishnaic teacher Rav Nachum Ha'amsoni [?] who, when all his life's work was refuted, said this beautiful thing: "Keshem shekablti schar al hadrishah" - "Well, just as I received a reward for the exposition," - "kach akabel schar al haprishah" - "so I will take it back and get the reward for the retraction".

So if I get it wrong, I hope I won't be unrewarded anyway. But here we are and I am going to begin with two stories. Very simple stories because this is a tough journey and I am going to begin lightly.

Once in a while I find myself, on average every couple of years, in Yerushalayim at the precise moment that I need a haircut. I always go to the same hairdresser in a little alleyway in Yerushalayim. The guy there, who must be well into his '70s by now, is an old-fashioned, old, Oriental Sabra who is not kindly disposed to the British Empire. Because I do not go there very often, he always forgets who I am and he says, "Me'ayfo ata?" - "Where are you from?". I say, "Me'Anglia". "England?!" He gets, you know, all tense. He says, "Lehamti neged haBritim be'arbaimvesheva." "I fought against the Brits in '47." And he goes on and on and on. And then he stops and he pauses and he smiles and he says, "Aval ha'Anglim hem gentlemanim".

Now listen to this. Even to say the word, even to express the concept, he has to use the English language. There are some words that are untranslatable.

Let me give you another example. I had the great privilege, back in 1955, to receive something called 'The Jerusalem Prize'. Extremely nice. You receive it on Jerusalem Day, in Jerusalem, at the Knesset. On the day afterwards you are given a reception by a leading figure in Israeli public life whom I won't name for obvious reasons. Anyway, I was given a reception in my honour and in the speech - which luckily was in Ivrit so that my parents couldn't understand what he was saying, he said the following, this very senior figure in Israeli life - he said: "I see that the Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Sacks, has been given his award for chinuch torani bagolah - for Jewish education in the Diaspora. Chinuch torani zeh yoter tov mi klum - Torah education is better than nothing but - . And he then delivered a diatribe against religious education.

When I came back to London I had breakfast with the Israeli Ambassador and I said, "Kavod HaShagrir, now I understand why it is that after 4,000 years the Hebrew language still does not have a word which means 'tact'". [Laughter]

Now I find these things interesting. Why? Because actually, what these stories are obviously saying is that not everything that you can say in one language can you translate into another. But I want to say that that is not a little point: it is a terribly big point. It really is a big point. If you really want to know the difference between one culture and another, one civilisation and another, look at the words that in one language exist and that cannot be translated into another language.

Let me just give you a 'for instance'. Take that second example. The fact that Hebrew does not have a word meaning 'tact'. Incidentally, would you be surprised to know that the Hebrew language does not have a word that means 'understatement'?

Now listen to this. Let me float a hypothesis to you. Here's the hypothesis: that the longer a nation has enjoyed uninterrupted sovereignty, the more the word for 'no' in that language sounds like the word 'yes'.

(Are you with me?) For instance, you know that there is a special kind of English. Do you remember that programme from years ago called "Yes, Prime Minister"? There is a special kind of English called 'Sir Humphrey talk'. Do you know what I mean? If he thinks the Prime Minister, say, is about to launch on something totally crazy, he says, "Courageous, Prime Minister." If he thinks you are totally wrong, he says, "Up to a point, Prime Minister."

In other words, countries that have survived for a long time as self-governing entities learn how to apply the oil of politeness to the friction of human conflict. They could not have survived without it. If they had not had it, they would have split apart. It is, therefore, very significant indeed that Hebrew does not have a word for 'tact' or for 'understatement' or for 'circumlocution'. And that is because the Jewish people have spent most of their history not exercising power.

(Are you with me?) They never needed to keep a people together as the sovereign state. In other words, this little thing turns out to be a very big thing. Because, if you look at Jewish language you will see that a fundamental question is being asked of Jewish history and of Jewish existence in the State of Israel right now. That is this: can Jews develop the kind of civility, the kind of tact, the kind of diplomacy, the kind of "soft answer [that] turneth away wrath", which will allow Jews in the State of Israel to disagree without splitting apart.

That seems to me probably the biggest question facing the State of Israel right now, today. In other words, one word can be missing from a language and that tells us something very deep if we keep chasing and pursuing and pursuing. Ok? (Are you with me?)

So far, so good. I now want to tell you in advance what I want to do in these lectures.

There was a very great book, written in the early 'sixties by an American philosopher, T. S. Kuhn, called *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. In this book, T. S. Kuhn introduced a phrase into the language which is an extremely important phrase: a 'paradigm shift'. You are familiar with the phrase, yes? A paradigm shift.

Here is Kuhn's theory. Everyone used to think that what scientists do is that they observe the world and, on the basis of that observation, they come up with theories. That is what is called induction: learning from observation. Kuhn said that, no, it doesn't work like that at all. What scientists do is they begin with a theory. They begin with a preconception as to what the world looks like, how one thing links to another, and then they see if the facts fit the theory. If it is a good theory, most of the facts fit it. But some do not. Some don't. And so long as the theory prevails, the bits that the theory doesn't explain are kind of ignored or explained away. There are a few odd things.

Eventually, however, somebody notices that those exceptions that the theory does not explain are actually centrally important and invents a new theory which accounts not only for the facts that we always understood but for the bits on the side that we didn't understand. That is what happened when Einsteinian physics took over from Newtonian physics; when Darwinian biology took over from earlier theories. Scientists looked at the bits that didn't fit in. And when you look at the bits that don't fit in, then you are open to a paradigm shift. And a paradigm shift is a radically new theory which revolutionises the way we look at the world.

And that is what I want to try and do tonight and in these six lectures: develop a radically new theory which is in fact a paradigm shift in our understanding of Judaism. Let me give you, for instance, two little examples which all of us, I suppose, must have noticed at some stage or other and which do not fit into any theory that I know of about Judaism. Ok? I want to give you two bits of Judaism that we are all familiar with which no theory explains. Can you handle that?

Let me ask you a simple question? When should we do tshuvah?

When? [Inaudible answers from audience.] Well, the conventional answer would be: we have ten days beginning at Rosh HaShanah culminating in Yom Kippur known as the Aseret Yomei Tshuvah - the Ten Days of Tshuvah. Right? So there is a bit of the year dedicated to tshuvah. However, you are absolutely right. Every single day, at least on weekdays, three times a day, we say, "Slach lanu ovinu ki hatanu, mehal lanu malkenu ki fashanu." "Forgive us, we have sinned." We ask for tshuvah.

The Gemara says, "Adam nidon bechol yom". We are judged every single day.

So here is a very simple question, ok? Why is it, if tshuvah should be on every day of the year, do we set aside these ten days of the year for it? (Are you with me?) That is a very simple question. Ignore it. I will come to it. It will turn out to be deeply significant in the end. No theory explains why, if tshuvah is right every day, we should have these ten days specially set aside for it.

Let me ask you a second question. What is the favourite occupation of Jews? [Inaudible answers from audience.]

Eating? Oh my goodness! Discussing? My goodness me, you must mix in polite company. Arguing? Schon. Years and years ago, there was a series, I think on the BBC, of all the world religions called *The Long Search*. The guy, who was not Jewish, came to the Judaism programme and was obviously in a state of shock and he called this programme *The Holy Argument*.

Now this is a very, very interesting thing. If you think about it, what is the Gemara? Every Jewish text, every rabbinic text, consists of the following. Rabbi X says this; Rabbi Y says that. Not only in the text itself of the Gemara, but you will know if you have ever studied a page of Talmud that outside the text there is another kind of argument going on between Rashi (French, 11th century) and his children and grandchildren known as the Ba'alei Tosafot. So there is another argument going on around the argument in the Talmud which is around the argument in the Mishnah and surrounding that, in the small print and all the surrounding volumes, are arguments about the arguments about the arguments.

Take a standard text of the chumash, the classic Jewish text called *Mikraot Gedolot* which will have a little bit of biblical text and around it an ongoing argument. There is Rashi's reading of the verse. There is his grandson Rashbam's reading of the verse. There is Ibn Ezra. There is Ramban. There is Hizkuni. There is Radak. There is Sforno, etc. etc. That page of Torah is an ongoing extended argument. If you were to describe the religious literature of rabbinic Judaism, the best description I can come up with is that it is an 'anthology of arguments'.

Not only that. Well, we call those arguments. What do we call those arguments in Judaism? Mahlokot leshem shomayim. Arguments for the sake of heaven. And I don't know of any other literature of any kind - I don't even know of any other books that are printed in that typography - not even the Arden Shakespeare has Rashi and Tosefot like that! You know what I mean? They have already sorted out the arguments before they write the commentaries.

There is no book like a Mikraot Gedolot. Or like a Talmud. Or like a volume of Shulhan Aruch. But what is more: there are not only arguments for the sake of Heaven. What is totally unique, I think - please correct me if I'm wrong: I've never come across it in any other literature - is the argument with Heaven itself. After all, Abraham argues with God. Moses argues with God. Jeremiah argues with God. So does Job. And the question is not just: why do Jews argue? I suppose everyone argues. The question is: why is argument central to the Jewish experience? Why is it the very structure of Jewish thought? Why is argument the standard form of a Jewish response to anything?

Now is there any answer to that? Do you know why?

So here is a central feature of Judaism that nobody explains. Just as Newtonian physics didn't explain the bending of light or the maximum speed of light which the Michelson-Morley experiment established and thus established Einstein's relativity theory, there were bits that Newtonian physics couldn't explain. There were bits that pre-Darwinian biology couldn't explain about the origin and diversity of the species. So there are bits of Judaism like argument, like having special days for special things, which nobody explains.

I think I am familiar with the literature. Nobody explains. What do we do with these two phenomena? What I would call the phenomenon of the Jewish calendar and the other phenomenon of the Jewish conversation.

The fact that Judaism, according to its standard theories, fails to explain things like this, tells me that we need a paradigm shift in our understanding of Judaism. Here it is in advance. Let me explain to you my view.

Western civilisation is the product of two immensely powerful civilisations. On the one hand, ancient Greece. On the other hand, ancient Israel. Athens and Jerusalem. The worlds, respectively, of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle on the one hand and of Avraham ovenu, Moshe rabenu and the Prophets on the other.

They are two very different cultures and we have always assumed that they were more or less translatable into one another. That ancient Greece and ancient Israel are two ways of talking about fundamentally the same things. Why did we assume this? I will tell you why we assumed this? Because European culture is based on Christianity which became, after the conversion of Constantine in 327 CE, the dominant cultural force in Europe, and Christianity is a synthesis of the two. Its birthplace was in Israel but its area of activity was in Greece and Rome, the Hellenistic world. So we had a culture based on Christianity which brought together the world of ancient Israel and the world of ancient Greece. So we thought that it is all translatable, one into the other.

However, though the first Christians were indeed Jews, what is deeply significant - and I am not sure how many people have really understood this - is: in what language are the first Christian texts? They are all in Greek. From the very beginning, Christianity - although it had Jewish bits to it - was expressed in the language of Greece. And that has influenced Western civilisation to this very day. At the very heart of our civilisation is an unacknowledged and unresolved tension between the Greek bits and the Jewish bits, and the dominant bits have been the Greek bits.

Now it is not simply that in Judaism there are lots of words that cannot be translated into Greek. That is simple. I want to say much more than that! That the deep structure of Jewish thought cannot be translated into the dominant categories of western thought. That western thought is based on a Greek model which is quite different from the Jewish model. And because we did not realise this, we thought Judaism was much more simple, tamed, domesticated than it actually is.

Actually, Judaism is very different indeed. So much so that every time we use words like 'faith' or 'knowledge' or 'truth' and we think we know what they mean, actually they mean something different in Judaism to what we think they mean when we translate them into English. They do not mean what we think they do.

To enter the world of Judaism, we have to learn a new language, a new thought system, a new way of entering the world. That is what I want to do in these six lectures: to say something new as radically new as I think it is possible to say about a tradition that we thought we knew all about. Can we learn to listen to Judaism's distinctive voice? Can we hear what is untranslatable about its thought patterns? Can we hear it saying new things to us?

That is my introduction. Now let me begin and I am going to begin at the beginning. At the beginning of the beginnings. Bereishit bara elokim - "In the beginning, God created." Now I want to introduce you to a problem which some of

you will be familiar with. It is the opening chapters of the book of Bereishit that formed the context, the impetus, to one of the great works of Jewish thought in the 20th century.

Does anyone know what I'm referring to here? Which great work starts with Bereishis 1 and Bereishis 2? Does anyone know? [Inaudible answers from audience.] Soloveitchik. Indeed. Rav Soloveitchik of blessed memory, his famous essay published in 1965, *The Lonely Man of Faith*. Rav Soloveitchik begins with a problem and I am going to begin with the same problem although, as you will see, I will analyse it rather differently from him.

Here it is. And for those who haven't read the essay, just concentrate very carefully because we probably read this so many times but we never noticed it before. The Torah does not contain one account of creation. The Torah actually contains two accounts: one in Bereishit chapter 1, the other in Bereishit chapter 2. And they are different accounts almost to the point of contradiction.

What is Bereishit chapter 1? Bereishit chapter 1 is surely one of the most influential texts in all of history. God speaks: the universe comes into being. God says, "Let there be -" and there was and God saw that it was good. That chapter of 31 verses changed the course of the human imagination. For the first time, God was seen not in nature but radically above nature, transcending it, beyond it altogether. All the ancient literatures of the world have a creation myth in which the god of the sky does battle with the god of the sea or the gods do battle, etc. etc. Marduk, Tiamat. You know all this stuff, I am sure. We have read all the heretics. Is that right? I am sure you have!

And all of that is missing from this incredible stately progression whereby the universe unfolds without conflict, without tension, as a result of God's creative word.

Bereishit chapter 1 created the revolution in human thought that is technically known as demythologisation. Ridding the world of myth. According to the greatest sociologist of all time, the 19th century thinker Max Weber - who was not a particular fan of the Jews - western civilisation, western rationality is born in Bereishit chapter 1 where human beings, for the first time, explained the world without myth.

However, Bereishit chapter 2 is very different. It's got a different feel about it. Instead of this vantage point of the universe as a whole, we now find ourselves, at the beginning of Bereishit chapter 2, in the Garden of Eden. And God suddenly appears to us as much more close, much more intimate, much more concerned with the human situation. We see Him taking a mass of earth, of clay - afar min ha'adamah - and forming out of it the first human being, and breathing into adam the breath of life - nishmat hayim.

Then, of course, like any other Jewish parent, the Almighty starts worrying. His son isn't married yet. You know the kind of thing!

You know the famous interfaith joke about the medical ethics question? When does life begin? The Catholics say: Life begins at conception. The Protestants say: At birth. The Jews say: When the children have got through graduate school and when we have got einkelech [grandchildren]. You know, that's when life begins!

Now, what Rav Soloveitchik points out and what you will see immediately if you look at Bereishis chapter 1 and Bereishis chapter 2 is that there are major differences, almost contradictions, between the two accounts. First, the question: how is man described in Bereishis chapter 1? He is tzelem elokim. He is the 'image of God'. Something majestic.

How is man described in Bereishis chapter 2? Afar min ha'adamah. 'Dust of the earth.' That is a radically different view. The height; the depth.

Number two: What is mankind commanded to do in Bereishis chapter 1? Milu et ha'aretz vekivshuha. 'To fill the earth and conquer it' - subdue it; learn how to control it. Master it. What is mankind commanded to do in chapter 2? Almost the exact opposite. God plants him in Eden le'ovdah uleshomrah. 'To serve it and to protect it.' Quite the opposite kind of mandate.

Thirdly, male and female: how are they created in chapter 1 of Bereishis? Simultaneously. Zachar unekevah bara otam. Simultaneously. God creates man and woman in His image. Whereas, in the second chapter, a quite different story. It is only after man has been created and God says, "Lo tov lihayot adam levado." "It is not good for man to be alone," and God has brought all the animals to Adam to see what he would call them, to see if he found a mate. "Velo matza ezer kenegdo" "And he did not find a mate." And only after then, is woman created. So, were they created simultaneously or not? Seriatim? What were they? Again, the two chapters disagree.

And, fourthly, very significantly, the name of God is different in the two chapters. In chapter 1 of Bereishis, God is described as elokim. In chapter 2 he is described as hashem elokim. The four-letter name of God. The Tetragrammaton.

So we have different sequence of creation, different moods. Four contradictions between the two narratives. What do we do with those contradictions?

Obviously one way, which was taken in the 19th century by people called biblical critics, was to say, "What's the problem? There's actually no problem because these two chapters were written by different people at different times."

Now that for me, I have to say - and we will have a lecture dedicated to that theme - is just a category mistake. It is just seeing the thing in the wrong way altogether. Biblical criticism fails to read the text as a text. It reads beyond the text to say: Well, let's forget about the text, what can we learn about the people who wrote it. And that is a mistake.

For instance, you imagine three people reading a novel by Dickens. Let us say *Hard Times* or *David Copperfield*. One is a psychiatrist who reads *David Copperfield* to learn that Charles Dickens was screwed up by his parents when he was young, etc. etc. Standard psycho-analytical interpretation. (It's not only Jews who have parents. Don't forget!) [Laughter] One of them is a social historian who reads the work to find out what were the social conditions of the working class in Victorian England. A third one, a cultural historian from America, reads it and says, "A typical 'dwem' book". Is that what it is called in America now? 'Dwem.' Dead, white, European, male. Forget it. It's off the curriculum!

So each one reads out of the text what they want to discover beyond the text. His background, the social class, the power structures. Ribono shel olam! Read the text! Forget about what's behind the text! And how much more so, indeed more so than any other text known to civilisation, do you have to read the text in the case of Tenach where the Torah actually says - and it says it right at the beginning - that the text is the ultimate reality, that language is reality. How does God create the world? Through words. God creates the world by saying, "Baruch she'omar!" "Blessed be He Who spoke." Vehaya olam. "And the world came into being." Words, for Jews, are the ultimately creative thing. And, therefore, reading the Torah, we have to read the words. Not tear it up into pieces and say, "That belongs here; that belongs there." We have to read the text, not the pretext or the context.

So, that way of dissolving the problems - saying there is no problem because it was not all written by one person - that is absolutely failing to understand the nature of the problem, which is: how do we understand this very contradictory set of chapters?

Well, let's take the Rashi option. Why are there two different accounts of creation according to Rashi? Look, Rashi is a beautiful classic Jewish commentator and he says something typically beautiful. He says this - and of course this is the standard rabbinic interpretation. Rashi says that the work elokim - God's name, elokim - means midat hadin, the attribute of justice. The word hashem means God's attribute of mercy. Why were there two accounts of creation? Because originally God created the world under the attribute of justice but then He saw that the world cannot survive on justice alone and, therefore, God had to create it all over again, joining to justice His attribute of mercy. Hence the two creations.

It is a beautiful, beautiful analysis. And I think it is true - but it is not the plain meaning of the text.

What does Rav Soloveitchik, who raised this question, answer? He answers in the following way. There is a lovely existentialist drama here. Here we are - there are, in fact, two types of human personality. Soloveitchik calls them 'majestic man' and 'covenantal man'. I am sorry - can this include 'woman' as well? I mean, don't take it amiss: Soloveitchik was writing before political correctness. So 'majestic woman' and 'covenantal woman' as well.

Anyway, the point is that the majestic personality seems to control the world; the covenantal personality seeks to experience the world. The majestic personality is the scientist, if you like, and the covenantal personality is the poet, if you like. And we are both. So, says Rav Soloveitchik, in a magnificently brilliant interpretation, Genesis 1 describes majestic humanity. The image of God; the person who can control and dominate the world. Genesis 2 describes covenantal personality who knows we are only dust of the earth and who is there to serve and protect the world. And we are both. Hence that is why there are these two chapters: because they are both true and they are both part of who we are. And I think that is deeply profound and moving and true.

However, I am still left with my question: what kind of literature begins with a contradiction? You open a novel. What kind of novel is it in which chapter 2 counterstates what is written in chapter 1? What kind of literature begins with a contradiction? That is my question.

Here I want you to step back for a moment and I want you to think of certain critical moments in human civilisation when human creativity bursts through all the existing conventions and creates something radically new. When that happens, you have an explosive mix because, initially, this new creation is shockingly incomprehensible to people and people feel scandalised.

Can you think of some examples - from the world of art? A famous one, right? In 1874, what happened in Paris? The first Impressionist exhibition. All the painters

in that first exhibition had been turned down by every art gallery. All the reviews - scandalised. What is this kind of stuff? This is painting?!

A second, famous, example: the famous first performance in 1913 of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre de Printemps* - *The Rite of Spring*. Total pandemonium in the concert hall. People boo, hiss, cheer. You know - it's like a Labour Party Convention. [Laughter] Anyway, there it is. So a riot takes place.

When Stravinsky breaks the boundaries of music, when Monet breaks through the boundaries of representational art, initially people find this shockingly unintelligible. But, of course, by now we know what those things were and those things taught us to see the world in a new way, to hear the world in a new way. So that a Monet exhibition in the last few years will attract massive crowds and ditto Stravinsky.

I want to concentrate on two other such moments that, to me, strike me as deeply, deeply interesting. Here is the first. It is set in Paris in the years 1907 to 1914. During those years, two painters - one called Picasso, one called Braque - developed a kind of painting known as Cubism. Cubism is a revolution in art. Maybe not a permanent one, but it's an interesting one and I really want to explain why this is. It is more of a revolution than Impressionism.

Impressionism already moved art from trying to depict things as they are or as we suppose them to be, to trying to depict things as how we see them. In other words, to move art from what is to what seems. That is Impressionism. But Cubism goes further - and I need to explain to you, and I need you to understand: what is Cubism? Cubism did something extremely important. This will turn out to be crucial to our whole understanding of Judaism.

Cubism broke with the convention which had been common to virtually all representational art. Here it is: when you look at a painting, what do you see? You see the world from a particular point of view. The point of view of the painter. The point of view of an ideal observer. You are standing in a different world from the painting - which is on two dimensions of canvas. You are standing here, in a different mode of reality, in a different metaphysical space from the painting itself, and you are the detached spectator. You are, hypothetically, where the artist was when he painted the scene. You are the ideal observer. Right?

That is what representational painting is - from Greeks through the Middle Ages, through to the Impressionists. It is a representation of reality from a point of view. A point of view in which the observer is in a different universe from that which he observes. There is the picture and here we are looking at it: detached, static, fixed. A single point of view.

Now what did Cubism do? It exploded that convention. Because, in fact, how do we perceive the universe? We don't actually come to know physical objects by standing here and gazing at them in reverential silence. How do we come to know things? We walk around them. We feel them. We kick them. You know! We look at things from one angle, then another angle and then, eventually - and we do this particularly when we are children - we get a feel from how it looks from this angle, that angle, side on, front on. We feel it and we get the texture. And what Cubism did was to put all those multiple perspectives together on a two-dimensional canvas. To say: Look, it is out of this jumble of impressions that we construct our sense of the reality of things.

Cubism abandoned the fiction of an ideal observer. That's Cubism.

I want to take a second moment - and you will know this a lot better than I do because I don't watch a lot of cinema. However, there is one moment which, for me - you probably know example how wrong I am on this - but there is one moment that for me, when I was a little kid (although it was made before I was born: I'm not that old!) was a decisive moment in the history of the cinema. I am sure you have seen this: Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*. Do you remember the point early on in the film where a reporter is trying to dig up the details of Kane's private life and goes to see his ex-wife who is now a singer in a very seedy rundown bar. Do you remember? The camera sort of pans across, up through the front of the bar, up through the rather broken and half-working neon sign, through the neon sign, across the roof and down a skylight into the bar.

Something happened to the cinema at that point. Namely - and maybe it happened before: this is just the point I can date, *Citizen Kane*, 1941 - what happened is this. That cinema liberated itself for that moment from the conventions of the theatre. In other words, until then a lot of movies - not all - were like theatre only on film. But the mobile camera liberated cinema from the conventions of the theatre.

I just want to remind you and remind ourselves what happens when you are sitting in a theatre watching a play. When you sit in a theatre watching the play, all the action is taking place in a world that exists on the stage. You are in a different world. Even though you are entering into the reality of the drama, you are not actually part of that world. You cannot suddenly interrupt in the middle of *Othello* and say, "He's telling a lie, for heaven's sake!" - and change the plot to a happy

ending! You cannot do that! Because the play is in one dimension of reality. You are in another dimension of reality and you are in a fixed vantage point: the point of view of the gods. You are seeing the play as a detached observer. A detached observer that can see and hear everything but cannot influence events.

In other words, what Orson Welles did when he moved the camera was to break the convention of a static observer. He suddenly allowed us to see things from a moving point of view.

Or, if I can give a slightly different example and an equally powerful one. What Tom Stoppard did in a different way in his first play, which you must have seen: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* is a metaphysical conceit in which, as it were, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is happening but you are watching it from the back of the stage. You are watching it from the point of view of two characters who, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, are off the stage most of the time and who, in Tom Stoppard's play, are on the stage most of the time. That is showing you reality from a second and conflicting perspective.

In other words, all of these - Cubism, Orson Welles, Tom Stoppard - are rejecting the conventional way of representing reality from a single perspective: from an ideal observer who is detached, who can see what is going on, but is outside the reality of what is going on. That point of view which the American philosopher Thomas Nagel calls *The View from Nowhere*. The view of total detachment, and that is broken by Cubism and mobile cameras.

I now want to explain to you what is happening in Bereishis chapter 1 and Bereishis chapter 2. Bereishis chapter 1 and chapter 2 are the same events seen from two different perspectives: one from the point of view of the universe; one from the point of view of mankind. Bereishis 1 and 2 are to linear narrative what Cubism is to representational art.

Bereishis 1 and 2 are the same events seen from two particular points of view: the first from God's point of view, the second - set in Eden - from a kind of human eye level point of view. Or, to put it slightly differently, in the terms of the great 11th century philosopher Yehuda Halevy, terms popularised in the 20th century by Martin Buber: what we see in Bereishis 1 is *elokim*, i.e. God is an 'it'; *elokim* is the force of forces, the 'first cause', the 'big bang', the unfolding of the universe in terms of 'it', in terms of physical, scientific forces. That is *elokim*.

Hashem, says Yehuda Halevy, is the proper name of God. It isn't a noun. It is the proper name of ...

[End of Tape 1, side A. Some words missing when tape turned over.]

... and that second chapter has got nothing to do with causes of the universe. It has got to do with relationships. It has got to do with the existential loneliness of the human being. And about the discovery of another person. Only now, in the 21st century, having come through what we have come through, knowing that there was something called Cubism, for instance, only now can we begin and go back and understand what an extraordinary technique the Torah was using!

I don't know if, in the 19th century, they could have understood the Torah like that because they did not have an obvious model for the same story told two times from different perspectives. I don't know if any of you listen to chamber music, but you surely know that it was Bartok's quartets, in the 20th century, that allowed people to go back and understand for the first time Beethoven's late quartets that were written a century earlier. It was only the experience of Bartok that made us understand what Beethoven was trying to do all those years before.

I have tried to explain to you that Torah, like Cubism, breaks with the convention of a single point of view. However, I don't want to stop there because we are beginning to sense something very significant. Something momentous, something unexpected - and here it is. Here we are in Bereishis 1 which introduced to the world a totally radically new concept of God. God as vast, as transcending the universe, as infinite in scope. Unlike anything in nature. What would we have expected such a concept to create?

Obviously we would have expected this concept to have created the total devaluation of anything else. Compared to God, compared to the biblical God, we are infinitesimal, insignificant specks of dust on the surface of eternity. That is what we would have expected.

In actual fact, the exact opposite occurs. Because what God speaks to us in Bereishis chapter 2 is the exact opposite of the insignificance of humanity. Bereishis 2 focuses on one human being who is centre stage and absolutely fills the action. His name is Adam. We see and we feel things through his eyes - not through God's eyes. In chapter 1 we saw things through God's eyes. He says, "and there was - and there is". In chapter 2 we see through his eyes. We see him lonely. We see him searching. We see him not finding. We actually see him wake up and see a woman for the first time. You know what he does at that point. He says the first poem on record:

Zot ha'pa'am - This time [I have found] Etzem mi'atzamei - bone of my bone
Basar mibasari - flesh of my flesh Lezot yikarei ishah - she shall be called
'woman' Ki mi'ish lukahah-zot - because she was taken from man.

We see, we feel, his joy of discovery. We actually are seeing through the immense significance of one human being. In other words, with Bereishis 2, by God giving us not only the point of view of God on creation, but the point of view of man on creation. In Bereishis 2 we are about to see an extraordinary phenomenon: that God who speaks to us through the words of Torah is God who makes space for mankind. Who takes human beings seriously. Who confers legitimacy, dignity, on the human point of view - which is the point of view from which the narrative of Bereishis 2 is told.

Now that is an incredible thing. What is equally important is the God as we see him in Bereishis 2 is not a detached observer. He is not there in the centre of the universe, big bang, ordering the bits and pieces to distil themselves into a universe. He is anything but a detached spectator. There He is, caring for man, shaping him, breathing into him, planting him in a garden, worried about his loneliness. He is becoming a *shadchan*. You know: "Have I got a lovely girl for you!" The whole stuff!

I tell you, there is a book. My French is terrible so I haven't read it. It's on my shelves. It's conversations with the previous Chief Rabbi of France, Rabbi Sirat [?], and it bears a lovely title. Here it is: *La Tendresse de Dieu*. The Tenderness of God. Read chapter 2 of Bereishis and that is what you will see. The tenderness of God.

I hope you are following what I am saying. Here is an immense, world-transforming phenomenon in the narrative technique of Bereishis. Yes, the Bible in chapter 1 gives us the point of view of God - which you would have thought is all you need. But chapter 2 says: No, it isn't all you need: you also need the point of view of humanity. And God enters that world. And in that world he confers dignity and integrity on the human perspective of things, even though it is partial, fragmentary and finite. God has created space for human beings.

Now already shadowed here, in the very opening chapters of Bereishit is a famous idea that didn't come into Judaism for another 3,000 years, the Kabbalistic idea of *tzimtzum* in which God effaces Himself to make room for human beings but also (and please listen carefully to this) - a psycho-analytic theory in Bereishis 1 and Bereishis 2 utterly and polar opposite to the psycho-analytical theory of Freud.

Remind ourselves. Where did Freud get his psycho-analysis from? What was his inspiration? [Inaudible answers from audience.] Jewish middle-aged women? No, no, no, no. No, no, no, no! He got it, as you know, from the classic text of Greek literature, Sophocles' play *Oedipus*. It is very important for you to understand that Freud's psycho-analysis is Greek not Jewish. Even if he did have Jewish parents, it is Greek psycho-analysis.

You know the story of *Oedipus*. And Freud made this, as I am sure you know, the basis not only of his human psychology but he also made it the basis of his theory of religion in a book he wrote called *Totem and Taboo* and here it is. This is the theory. This is Greek tragedy. This is Sophocles. This is *Oedipus*. Here it is. Here is a world in which father and son compete for the same space. That space is only big enough for one of them. Therefore, Laius, *Oedipus*'s father, attempts infanticide on his son by abandoning him as a baby and the son, who grows up to be *Oedipus*, commits parricide - kills his father, not knowing that he is his father.

It is a particular view of the universe in which father and son are antagonistic and they cannot both live together. And Freud saw this as the basis of religion, human civilisation, the works! The very essence of the Jewish vision is exactly the opposite! Of a father called God Who makes space for His children, i.e. us. And of us, His children, who make space for God - by listening to His word, called the Torah, by speaking to Him, called 'prayer', and by doing His will, called 'mitzvos'. The world of ancient Greece, which Freud turned into psycho-analytical theory, is diametrically opposed to the fundamental premise of Bereishis 1 and Bereishis 2 in which Father and son, parents and children, make space for one another.

Now I want to go further. I said the Torah breaks with certain conventions. Conventions of representative art, of narrative and of theatre. Those, of course - art, theatre: painting pictures, drama - they were the two great art forms of which civilisation? (Apart from the West End, now, ok?) Ancient Greece. Representational art. Portraits, paintings, architecture and drama.

Now I want to say this. Here we get into the crunch. The core of Greek culture is not art. It is a discipline called philosophy. Josiah Royce said, probably accurately, that the whole of western philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato. There it is. Now here is philosophy, and philosophy itself - which is the master discipline of Greek civilisation - has its own master discipline which is called logic. And the fundamental principle of logic is what is called the 'law of contradiction'. The law of contradiction says that a statement and its negation cannot be true at once. They cannot be both. This table is brown and it is red all at once: it cannot be both.

Tuesday night and Friday morning. Although by the time I have finished it may well be!

You know the famous joke? The three ministers of religion are getting together and they are talking about the power of prayer and the miracles that happened to them. The Catholic says, "I was in a village when all of a sudden the flood waters came and I was about to be swept away. I prayed and, by a miracle, there was water to the right of me and water to the left of me but in the middle, where I was, was dry land." And the Protestant says, "That's nothing. I was in a place and the building caught fire and the flames were leaping and I prayed to God. There was fire to the right of me and fire to the left of me but where I was was safe." And the Rabbi says, "Fah! That's nothing! I was walking along a street one Shabbos. I see in front of me on the pavement a thousand pounds. I pray. A miracle happens. It's Shabbos to the right of me, Shabbos to the left of me but where I am it is Wednesday! [Laughter]

I take that back. It is an anti-Semitic joke. Anyway - those things only happen in jokes.

But in reality, says logic, you cannot have Shabbos and Wednesday at once. That's the law of contradiction. Now I want you to understand that the law of contradiction, the world of logic, is like the world of representative painting. It is a two-dimensional universe. You could imagine, for instance, a vast chessboard, as big as the world, with every possible question on it and, as human knowledge increases, we can put on it a white chequer to say it is true, a black chequer to say it is false. You could get all of truth on a two-dimensional flat plane. That is the world of Greek logic. Two-dimensional reality. Ok? Why is this? There it is.

I am pushing you very hard. This is deep stuff. But, anyway - for the Greeks, that is what the gods were. That is what truth was. Gods were people who observed the world from a distance, as an audience observes a drama from a distance, as a visitor to an art gallery looks at a painting from a distance. Detachment. Flat reality which you see. And that is the Greek concept of knowledge and truth. Ok?

And Judaism rejects that. Judaism rejects that. Because truth for us is not flat. It is not two-dimensional. And very often it is not a matter of either true or false. And here I am trying to explain the key proposition which I analyse here, that in Judaism the law of contradiction does not apply! Two conflicting propositions may both be true! It just happens to depend on where we are standing and what is our perspective. How do things look from where we stand?

And I can explain this idea to you very simply. In terms of an aphorism, I can explain it to you in words and I can explain it to you in the form of a diagram which, Nicole, you are going to show people. Here it is, first of all, in the form of words. Listen very carefully to some very wise words by a Nobel prize-winning scientist, Niels Bohr. He said the following: "The opposite of a simple truth is a falsehood. The opposite of a profound truth is very often another profound truth." This particular fascinating diagram I owe to a psychotherapist - a very interesting man who died not long ago and who was a survivor of Auschwitz. He founded a new school of psychotherapy. His name was Victor Frankel. (I don't know if you are familiar with him.)

Here we are. Can you see up there? There's a cone, a cylinder and a sphere. Ok? Three different three-dimensional objects. You shine a light down on all three onto a two-dimensional surface, and what do you see? Three identical zones. In other words, what look like the same in two-dimensional reality are in fact different in three-dimensional reality. (Are you with me so far?)

Look at this one. You have got a cylinder and if you shine a light down on it from the top, you see a circle. You shine a light across and you see a rectangle. Now can something be a circle and a rectangle at the same time? The answer is: No. That is a contradiction. However, the answer to that contradiction is very simple. It looked like a contradiction because we were trying to see it in two dimensions. If you can see it in three dimensions, then the contradiction disappears.

Now that is what Judaism is. It embraces both sides of what looked like a contradiction. They only look like a contradiction because we think the world is two-dimensional and Judaism is concerned with three and four-dimensional reality.

Now I can explain the point to which I have been driving all along. Judaism rejects the law of contradiction. It therefore rejects the system of Greek logic. It therefore rejects the basis of western thought. Because, western thought tries to see everything in terms of two dimensions: either it is true or it is false. And all we have is one perspective! That is what Judaism rejects. There is always more than one perspective. And Judaism regards that as fundamental to the nature of reality. If I am standing here, the things look different from what you see if you are sitting there. We are seeing the world from different perspectives and Judaism wants to confer dignity on how the world looks to me and how the world looks to you. The world is an irreducible multiplicity of perspectives.

There is, in other words, the view of Hillel. But there is also the view of Shammai. There is the view of Jacob. But there is also the point of view of Esau.

There is the point of view of Adam. There is also the point of view of Eve. And, ultimately, there is the point of view of us down here and there is the point of view of God up there.

Judaism is an attempt to do justice to the fact that there is more than one point of view; more than one truth. And that is something that you cannot translate into the structures of western thought. It is as unintelligible in those categories as Cubism was to people who had never seen a Picasso before.

Now supposing you and I see things differently. We have different perspectives on reality. Is that it? Finito? What can we do under those circumstances? Well, we can talk. Right? We can converse. You can tell me how the world looks like to you. I can tell you how the world looks like to me. We can have a conversation. We can, through that conversation, learn what it feels like to be different. Man can learn what it feels like to be a woman. An adult can learn what it feels like, all over again, to be a child. Man can begin to enter into a dialogue with God.

One way of bridging the distance between two perspectives is through conversation and through dialogue. Another way is very simple. You can look at the world from two different perspectives at two different times. This week I can enjoy myself speaking from the platform. Next time I can ask you to give the lecture and I can sit in the audience. So I can adopt your perspective so long as I do it at a different time. And now I reach my proposition. Here it is.

Greek thought is logical. Jewish thought is more than logical: it is dialogical and it is chronological. Because Judaism gives dignity to the multiple perspectives from which we perceive reality and, most importantly, I say that the truth is not only as it appears to God looking down from heaven. Truth is also how it seems to us down here on earth. And the only ways we can handle that are either by having a dialogue and conversation, or by having different perspectives at different times. That is the paradigm shift.

Here it is: my argument that Judaism represents a fundamentally different language from Greek on which western civilisation is built. And now you understand the points with which I began. How do we explain that Judaism is a religion of argument and that argument is for us something holy? The answer is obvious! Because argument is that point in which we live a reality which does justice to more than one point of view. More than one perspective. Hence, all the arguments on the page of a chumash. So we see them from the eyes of 11th century France and Rashi. We see them from Rashbam. We see them from Ibn Ezra in Spain in the 11th century. In the 12th century we see them from Ramban. We see the world, the text, from all those different points of view. The Gemara we see from the point of view of Rav and the point of view of Shmuel. Abaya Rava in the Mishnah. We see it from the point of view of Rabbi Shimon, Rabbi Yehudah. In the Bible itself, we see the point of view of God engaging in the dialogue with those who represent the point of view of humanity - called Abraham, called Moses, called Jeremiah, called Job.

Only a world view that had the validity of multiple perspectives could regard argument as the fundamental vehicle of truth. Therefore, dialogue occupies a role in Judaism that it does not occupy in philosophy. That is the first point. The second point: I still remember the first time I read *The Lonely Man of Faith*. There was Rav Soloveitchik explaining that on the one hand we are creative; on the other hand we are created. We strive to control the universe on the one hand. On the other hand we strive to revere and admire and respond to it. We are majestic. We are covenantal. And Soloveitchik explains that that two things are part of our personalities. They are in ceaseless conflict. They are in tension. We have got to live with that existential angst. And I thought to myself: Hang on. All he has said is true but he's missed a fundamentally important point - which is that we do not all need psycho-analysts. We are not all in a state of constant existential tension. How does Judaism resolve the tension between us being creative and us being created?

Very simple. In the words: sheshet yamim ta'avod u'veyom ha'shevi'it tishbo. Six days shall you work - be majestic. The seventh day you be at rest and be covenantal. In other words, these two fundamentally different ways of looking at the world - Judaism does not see as a constant state of tension. It says: resolve them, not in the soul but in time! Give six days to that way of seeing the world. That is a profound truth. We are there to improve the world and not to take it for granted. But one day in seven, as a phenomenon of time, live this other truth! - which is not only that we are here to change the world but we are also here to revere, admire and praise God for creating the world.

In other words, the tension is resolved in terms of chronology, in terms of time, in terms of the Jewish calendar. And now you'll understand why it is obvious - why even though it is true every day of the year that we are sinners and we should be full of remorse and we should do tshuvah, we cannot spend our whole lives like that. We set aside ten days of the calendar, from Rosh HaShanah to Yom Kippur. And that is when we live that truth - even though it is true all the time. Because truths have other truths which we also have to live some of the time.

I have tried to give you an argument which is as revolutionary, I suppose, as some major paradigm shift. I have tried to explain to you that Judaism is a radically different way of experiencing reality from that which is held by the Greeks. That which is held today by western culture. That makes the whole language of Judaism radically new, radically different. Jews really did see the world differently. They had a different concept of truth, of knowledge, of faith - as I will explain in the course of these six lectures. And that means that Judaism is systematically untranslatable into the language of western culture. It is radically different and offers a radical alternative. What I call the 'dignity of difference'. Respecting the point of view of somebody who is radically different from us. As we respect God's point of view; as He respects ours. As Hillel respected Shammai and Shammai respected Hillel. It actually needs a whole different way of thinking from that which dominated the Greek world.

In other words, what Judaism has over and above a logical imagination - which we do not knock. It gives us a little bit of reality. The non-human bit of reality. Science. Philosophy. That's all logical. Fine. But if you want to deal with human reality, the world as it seems to us as people in the image of God, for that you need more than logic. You need not a logical imagination but a dialogical imagination and a chronological imagination.

If I am right, then the whole enterprise which is called Jewish philosophy rests on a mistake. Judaism cannot be translated into the language of philosophy because Judaism is too subtle, too complex, too multidimensional to be translated into philosophy, that great Greek discipline. And the reason is that Judaism is the most heroic endeavour that I know to describe the world. A world in which God is real and we are real. In which the immensity of God doesn't negate our integrity and our importance does not negate the reality of God. A world in which God makes space for us and our viewpoint and we make space for God, Who is radically unlike us, and for other people who are radically unlike us.

Judaism is an attempt to describe a universe in which a free God creates room for human freedom. A creative God who leaves room for human creativity. Judaism is the personal encounter between this perspective and that perspective; between the self and the other - whether the other is divine or the other is human. It is the most radical account ever given of the dignity of the human situation of freedom and creativity under the sovereignty of God. That drama can not be caught in a philosophical system, however you try. A philosophical system in the Platonic mode or the Cartesian mode. It cannot be done. Philosophy is a two-dimensional enterprise trying to capture the reality of a three-dimensional phenomenon.

In other words, Judaism is bigger than philosophy. It cannot be systematically thought. It can only be lived through two things: through dialogue and conversation and through time. The dialogue which we call 'learning Torah' and in time which we call 'Jewish history'.

In short, for me, Judaism is the greatest story ever told of God's love for a people - and taking us seriously. And our love for God and taking Him seriously. Can we build a world big enough for us to be free and creative and for God to be God? In order to do that, Judaism had to put forward one of the most revolutionary visions of reality ever recorded. I don't know of any equivalent. I hope I've given you a little glimpse of how, in a very ancient tradition, we can still see things in a new way. Thank you very much indeed. [Applause]

Howard Jackson: Thank you very much Chief Rabbi. The Chief Rabbi has agreed to take a few questions so please feel free to raise your hand if you have a question. [Aside from Chief Rabbi: What was he talking about? Right?!]

1st Questioner [Danny Berkowitz] : ... [inaudible - first words not into microphone] ... difficult to comprehend now ... It probably isn't possible to re-create experience with dialogue and conversation. They just don't do it for me. Dialogue and conversation don't re-create experience and without experience, I find it very difficult to put everything together really. I mean - how do we re-create Judaism - or everything that has happened through time to this point without being able to re-create the experience. I mean, we talk about it at the Seder. We talk about what we all went through, coming out of Egypt. But we cannot re-create that experience and then comprehend to our ability what Judaism is really all about.

Chief Rabbi: Ok. Let me try and explain if I can. What I tried to do in this opening lecture was to give you an intellectual foundation on which we will be able to understand things a little bit differently from the way we did before. However, learn from the example you gave. The example of yetziat mitzrayim - the exodus from Egypt - zman herutenu - the time of our freedom.

We know that Socrates, Plato, Aristotle all wrote works of political philosophy. The most famous, Plato's Republic, Aristotle's Politics - and they go on through western thought all the way to Hobbs's Leviathan, Locke's two Treatises of Government, John Stuart Mill's essays On Liberty and Considerations on Representative Government and so on. And all of them, insofar as they are philosophical, set forth a theory of the ideal society as a timeless truth. A timeless

truth. Philosophy is not something that functions within time. Judaism sets it out in a quite different way. It has a quite different concept of time.

But here it is. Freedom begins at a particular moment in time. And that moment in time is called Pesach, the going out of Egypt. However, as you know, Jews did not immediately move from the going out of Egypt to a free society. First of all, they had to go through an experience seven weeks later of Shavuot, of the giving of the Torah. Why? Because a free society without law, in which everyone is free to do what they like, will be free for the powerful and anything but free for the powerless.

We lived through the experience of Pesach, Shavuot and the journey between which is called Succoth which represents that long period of wandering - what Nelson Mandela calls The Long Walk to Freedom. Because we see freedom as a story set in time. I will give you an example. The essence of the story of the going out of Egypt is that God acts and intervenes in history to liberate slaves. When, in the United States, was slavery abolished?

The 19th century. They fought a civil war over it. Ok? So here is an ideal, set out at the beginning of the human journey which takes 3,000 years to be realised. Why? Because, in Judaism, a free society begins at a particular moment in time but it's a story, a journey, to which we slowly march but we make steady progress. The Torah begins with the statement (I just gave it to you) - God says, "Na'aseh adam betzalmeinu kedmuteinu." "Let us make man in our image and our likeness." A statement of universal human rights. When were universal human rights enacted? Anyone know? 1948. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. So here is something that took 4,000 years to enter the consciousness of the world. Judaism sees time - the chronological imagination - as essential to politics. We begin with an ideal but we only approach it over time, by constantly telling ourselves and our children and our grandchildren. And every so often moving a little bit closer through time. That is Judaism. Political philosophy as a story not as a philosophical system.

Now let me test this hypothesis. We have had three revolutions that constitute, between them, the modern world. There was, number one, the American Revolution. There was, number two, the French Revolution. There was number three, the Russian Revolution.

Now there was a difference between those three revolutions. The American Revolution was based on Tenach - on the Hebrew Bible. That is the book the first travellers in the Mayflower took with them. They even read it in Hebrew. They even got together to create a brit, a covenant, as they called it. The city built on a hill. Where was that? Was it Boston? [?] The new Jerusalem. George Washington described America as the "almost chosen land". And all the rest of it. You know when Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin sat down to draw up the great seal of the United States in 1776, what did they draw? Benjamin Franklin drew Moshe Rabbenu leading the Israelites through the Red Sea with the Egyptians drowning. The Egyptians, in that case, being the British - as you will understand. And Thomas Jefferson, who was a bit more gentle, drew on the great seal of the United States the Israelites going through the desert led by the Pillar of Fire.

The American Revolution was based on Jewish sources and you can even hear them if you listen carefully enough to the Declaration of Independence in 1776 which says the following famous words:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal and are endowed ... with certain inalienable Rights, ... amongst these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

That sentence comes out of Bereishis, chapter 1. These truths are not self-evident, guys. Most societies in most times have not believed in them or subscribed to them. They are only self-evident to somebody who knew Bereishis inside out. There is the American Revolution based on the biblical idea of political philosophy.

What was the French Revolution based on? A philosophical system. The philosophical system of Jean Jacques Rousseau. What was the Russian Revolution based on? A philosophical system by a guy called Karl Marx who really ought to have stuck to comedy! I really think so. [Laughter]

So you have two revolutions. The French and Russian built on philosophy, and the American Revolution built on a biblical view of humanity.

Now, please, examine those records. The American Revolution began in freedom and was sustained in freedom. The French and the Russian Revolutions began with dreams of Utopia and ended with nightmares of the suppression of human rights. I don't know of any clearer proof that philosophical systems are the worst way to change the world, because they have no understanding of the dimension of time. Whereas the Jewish way of understanding the world - which understands that first we have the memory. The memory of the going out of Egypt. Secondly, we hand that memory on to every generation so that I as a child, and your children, your grandchildren, will taste the bread of affliction, will eat the bitter herbs of slavery and will not take freedom for granted. And, over time, we will move closer and

closer to our destination which we call the Messianic Age, which we expect daily but we probably know will not arrive before Rosh HaShonah!

So, I have tried to explain how the Jewish view of a free society - which is your question about Pesach - is of a story, a journey, extended through time. How a philosophical view, whether Rousseau's, or Karl Marx's, or the worst of the lot, Plato's republic - read Karl Popper's famous book about Plato called The Open Society and its Enemies: Plato's republic is a totalitarian state - and the philosophical systems just don't do justice to human reality in the way the biblical system does.

I hope I have tried to answer you. Yes? Ok.

2nd Questioner [Mark Persoff]: If I can just ... philosophy -

Chief Rabbi: Yes, yes. It's good. I'm a philosopher. That's what I do for a living.

2nd Questioner [Mark Persoff]: Hegel's philosophy talks about thesis and antithesis leading to a new synthesis. That requires both dialogue, which as you pointed out is the key essence of the Talmud. It also requires time. Just as Judaism, both in its halachic context and hashkofic context has, if you like, coalesced round new truths - you know, Hillel and Shammai leads to a new truth in the Gemara. Similarly the Rishonim, Aharonim etc. etc. to the current day. Wasn't Hegel postulating a similar idea, that both in the world of ideas and in the world of reality, you have truths. You have people who oppose those truths. Eventually that leads to a new reality around which the world coalesces. Is that really so different from the sort of thesis that we've put forward tonight?

Chief Rabbi: That is a very good question, really good. Only I am tired and you are tired and it would take an hour to explain the difference [laughter] between dialectical thinking and dialogical thinking. But one day I'll give you a lecture on that as well.

Hegel's thinking is dialectical and Jewish thinking is dialogical and they are slightly different ways of thinking. I'm not a Hegelian. Marx was a Hegelian and I think that's the refutation of Hegel. Hegel sees thesis succeeded by antithesis which supplants the past. We are never supplanting the past. We always keep it in mind and keep it in memory. We live with our past. We remember our ancestors. We are still at one with them. We are still at one with our grandchildren yet unborn. (You know what I mean?) Because we're handing on the tradition to them. That's a very different view of history in which we preserve the past and the future. That's dialogical. We keep talking to our past and to our future. Whereas Hegel's is dialectical in which every new mode of civilisation is built on the ruins of the past. (Are you with me?) So I think they are different.

3rd Questioner [Annabel Reis-Nadav]: ... [inaudible - not into microphone]. But the question is: how have we got it so wrong? How come there are so many divisions? There seem to be some things that some people understand to be fundamentally mutually exclusive. But how liberal can we be to try and understand others' perspectives? To try and maintain this dignity of difference? Are there any limits as to how "liberal" we can be and, if so, what are they?

Chief Rabbi: I threw at you tonight some of the more difficult ideas, most difficult ideas, I've ever had in my life. I did that not because I am an academic. I don't think we're allowed in Judaism to be academics. The Gemara says, as you know, in Kiddushin, Gadol hatalmud shehatalmud meiivi leyeidei ma'aseh. Why do we learn? Because learning leads to doing.

If I have articulated tonight the beginning of a radical new way of understanding Judaism, I am doing that in order to create the possibility of a radically new way of relating to our fellow Jews in the Jewish enterprise and to our fellow human beings in the human enterprise. And I am doing so, I hope, from a position of some philosophical depth that is going to the archaeological core, if you like, of the Jewish mind. We have been digging at the very foundations of the Torah.

I believe that things have got to a very bad state in the Jewish world. I really do. We are in a situation today when two weeks ago a Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel was put in herem. The story didn't quite come through in the British press because they reached a compromise before the papers went to press. But in Israel, we had this extraordinary thing of Rav Bakshi Doron, a Sephardi Chief Rabbi, put in herem - excommunicated - by some of the greatest ashkenazi Torah sages in the world. What have we come to? What have we come to?

We have a situation in which the State Comptroller of Israel, Miriam Ben-Porat, is arguing like Jackie Mason. Let's get rid of Hatikvah. [Mimics Mason!] "Too Jewish."

I mean - Ribonu shel olam! I never yet heard of the British Secular Society writing to The Times saying, "Let's re-write the national anthem because God Save the Queen excludes all us atheists." (Are you with me?)

I mean - we live and let live in Britain. God Save the Queen. Fine. I don't feel excluded if your God's different from my God. (Are you with me?) Whereas right now in Israel there are people in very high public positions who are saying, "Let's get rid of the entire Jewish character of the state." And that is becoming a political

programme and I don't know what's going to happen at the end of it. We have a history which surely tells us that three times in our history we suffered exile. And do you remember why?

Exile number one. In Egypt. Because vayisne'u oto eihav velo yochlu ledabro leshalom. Because Joseph's brothers hated him and couldn't speak peaceably to him. End result? They sell him into slavery in Egypt. End result? They themselves get sold into slavery in Egypt. That is the first exile in Egypt that lasted 210 years.

Second exile. After a mere three generations of kings, three generations - Saul, David, Solomon - the Jewish people splits in two: a northern kingdom called Israel, a southern kingdom called Yehuda, called Judah. Israel always was, in the old days and now, too small to survive if it were divided. And, therefore, if it was in danger when it was unified, how much more so when it was divided? The writing was on the wall from the very beginning and so, in due course, in 722 BCE, the northern kingdom gets conquered by the Assyrians. End result? Lost ten tribes. As you know, they wandered over the face of the earth and landed up here in Britain. As I'm sure you know, Brit'ish means 'man of the covenant'. [Laughter] London means 'the lodge of Dan' - and all the rest of it.

There it is. The northern kingdom gets defeated, destroyed. The southern kingdom, Judah, goes into exile into Babylon for 52 years. Hurban bayit rishon. End of the First Temple. Destruction of the First Temple. The second great exile because Jews couldn't live together.

You would have thought, after two exiles, they would have learned their lessons. Not only did they not learn the lessons. In the Second Temple the factionalism within the Jewish people, if anything, was even worse. There were Pharisees. There were Saducees. There were Essenes. There were political realists. There were Messianists. There were fanatics and zealots. There were political pragmatists. They nearly massacred - you know the Gemara in Gittin daf samech alef says that Rab Yochanan inside the besieged Jerusalem, who wanted to make some kind of peace and salvage a little bit from the destruction, was threatened with assassination. They had to sneak him out of Jerusalem disguised as a corpse in a coffin for him to be able to survive in his peace initiative. Josephus, who was an eyewitness of the Second Temple destruction, paints a picture of Jews inside the besieged Jerusalem busier fighting one another than fighting the Romans outside. That was the third exile and that lasted for almost 2,000 years.

You would have thought a people of history could learn the lessons of history. But we haven't. We haven't. And it terrifies me. It terrifies me. The mutual demonisation taking place today in Israel - between religious, non-religious, orthodox, non-orthodox, ashkenazim, sephardim, old Sabras, new immigrants - is horrendous. And that is why I have gone through this long and lonely search within the sources of our texts to see: Is this written into our destiny or is the Torah from the very word go trying to tell us something else.

If I can develop a philosophy which treats the other with dignity, I want to make it compelling to you and I want you to go and change the world.

We held a conference at my request. I worked on it for many years and we eventually did it in late May of this year, in Jerusalem, at the Hebrew University thanks to a wonderful benefactor from this country, Clive Marks. And thanks to the President of the Hebrew University, Menahem Magidor ...

[End of Tape 1, side B. Some words lost before start of Tape 2.]

... from Israel and from 16 countries of the Diaspora. It was a wonderful thing. Everyone spoke. The only trouble was: not many people listened. [Laughter]

Therefore, I came away from that conference very perturbed. However, I will tell you something, I mean, we're among friends. I will tell you something, I sneaked out for a couple of hours from the conference and we drove down to the midbar. I'd never been down there before, to a little town called Arad. In Arad lives a rather impressive Jewish writer called Amos Oz. Amos Oz is probably what they call the rebbe of the hilonim. You know what I mean? Of all the secular Israelis, he's the sage. He's the guru. He's the wise man.

Having read most of Amos Oz's books - fiction and non-fiction - it was clear to me that this is a man of formidable and impressive gifts, not only literary but also moral. And there he is - a secular guy. I'd never met him. I said: Let it be the case that a Chief Rabbi, an orthodox rabbi, shleps out for two hours into the wilderness to sit and visit Amos Oz without expecting Amos Oz coming to visit me. We talked for an afternoon. And it was a very beautiful conversation. Very beautiful. I gave him a book. I gave him my Politics of Hope. He gave me his book and he wrote in it, "Lerav Yonatan Sacks, ish kelevovi" - a man after my own heart.

Now something happened in the course of an hour or two of a summer's afternoon in Arad. A religious figure and a secular figure met and spoke and found they could understand one another and respect one another. And then I thought: how many orthodox rabbis in Israel took the trouble to go out and speak to Amos Oz and not attempt to convert him? But, actually, attempt to do the only thing that is worthwhile, which is to listen to him. So, there was a little moment of hope. A

little signal of tikvah. But you will hear what I am saying when I put this philosophy before you in very technical terms because my ultimate ambition is anything but technical and anything but theoretical. I can see the cracks beginning to appear.

And, excuse my saying so, but I do not believe that the concept of a navi, of a prophet, is intrinsically supernatural. What is a prophet? Well, I'll tell you. Do you have - I'm sorry, I don't do these things myself: Elaine does these things for me. You know, the house is falling down. Don't ask a Chief Rabbi. But you know what happens. You get a surveyor to come along. There's a little hairline crack. And the surveyor can tell you that in 20 years the house will fall down. It doesn't need to be a supernatural prophet! The surveyor will tell you, or the garage mechanic will tell you that if you don't change your oil in 3,000 miles your car will seize up. That's what a prophet is! A prophet is a guy who sees the crack now and the collapse 20 years from now. Because the prophet is reading reality.

So, therefore, if I say that if I feel the call of prophecy - we all feel it, for heaven's sake! This is not me. This is us. I see the cracks beginning to appear in Israeli society. And unless somebody stands up and shouts, bad things will happen. And bad things may not happen because that is not what we are allowed to do as Jews. So I tried to explain a philosophy which is built on the dignity of otherness which begins in the dignity an infinite God gives to an infinitesimal creature like us.

Howard Jackson: Thank you very much, Chief Rabbi. [Applause]

Sorry that we have to stop the questions there but may I remind you there is a box at the back of the room into which written questions can be placed. Where possible, these questions and answers from the Chief Rabbi will be posted on the internet or dealt with in future lectures.

Additionally, a written transcript of the lecture this evening can be viewed at the Chief Rabbi's website www.chiefrabbi.org

If you'd like to purchase one of the Chief Rabbi's books, there is a selection outside in the foyer.

Just a brief list of thank-yous. Firstly, Chief Rabbi, thank you so much for your inspiring and entertaining words of wisdom. We all really, really enjoyed it. Thank you.

Special thanks to Nicole and Sara from the Chief Rabbi's office for all their hard work. Thanks to the CST for ensuring our safety tonight and always. And a final thank you to you, to everybody for supporting this event and we hope that you enjoyed yourselves and that you will join us here, with your friends, for the Chief Rabbi's next lecture which is on Monday 6th November and the title is "Judaism, justice and tragedy - Confronting the problem of evil."

We urge you to pre-book in the foyer for just £5 per lecture or at the discounted price of £20 for the remaining five lectures in the series.

Just finally: leshanah tovah tikatevu veteihateimu. May we be inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life and have a happy new year. Thank you. [Applause]

[End of recording]

from Shema Yisrael Torah Network shemalist@shemayisrael.com to
Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com> date Wed, Oct 12,
2011 at 7:40 AM subject **Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib
Scheinbaum - Parshas Breishis
PARSHAS BEREISHIS**

When the earth was astonishingly empty, with darkness upon the surface of the deep... G-d said, "Let there be light," and there was light... And G-d separated between the light and the darkness. (1:2,3,4) Contrary to popular belief, the darkness of which the Torah speaks is not merely the absence of light. It is a specific creation, as it is clearly stated in Yeshayahu 45:7, Yotzeir ohr u'borei choshech - oseh shalom u'borei ra. "(I am the One) Who forms light and creates darkness, Who makes peace and creates evil." The Midrash comments, "Great is peace, for Hashem did not commence His creation of the world with anything other than something which represents peace. What is this? It is light." The Midrash goes on to cite the pasuk in Yeshayahu. We must endeavor to understand what about light evokes the concept of peace. Furthermore, what is the relationship between the creation of light and darkness and peace?

In his Halichos Shlomo, Horav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zl, explains that light specifically relates to peace, as it is the perfect symbol for peace. We first must understand the meaning of peace. We are led to believe that a man at peace is one who has vanquished his enemies. No longer does he suffer from those who would cause him to be involved in strife. His enemies fear him as he walks among them with impunity, but they are still his enemies. This is not the definition of peace. Living with enemies all around you, albeit powerless to hurt you, does not define peace. It is controlled enmity.

Shalom, peace, is derived from shleimus, completion, perfection. To be at peace is not to have enemies at all. One gets along with everyone, earning their respect and admiration - even if they do not see eye to eye on various issues. We see this dichotomy between the blessings that the evil Lavan and Besuel gave to Rivkah Imeinu as she was about to become Yitzchak Avinu's wife. "And may your offspring inherit the gates of its foes" (Bereishis 24:60). When Moshe Rabbeinu blessed Asher, he said, "He shall be pleasing to his brothers" (Devarim 33:24). One focuses on vanquishing enemies, while the other sets his sights on friendship and respect. These pose two contrasting perspectives which represent their differences in appreciating the value and meaning of peace.

Concerning all natural phenomena, we note, that by their very nature, they are involved in a sort of competitive relationship whereby one must best the other. Fire and water cannot exist together. It is one or the other. This applies to all phenomena, except light and darkness. They are both creations ex nihilo, yeish mei'ayin, something from nothing. In his commentary to Meseches Tamid 32, the Maharsha writes that we must believe that Hashem created ohr and choshech, light and darkness, equally yeish mei'ayin, even if we have difficulty conceptualizing this. We neither ask what existed before this world was created, nor do we query what will be after. As believing Jews, we do just that: believe in Hashem. Likewise, the Gaon, m'Vilna, writes in his commentary to Sefer Yetzirah, that darkness is not merely an absence of light. It is a powerful entity of darkness created by Hashem. Thus, despite the fact that darkness is a viable entity, a drop of light will push away darkness. Why? Because the darkness yields to the light, accepting its status without complaint or without protest. This is peace at its zenith. For this reason, only light stands alone as the symbol of peace, for its ability to compel darkness to acquiesce to its dominance.

This explains the pasuk's concluding words, u'borei ra, Who creates evil. As Hashem causes darkness to cede to light, creating a viable peace, so, too, will evil be nudged off before good, so that the two will make peace.

Hashem Elokim called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"... The woman whom You gave to be with me - she gave me of the tree... The woman said, "The serpent deceived me." (3:9,12,13)

What really was the nature of Adam and Chavah's sin, such that it necessitated their expulsion from Gan Eden? Ostensibly, it is because they ate of the Eitz HaDaas, Tree of Knowledge. This is what, at first glance, is gleaned from the pesukim. Hashem did not, however, banish them until after He had had a dialogue with them. Something in that conversation was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. Something ensued from that conversation that made it evident to Hashem that they had to go. Hashem "searched" for Adam and He called out, "Ayeca?" Where are you? Clearly, Hashem knew exactly where Adam was positioned. He simply wanted to start a dialogue. Perhaps Adam would confess his sin and repent.

Adam did not bite. He wasted the opportunity. Instead of explaining to Hashem that he was "hiding" out of shame, because he had committed a grave error, he replied somewhat audaciously to Hashem's query, "Did you eat from the tree which I commanded you not to eat from?", "The woman whom You gave to be with me - she gave me of the tree." When Hashem turned to Chavah and questioned her, she immediately retorted, "It was the serpent's fault. He convinced me to eat."

Both Adam and Chavah passed the buck. They refused to accept blame for their own actions. They refused to accept responsibility for their actions. Can one imagine what would have occurred had they replied, "We did it. We were wrong. We are sorry!" But they did not. Life is much harder for us as a result of their unwillingness to accept responsibility.

Denial that one did something wrong is a natural tendency. How often do we attempt to gloss over our actions, to justify them in any number of ways? This is a great mistake - both in practical life and concerning Torah observance. There is a popular dictum that would be well-placed in front of our eyes at all times as a constant reminder of this folly: "Never defend a mistake." Attempts at justifying what we did wrong often lead to further rationalizations that are viewed as patently false by everyone - but ourselves. This leads to further bending of the truth and other cover-ups. What is worse is that the more we rationalize, the more we begin to believe that it is true. We are innocent. We are victims. Why is everybody picking on me? As a result, teshuvah, repentance from our misdeeds, eludes us. After all, if we did not sin, why should we repent?

We forget that while not taking responsibility may be less demanding, less painful, and less time spent worrying about the unknown, we always pay a price for it. It may be more comfortable - now - but when one does not assume responsibility for his actions, he basically relinquishes his personal power. It will ultimately destroy his self-esteem. When we blame others for the bad things that happen in our lives, we develop a victim mentality, constantly cowering and obsequious. Relationships, ambitions and achievements suffer, as we revert back into our little

cocoon of comfort. The hurt will never go away until we take steps to assume responsibility for our lives.

Some have a more serious problem. This refers to the individual who does not even realize what he is doing. We all like to feel important and have others maintain a high opinion of us. Some more than others develop an over-inflated, over-exaggerated opinion of themselves. As a result of these tendencies, they wrap themselves up in what we may call "denial." This creates a false perception of oneself and the inability to accept the truth concerning oneself. It becomes painful to accept that mistakes are possible and they do happen. When they occur, we impulsively point the finger of blame on someone else. We refuse to think objectively and accept any responsibility for our own actions.

What is the cause of this reluctance to accept responsibility? It comes from insecurity. To the simple-minded, accepting responsibility is a sign of weakness, infirmity, or an opportunity to lose the respect of others. Some even feel that they will lose their sense of value and importance. What they do not realize is that accepting responsibility increases one's respectability, elevating him in the eyes of others. We cannot be perfect all of the time. We all make mistakes at one time or another. By owning up to these errors, one establishes his own self-worth and elevates his self-esteem. With this foundation, we are able to build our own self-confidence and, ultimately, learn to conquer our fears.

Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you. (3:18)

The Chidushei HaRim cited by Sifsei Tzadikim explains that what seems as a curse is actually a blessing in disguise. Hashem had originally warned Adam, "On the day that you eat from the Tree of Knowledge, you will die." Well, Adam ate and did not die. What happened? We must therefore surmise that the "curse," "Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you," which is a reference to yissurim b'olam hazeh, affliction/troubles in this world, is not really a substantive curse. The alternative to "thorns and thistles" is death. Not a bad trade-off.

The following episode supports this hypothesis, as well as providing us with a much-needed lesson on life. A man, a victim of abject poverty who had wealthy relatives in America, asked his friend to present to the Chidushei HaRim this question: His relatives were prepared to help him get back on his feet. May he accept their charity, or should he be concerned with the money's source? The Rebbe replied in the negative. After a while, the poor man could no longer hold out. He needed the money badly. He could wait no longer. His relatives were his only option. The die was cast.

The man wrote his relatives soliciting their assistance. They immediately forwarded a considerable amount of money to him, but mail in those days was even worse than it is today. It took quite some time for the money to arrive in Poland. In the meantime, the poor man became ill. As his illness progressed, he asked his friend to speak with the Chidushei HaRim and obtain his blessing. The friend went to the Rebbe and petitioned for his blessing. The Rebbe replied, "At times, a decree of death is issued against a person. In its infinite mercy, the Heavenly Tribunal will provide an opportunity for ameliorating the death sentence against the individual by granting him yissurim, troubles, pain and misery, to offset the decree of death. What can I do? Your friend refused to accept the pain. The alternative is regrettably non-negotiable." By the time the friend returned home, the poor man had passed on to his eternal rest.

This is a powerful lesson. We must know what to pray for. We must think long and hard before we ask for something. Who knows - maybe our present state, albeit not pleasant, is our salvation from something much worse.

And Kayin brought an offering to Hashem of the fruit of the ground. As for Hevel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and from their choicest. Hashem turned to Hevel and his offering, but to Kayin and his offering He did not turn. (4:4,5)

The Torah informs us that Kayin brought of the fruit of the ground as an offering to Hashem. From the fact that the Torah underscores that Hevel's sacrifice was derived from the choicest animals, we derive that Kayin's offering was of a mediocre nature. Thus, Hashem turned to Hevel's offering, rather than Kayin's, because Hevel brought from the finest of his animals. This seems a bit difficult to accept. Since when is there a competition among "good," "better," and "best" before Hashem? The Almighty cares only about attitude, not product. The individual's intentions determine the true nature of the sacrifice - not its monetary value. The Torah in Vayikra 2:1 commences stating the laws of the Korban Minchah, Meal-offering, with the statement, V'nefesh ki sakriv Korban Minchah l'Hashem, "When a nefesh/person offers a Meal-offering to Hashem." Rashi notes that nowhere concerning any of the korbanos nedavah, free-willed offerings, does the Torah use the word nefesh, which also means soul. He explains that, given the simplicity of the ingredients which comprise a Korban Minchah, the sacrifice is

indicative of the financial status of the individual who brings it. This person is even too poor to afford anything more than these simple ingredients. Because such a person extends himself to bring an offering, despite his current poverty level, the Torah assigns a special value to his deed, considering it as if he actually offered his nefesh, soul, on the Altar.

Kayin seems to have manifested the appropriate intentions behind his offering. It was just deficient in quality. Why did Hashem not turn to it? Horav Bunim, zl, m'Peshischa, explains that the answer is in the motivating factor which inspired the korban. Concerning Kayin, the Torah says that he brought an offering of the fruit of the ground. Only after Kayin "aged" and realized that he was ultimately going to end up in the ground, did he decide to think of Hashem. Hevel, however, brought from the firstborn sheep, the young, healthy animals. This is a reference to when Hevel brought his korban: when he was young and vibrant, filled with life. It was at this point that he decided to share with Hashem.

Are we any different? Do we wait until we can do little else before we start visiting the bais ha'medrash? Clearly, one should go whenever he can, but it is so much more meaningful when one attends the bais ha'medrash when he is filled with the zest of life. Hashem should not have to play second fiddle to everything else in our lives. Our prime time should be devoted to Him.

And Hashem said to Kayin, "Why are you annoyed, and has your countenance fallen? Surely, if you improve yourself, you will be forgiven. But if you do not improve yourself, sin rests at the door." (4:6,7)

The Baal HaTanya, zl, derives an important lesson concerning human nature from this pasuk. We note that the individual outlook of people varies in perspective. There are those who see negativity all of the time. They care about mitzvah observance and seek every opportunity to strengthen it, but at what expense? Everywhere they go, whatever comes into their line of vision, they see sin. Everyone but themselves, of course, is not observing Torah and mitzvos properly: Shabbos observance is not what it should be; people are not learning enough; their manner of dress reflects western society's moral bankruptcy - and the list goes on. They want to help; they want to effect change, but how can they work with a world filled with sinners?

The other type of Jew attempts to look for and, thus, find every redeemable value that a Jew possesses. He sees their good, their acts of kindness, their minimal Torah study due to the taxing burdens of earning a living. He sees that their manner of dress has truly been influenced by the society in which they live and the environment in which they must function. This type of Jew seeks ways to reach out, to bring his fellow closer - not to shoot him full of piercing arrows. He wants to include, rather than ostracize. He understands that everyone has a history, every family has a pathology. Perhaps, by delving into their lives, we might be able to bring them closer.

Why is it that some always look at the dark side, that which is tamei, ritually unclean, while others have their vision set for the ritually pure, the mitzvos that another Jew performs, his positive attributes and actions? The pasuk gives us a profound answer. Im teitiv, "If you will improve yourself," if you will be a repository of Torah and mitzvos, if your life will be one of dedication to you, Hashem and your fellowman, then, s'eis, "You will be forgiven/You will also tolerate the failings of others. If you are good, then you will be patient with others. On the other hand, Im lo teitiv, "If you will not be good/ if your personal life will be checkered with sin, if your life will be replete with moral and ethical failings; if spiritual bankruptcy will define your character, then, l'pesach chata rodeitz, "Sin will rest at the door, "You will see sin at every doorstep. Every step that you take; every person that you meet, you will see only negativity."

A person tends to see others as a mirror image of the individual himself. One sees in others what he is personally. If he is a good person with refined character traits, he will see the same positive image in others. If, regrettably, he is spiritually and morally deficient, he will see himself emulated by others. Before one looks at others, he should take a long, hard look at himself.

Sin rests at the door. Its desire is toward you, yet you can conquer it. (4:7)

Herein lies the folly of man. True, the yetzer hora, evil inclination, is constantly on guard, looking for ways to entice us into sin. Man, however, does not have to succumb to its blandishments. He can prevail - if he so wants to: Im tirtzeh tiggaber alav. In Rashi's immortal words, "If you want, you will prevail over it." It is all up to us. If we want, we will succeed; if our desire for success is lackadaisical, we will fall into its clutches. The following episode gives meaning to the idea that it is all up to us. We can prevail, if we want.

Horav Elyahu Lopian, zl, came to visit his good friend from days past, Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl, who, at the time, was Mashgiach in Ponevez. Rav Chatzkel was quite happy with the visit, especially since Rav Elya had acquiesced to deliver a shmues, ethical discourse, to the students of Ponevez. This was a special treat, since Rav Elya was a powerful and prolific orator. Rav Elya began his

lecture with an incident that had taken place some thirty years earlier, in a small town in Lithuania. The gentile population's enmity towards the Jewish community was rabid. They would do anything to create a stir, to start a pogrom, to rid themselves of the accursed Jews. They decided upon the usual, proven approach: a blood libel. One of their own murdered a young gentile child and threw his body in the back of the town's shul. Did they need more damaging proof that the Jews were a nation of murderers who preyed on gentile children?

Word spread rapidly throughout both the Jewish and gentile communities. The gentiles were preparing for a mass slaughter, but times had changed. They could no longer decide at will to murder Jews. There were laws and authorities who administered these laws. The gentile mob came before the authorities with the tools of their trade, ready to do their thing, only to discover that the authorities were not going to permit them to carry out wanton murder. They would have to investigate the matter. If the Jews were guilty, the perpetrators would be punished. First, however, they needed conclusive proof that the Jews were behind this brutal slaying.

In those days, their idea of advanced criminal investigative science was the use of a special dog. This dog, the authorities claimed, was very gifted. One whiff of the body of the deceased, and it would immediately proceed to the murderer. This "brilliant" dog was all that they would need to ferret out the murderer. He was as good as behind bars. Since it was already getting dark, they decided to conduct their investigation the next day.

Meanwhile, the entire Jewish community crammed into the shul and began pouring out their hearts to the Almighty. Who knew what this anti-Semitic dog would discover. How could they rely on a dog? What if the dog was mistaken? They prayed throughout the night for Heavenly mercy.

The next morning, the entire town gathered in the town square: the gentiles in anticipation; the Jews in fear and dread. The corpse was brought to the square, after which the dog took a few sniffs and began to walk around the people. It stopped at the feet of one of the town's gentile hooligans, who -- after some "convincing" by the authorities -- confessed to the libel. He was hauled away to jail, and the Jews let out a sigh of relief. They all went to the shul amid laughter and tears, to thank Hashem for saving them.

Rav Elya concluded the story, and, in a nonchalant tone, asked the students, "What kind of Olam Habba, Heavenly reward, did this dog deserve for saving an entire Jewish community? Did he receive a doghouse made of gold with the finest dog food? Clearly not! He received nothing! Why? Because he did nothing! Since he had no bechirah, ability to choose between right and wrong, he was compelled to act truthfully. He acted according to his nature. For that there is no reward!" Suddenly, Rav Elya raised his voice and declared, "Morai v'rabbosai, My friends! Who knows if we are not very much like that dog? Who knows if we are not, in fact, serving Hashem out of complacency, habit, cold, dispassionate, just to fulfill our obligation? Do we really care? How are we going to stand before the Creator? What will we say?"

This is what the pasuk is teaching us. We make choices, and we live with the consequences of our choices. There are those who choose to go through life as floaters, floating from one religious observance to another, never really caring what they say or do. While it is nice that they attend, is that davening? Is that learning? We can either tell the yetzer hora to get off our case, or we can fall prey to its guile. It is all up to us. Are we human beings with common sense, ambition and resolution, or are we weak, no better than a trained dog? Our actions indicate the path we have chosen.

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