

Weekly Parsha BERESHITH

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

In the whirlwind cascade of events that fill this opening parsha of the Torah, one can easily be overwhelmed by the sheer number of subjects discussed. Nevertheless, I think we can all agree that the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, after they exercised their free will to disobey God's commandment, is an important issue to dwell upon and discuss.

What life was like within the Garden of Eden is pretty much an unknown to us. It is obvious that human nature was different there and that the prevalence of shame and titillating sexual desire was absent - certainly in a way that our world cannot countenance. But once driven from the Garden and apparently prevented from ever again returning, Adam and Eve and their offspring engage in a life and live in a world that is very recognizable to us.

Sibling rivalry, jealousy, murder, psychological depression, sexual laxity and abuse are now all part of the story of humankind. Human beings are now bidden to struggle for their very physical and financial existence in a world of wonder- complete with ever present dangers and hostility.

But the memory of the Garden of Eden has never departed from Adam and Eve or for that matter from their descendants, no matter how many centuries and millennia have passed since their expulsion. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the Torah records for us the hundreds of years that early human beings lived – to emphasize that even over nine hundred years later the memory of the Garden still burns bright in the recesses of the brains of Adam and Eve and their descendants.

It is this memory that still fuels within us our drive for a better and more ideal world. Once human beings, albeit only Adam and Eve alone, experienced what human life and our world can be – life in a Garden of Eden – the drive of society to constantly improve our world and existence is understandable. We are always trying to return to the Garden.

Even though human society has unfortunately perpetrated and witnessed millions upon millions of murders over its long bloody history, we still strive to create a murder-free society. And we do not feel that this is a vain and foolish hope on our part. Within each of us there still is a fragment of memory that

recalls that human beings once lived in the Garden of Eden and were spared the woes of human society as we know it from our past history – and even from today.

It is interesting that human society never has really despaired, in spite of all historical evidence to the contrary as to the impossibility of the task, of creating this better world of serenity, spirituality, harmony and good cheer. It is the memory of the Garden that gives us no peace and does not allow us to become so desensitized that we would readily accept our current human condition as being unchangeable.

The angels that guard the entrance to the Garden were also represented in the Holy of Holies on the lid of the Ark that contained God's message to humankind. Those angels have the faces of children in order to indicate to us that somehow, someday, in God's good time in the future perhaps, we will be able to once again enter the Garden and truly live in the better world promised to us by our holy prophets.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

BEREISHIT - The Art of Listening

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

The Art of Listening

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

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

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

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

After the attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Americans knew they were about to enter a war against a nation, Japan, whose culture they did not understand. So they commissioned one of the great anthropologists of the twentieth century, Ruth Benedict, to explain the Japanese to them, which she did. After the war, she published her ideas in a book, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. [2] One of her central insights was the difference between shame cultures and guilt cultures. In shame cultures the highest value is honour. In guilt cultures it is righteousness. Shame is feeling bad that we have failed to live up to the expectations others have of us. Guilt is what we feel when we fail to live up to what our own conscience demands of us. Shame is other-directed. Guilt is inner-directed.

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

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

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

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

Shame cultures are essentially codes of social conformity. They belong to groups where socialisation

takes the form of internalising the values of the group such that you feel shame – an acute form of embarrassment – when you break them, knowing that if people discover what you have done you will lose honour and ‘face’.

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

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

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

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

scenes of the Bible, God teaches Elijah that He is not in the whirlwind, the earthquake, or the fire, but in the “still, small voice.”

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

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

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

Jewish spirituality is the art of listening.[3]

[1] Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed, I:2.

[2] Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1946.

[3] We will continue our theme of listening in Judaism later in this series, particularly in the essays for Bamidbar and Ekev.

Shabbat Shalom: Bereishit (Genesis 1:1-6:8)

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – Our nation, Israel, has just concluded a most intensive Festival period which encompasses a rollercoaster of religious emotions. We have moved from the intense soul searching of Rosh Hashanah to the heartfelt prayers for forgiveness of Yom Kippur. We have built and dwelt for seven days in a makeshift house reminiscent of the booths in the desert as well as of the “fallen sukkah of King David”, the Holy Temple. We have punctuated our prayer for rain with joyous and sometimes even raucous dancing around the Torah, whose reading we conclude just at Festival end. After a full month of festivities, we are now entering our first post festival Sabbath, on which we shall read of the creation of the world.

Although these segments seem disparate, I truly believe that there is a conceptual scheme which connects them all. I also believe that many observant Jews miss the theological thread which magnificently unites this particular holiday period because the religious establishment does not sufficiently stress the real message which Judaism is trying to teach.

Despite the hundreds of years between them, two great theologians – Rav Yosef Albo (1380-1444), in his *Sefer Haikkarim* – “Book of Essential Jewish Beliefs” and Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) in his “Star of Redemption” – insist that the fundamental principles of Jewish faith are outlined in the three special blessings of the Rosh Hashana Musaf Amidah. Conventional wisdom sees the High Holy Days as frightening days of judgment, but Rosh Hashana actually teaches us that a major function of the Jewish people in this world is to establish the Kingship of our God of love, morality and peace throughout the world. Indeed, the Hassidim – and especially Habad – refer to the night of Rosh Hashanah as the Night of the Coronation.

Yom Kippur is our Day of Forgiveness. In order for us to dedicate ourselves to the task of bringing the God of compassionate righteousness and justice to the world in the coming year, each of us must take to the task with renewed vigor. We can only muster the necessary energy if we have successfully emerged from our feelings of inadequacy resulting from improper conduct towards humanity and to God.

Yom Kippur is not only a day of forgiveness for Jews. Our reading of the Book of Jonah with God’s command that the prophet bring the gentile Assyrians to repentance and the refrain which we iterate and reiterate during our fast, “for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:7) demonstrate that God desires repentance and forgiveness for all of humanity.

The Mussaf Amidah on Yom Kippur describes in exquisite detail every moment of the Temple service for forgiveness; indeed, it transports us to the Holy Temple itself. Our sukkah represents the Holy Temple, or at least the model of the sanctuary in the desert after which it was crafted. The guests of the sukkah (*ushpizin*) are the great personalities of Biblical history, and the most fitting decorations for the sukkah are scenes from the Temple service (so magnificently reproduced by Machzor Hamikdash). It is not accidental that the depiction of the Temple service of the musaf amidah in the Yom Kippur

service begins by invoking the creation of the world. The Temple should somehow serve as a magnet for all nations and the conduit through which they will accept the Kingship of God and a lifestyle reflecting His morality and love.

Please note the following amazing parallels when the Bible describes the building of a sanctuary; it uses the following words:

“Behold I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri the son of Hur from the tribe of Judah and I have filled him with the spirit of God: with Wisdom (Hakhmah), with Understanding (Tevunah) and with Knowledge (Daat)” (Exodus 31:2,3)

In the Book of Proverbs, which invokes God’s creation of the world, a parallel verse is found

“The Lord founded the earth with Wisdom (Hakhmah), fashioned the heavens with Understanding (Tevunah) and with Knowledge (Daat) pierced through the great deep and enabled the heavens to give forth dew.” (Proverbs 3:19,20)

Apparently, the Bible is asking us to recreate the world with the Holy Temple from whence our religious teachings must be disseminated throughout humanity.

From this perspective, we understand why our rejoicing over the Torah takes place at the conclusion of this holiday season rather than during the Festival of Shavuot. Pesach and Shavuot are national festivals on which we celebrate the founding of our nation from the crucible of Egyptian slavery and our unique status as the chosen people resulting from the revelation at Sinai.

The Tishrei Festivals are universal in import, focusing on our responsibility to be a Light unto the Nations. This is why on Simchat Torah, we take the Bible Scrolls out into the street, into the public thoroughfare and dance with them before the entire world. From this perspective we can well understand why Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah moves seamlessly into the reading of Bereishit of the creation of the world.

Shabbat Shalom!

Insights Parshas Bereishis - Tishrei 5783
Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim/Talmudic University
Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav
Yochanan Zweig

This week’s Insights is dedicated in memory of R’ Moshe Chaim Berkowitz z”l - the visionary for whom

our Yeshiva is named. “May his Neshama have an Aliya!”

Death Becomes Us

Hashem Elokim created man from the soil of the earth (2:7).

Rashi (ad loc) quotes the Midrash (Tanchuma, Pekudei: 3), which explains that Hashem gathered soil from all four corners of the earth to create man so that, regardless of where a person should die, the earth would absorb him in burial.

This is a highly perplexing statement. Ostensibly, one of the functions of the earth is to absorb any organic matter that is buried in it. Any living thing – a bird, fish, or other animal – that dies and is buried in the earth will decompose and be absorbed by the soil. How can the Midrash assert that man had to be formed specifically from soil from all over the world in order for the earth to absorb his body? Shouldn't the natural properties of the earth have made it inevitable that the body would be absorbed?

The Torah (Bereishis 3:19) tells us that the phenomenon of death came about as a result of Adam Harishon's sin. Because Adam violated the prohibition against eating from the Eitz Hadaas, Hashem decreed that he and all human beings in succeeding generations would ultimately die. How are we to understand this decree?

On the third day of creation Hashem commanded the earth to bring forth fruit trees (1:11). Rashi (ad loc) relates a remarkable event that took place on that day: Hashem decreed that the earth produce fruit trees with the unique aspect that the tree itself would taste like the fruit it was supposed to produce. But the earth, fascinatingly, refused. The earth produced trees that merely brought forth fruit, not trees that actually tasted like the fruit. Rashi (ad loc) notes that the earth wasn't punished until Adam sinned – at which point it was cursed.

Hashem created a world that was supposed to have the illusion of being separate from Him. This was done to give man free will and the ability to make choices; thus providing the ability to earn reward and the ultimate good Hashem wanted to bestow upon mankind. Therefore, man was created as a synthesis of the physical and the spiritual.

The physical component was the earth from which Adam was formed. In fact, the name Adam comes from adamah (earth). The spiritual component was, of course, the soul that Hashem blew into his nostrils. When Adam chose to violate the one commandment

Hashem had given him, he was actually accessing the earth aspect of his makeup; the very same earth that had refused to heed Hashem's command regarding the fruit trees.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 90b) relates that Cleopatra asked Rabbi Meir if the dead will be wearing clothes when they are resurrected. Rabbi Meir responded by likening the resurrection of the dead to the growth of grain. A seed, he explained, is completely bare when it is placed in the earth, yet the stalk of grain that grows from it consists of many layers. Likewise, a righteous person will certainly rise from the ground fully clad.

By comparing the burial of the dead to the planting of a seed, Rabbi Meir teaches us that when the deceased are interred in the earth, it marks the beginning of a process of growth and rebirth, a process that will reach its culmination at the time of the resurrection of the dead. The burial of a human being is not like the burial of any other living thing after its death. When a dog or a fish is buried the purpose is simply for the creature's body to decompose and be absorbed by the soil – for which any soil will suffice.

But for a human being the process of death and burial is the process of shedding the physicality and reconnecting it back to the earth from whence it came. With that in mind, we can understand Rashi's comment that Adam had to be made from earth from every part of the world. Burial is not a mere disposal of the body, an act of discarding the deceased. On the contrary, it is the beginning of a process of recreation. Indeed, the Hebrew word *kever* also has two meanings: It is the term for the grave, but it is also a word for the womb. The grave, like the womb, is a place where the body is developed and prepared for its future existence.

Lights of Our Lives

And God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night and the stars (1:16).

Rashi (ad loc) relates the incident that caused the moon to become a “lesser light.” The Gemara (Chullin 60b) explains how this came to be: Rabbi Shimon b. Pazzi pointed out a contradiction; one verse says: And God made the two great lights, and immediately the verse continues: The greater light [...] and the lesser light.

The moon said unto the Holy One, blessed be He, “Sovereign of the Universe! Is it possible for two kings to wear one crown?” He answered: “Go then

and make yourself smaller.” “Sovereign of the Universe!” cried the moon, “Because I have suggested that which is proper must I then make myself smaller?” He replied: “Go and you will rule by day and by night.” “But what is the value of this?” cried the moon. “Of what use is a lamp in broad daylight?” He replied: “Go, Israel shall reckon by you the days and the years.”

“But it is impossible,” said the moon, “to do without the sun for the reckoning of the seasons, as it is written: And let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years.” “Go, the righteous shall be named after you as we find, Jacob the Small, Samuel the Small, David the Small.”

On seeing that it would not be consoled, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: “Bring an atonement for Me for making the moon smaller.” This “atonement” is the sacrifice that is brought on Rosh Chodesh.

What exactly is going on here? If the moon had a valid complaint then why did Hashem actually create them equally? If the complaint wasn’t valid, why does Hashem try so hard to placate the moon, leading up to Hashem asking Bnei Yisroel to bring a sacrifice for His “transgression”?

What the moon failed to recognize is that Hashem had created a perfect system of time, the sun would control days, weeks, and years, while the moon would control months and all the times of holidays. This wasn’t “two kings sharing one crown.” Hashem had created the perfect union, and the original intent was that the sun and moon would work in unison, much like a marriage. In a marriage there are different roles, each person with the responsibility for their part of the whole. Marriage isn’t a partnership between two kings; it’s a union of two individuals for the greater whole. The sun and moon were supposed to represent the ultimate man-woman relationship.

But the moon didn’t see the union for what it was, the moon felt that it needed its own identity. To that Hashem responds that if you don’t see the value of the unified whole then you have to take a smaller role because you are absolutely right — “two kings cannot share one crown.” But the moon’s reduced role was really a function of its refusal to become one with the sun.

Ultimately though, the moon gets the last laugh, so to speak. Much like in a marriage, when the woman feels wronged it doesn’t make a difference if the husband is right or wrong; he’s always wrong. That’s why the Gemara ends as it does; when Hashem saw that the

moon would not be consoled he asked Bnei Yisroel to bring a sacrifice as an atonement. This was a recognition (and lesson for mankind) that being right doesn’t really matter. What really matters is recognizing another entity’s pain and accepting responsibility for their feelings; and of course doing what it takes to rectify it.

Drasha Parshas Bereishis :: Goal Tending ***Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky***

This week we are introduced to a formidable foe who greets us upon our entry into this world and attempts to accompany our every action throughout our mortal existence. He is known as the Yetzer Harah, the Evil Inclination. After Kayin has an inferior offering rejected, he is very upset. G-d talks to him frankly about the nature of his act and the hidden beast that undermines our good intentions, the Yetzer Harah. “Surely, if you improve yourself, you will be forgiven. But if you do not improve yourself, sin crouches at the door. Its desire is toward you, yet you can conquer it.” (Genesis 4:7). Though the imagery of sin crouching in wait seems quite ominous, the allegorical allusion to an evil force blocking a doorway lends a simile to a story I recently heard that may be quite applicable to the lessons of the finale of any sport season. It may even be a lesson to those of us who have our ears glued to the rumblings of the subway, shuttling high-flying frivolity from the Bronx to Queens.

Rabbi Sholom Schwadron had noticed that one of the students at the yeshiva was missing on Sunday and Monday. Tuesday morning he approached him, inquiring to the reason he missed those two days.

“I know you for two years. You never missed a day of yeshiva. I am sure that something important is happening. Please tell me what’s going on.” The boy did not want to say, but after prodding, the boy finally blurted out. “I would tell, but, Rebbe, you just wouldn’t understand.”

“Try me,” begged Reb Sholom, “I promise I will try my hardest to appreciate what you tell me.”

“Here goes,” responded the student, conceding to himself that whatever explanation he would give would surely be incomprehensible to the Rabbi, who had probably had never seen a soccer ball in his life.

“I missed yeshiva because I was at the Maccabi Tel Aviv football (soccer) finals. In fact,” the boy added in embarrassment, “I probably won’t be in yeshiva

tomorrow as well. It's the final day of the championship."

Rabbi Schwadron was not at all condescending. Instead, he furrowed his brow in interest. "I am sure that this game of football must be quite exciting. Tell me," he asked, "How do you play this game of football? What is the object? How do you win?"

"Well," began the student filled with enthusiasm, "there are eleven players, and the object is to kick a ball into the large goal. No one but the goalkeeper can move the ball with his hands or arms!"

Rabbi Schwadron's face brightened! He knew this young boy was a good student and wanted to accommodate him. "Oh! Is that all? So just go there, kick the ball in the goal, and come back to yeshiva!"

The boy laughed. "Rebbe, you don't understand! The opposing team also has eleven men and a goalkeeper, and their job is to stop our team from getting the ball into their goal!"

"Tell me," Rabbi Schwadron whispered. "These other men the other team. Are they there all day and night?" "Of course not!" laughed the student. "They go home at night!"

What was the Rabbi driving at? He wondered.

Rabbi Schwadron huddled close and in all earnest continued with his brilliant plan. "Why don't you sneak into the stadium in the evening and kick the ball into the goal when they are not looking! Then you can win and return to yeshiva!"

The boy threw his hands up in frustration. "Oy! Rebbe! You don't understand. You don't score if the other team is not trying to stop you! It is no kuntz to kick a ball into an empty net if there is no one trying to stop you!"

"Ah!" cried Reb Sholom in absolute victory. Now think a moment! Listen to what you just said! It is no kuntz to come to the yeshiva when nothing is trying to hold you back! It is when the urge to skip class is there, when the Yetzer Harah is crouching in the goal, that it is most difficult to score. That is when you really score points. Come tomorrow, and you can't imagine how much that is worth in Hashem's scorecard!"

Needless to say, the boy understood the message and was there the next day the first in class!

The Torah tells us not only about the nature of the Yetzer Harah as an adversary, but rather as our ultimate challenger. He stands crouched in the door, ready to block any shot and spring on a near hit. Our job is to realize that we must overcome him when the

urge is the greatest. Because when it is most difficult to do the right thing, that is the time we really meet, and even score, the goal!

Dedicated in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of our son, Benzion Raphael, by Karen and David Portal and family

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Bereishis The Moon Provides an All-Star Example of Sincere Repentance

In the beginning of Parshas Bereshis, the Torah says that the Ribono shel Olam created two big luminaries in the heavens—the sun to rule by day and the moon to rule at night. There is a well-known teaching of Chazal (Chulin 60b) that the moon complained to the Ribono shel Olam that it is not practical "for two kings to share one crown." The Talmud says that the Almighty's response to the moon was "You are right. Go ahead and make yourself smaller." As a result, the moon downsized. It made itself much smaller and became the "smaller luminary that ruled at night." Not only did it make itself much smaller, but originally, at the time of Creation, it had its own source of light. After downsizing, the moon accepted a status of only being able to reflect the light of the sun, forgoing being a source of light on its own.

The Gemara says that the moon felt bad about its diminished status, and therefore the Almighty consoled it, saying, "Don't feel bad about being the 'small luminary' because Tzadikim will be called 'small' as we see Yaakov is called 'Katan,' Shmuel is called 'Katan,' and Dovid is called 'Katan.'" Then the Ribono shel Olam consoled the moon even further. The Medrash says, "Since this luminary diminished herself to rule at night, I decree that she shall be accompanied by innumerable stars and galaxies." The moon received a consolation prize of many billions of stars. When the moon becomes visible at night, the stars become visible as well.

The question must be asked: Where do we ever find that the Ribono shel Olam punishes someone and then seemingly reconsiders and says, "You know, I feel bad that I am punishing you, so I will give you a consolation prize to compensate you for the

punishment.” The moon acted improperly by complaining about the two co-rulers. Hashem commanded her to minimize herself. The Ribono shel Olam is not a parent who has second thoughts – “Maybe I punished my child too severely so I am now going to give him a treat.” The Ribono shel Olam does not act like that. What He does is Just. If it is proper that the moon had to make itself smaller, then there was no need for any consolation prize!

Rav Leibel Heiman offers an interesting observation in his sefer Chikrei Lev: The Almighty told the moon to make itself smaller. How much smaller? He left that up to the moon. The moon did not need to reduce itself to a fraction of what the sun is. The moon could have said, “Okay. Three percent. Five percent. Ten percent.” The sun is so many times bigger than the moon. In addition, who said the moon had to give up its own source of light? The moon could have even reduced itself by fifty percent but held onto its own source of light. Becoming merely a reflection of the sun was not part of Hashem’s instruction. That was not part of the punishment.

When the moon greatly reduced its size and changed its entire nature—going far beyond what was decreed upon it—the Ribono shel Olam saw a tremendous teshuva in that.

We are talking about the moon, but this is a metaphor. This is a lesson for all of us. It is a lesson that when we do something wrong, real teshuva is demonstrating our sincere regret by doing much more than we need to do. If someone insults another person or hurts the person’s feelings, he needs to apologize. “I’m sorry.” That is required. But when a person really tries to make it up to the other person and goes out of his way to demonstrate his sincere regret, that is a true teshuva.

The Ribono shel Olam provided all this consolation by saying that Yaakov, Shmuel and Dovid are all called Katan and by providing billions of stars, because the moon’s action demonstrated tremendous contrition. “Ribono shel Olam, You were right. That was no way for me to talk!” To prove it, the moon goes lifnim m’shuras haDin—so much further than was necessary. The moon was rewarded with consolation prizes for that sincere teshuva!

The Garments of Adam and Chava Were Made from the Skin of the Nachash

The pasuk says that when the Nachash (snake) seduced Adam and Chava into eating from the Etz HaDa’as, they realized they were naked, and “G-d

made for them garments of skin and dressed them.” (Bereshis 3:21) The Medrash says that these garments of skin came from the Nachash. The Ribono shel Olam skinned the Nachash (which was a huge animal), took his hide and made it into clothing for Adam and Chava. What is this Medrash trying to teach us?

These are metaphors. Chazal say that jealousy prompted the Nachash to try to entice Adam and Chava to eat from the Tree of Knowledge and change the world. Rashi quotes the Medrash that the Nachash observed them engaging in marital relations and he lusted for Chava. He was jealous of Adam and hatched this plot to bring them down. Jealousy was the root cause that prompted the Nachash to change the world.

What caused the Nachash’s jealousy? He saw them engaging in private activity that is supposed to remain private between a man and a woman. He looked where he was not supposed to look, and he wanted what he was not supposed to want. The root of Midas HaKinah (the Attribute of Jealousy) is that someone looks where he is not supposed to look, and as a result, wants that which is really off limits to him. If someone restricts his eyes and his thoughts to his own four amos (cubits), there is no jealousy. That is the way it is.

I see my friend or my neighbor driving a better car. I want that car. I see that my friend remodeled his kitchen. I need to remodel my kitchen. He has granite counter tops. I also want granite counter tops. Why are you going around looking at his kitchen? His kitchen is his kitchen! Your kitchen is your kitchen. Maybe you can’t help seeing a car. But kinah stems from me looking into the private affairs of someone else where I have no business looking.

This is perhaps why a famous Gemara in Masseches Taanis (8a) equates the Ba’al Lashon HaRah to the Nachash. The Gemara asks what pleasure does either get from their destructive actions? Lashon HaRah is also an aveira of revealing information which should be hidden. What is Lashon HaRah? I know something about someone that others do not know. I spread it. Again, I am looking at that which should remain hidden. I see it and I share it with others. It is the same aveira as the Nachash—looking where you should not look, wanting what you should not want, and going where you do not belong.

The Tolner Rebbe explains the reason why the Ribono shel Olam punished the Nachash by taking its skin and

making garments of hide for Adam and Chava. What is skin? Skin is the most basic covering of a being. It keeps hidden that which should be hidden. The Nachash failed to understand that. There are things that should remain closed, should remain behind the screen, behind the skin. They should be hidden. Do not look where you are not supposed to look.

By taking the skin of the Nachash, the Ribono shel Olam was teaching us that this Nachash did not respect the privacy of a human being and looked where he should not look. As a result, the Ribono shel Olam took off his skin—uncovered him—and used that skin to cover the human beings.

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Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Parashat Breishit 5783 :: Who Is the Ideal Religious Person?

This Shabbat, the first after Simchat Torah, we will begin again with the annual cycle of reading the Torah. The first Torah portion, Breishit, brings us back to the foundations of human conception: the creation of the world, the relationship between humans and G-d, humans and nature, man and woman, sin, guilt and punishment, human suffering, the complex relationships between siblings, and more. Let's delve into the relationship between the first brothers – Cain and Abel. Their short story is constructed in a tight structure and deals with Adam and Eve's oldest son – Cain and his younger brother – Abel. The story begins with the brothers' occupations. "...and Abel was a shepherd of flocks, and Cain was a tiller of the soil." One was a shepherd wandering with his flock, and the other was a farmer rooted in his land and growing food. And here the story gets complicated. Cain decides to bring an offering to G-d from the fruit of the land, but G-d does not accept it. After him, Abel brings a choice offering from his herd and G-d willingly accepts it. Cain of course was sad and angry. G-d consoled him and taught him that acceptance of the offering was contingent on improving one's acts. "Is it not so that if you improve, it will be forgiven you? If you do not improve, however, at the entrance, sin is lying..."

Here's where the complication reaches its peak: "And Cain spoke to Abel his brother, and it came to pass when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him." What does Cain say to Abel? The Torah doesn't tell us. It doesn't matter what the argument was about since every argument, as bitter and serious as it may be, is not reason enough for murder. After the murder, we wonder how the story continues. What more could happen? And then there's a twist in the tale. G-d shows up and turns to Cain with a question: "Where is Abel your brother?" But Cain, pretending to be innocent, answers: "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

G-d does not accept Cain's answer and rebukes him: "What have you done? Hark! Your brother's blood cries out to Me from the earth." We, readers beginning to read the Torah, discover that there is someone who hears the muted cry of the murdered. G-d is not indifferent to what happens. A person can choose evil, but the cry that emanates from the iniquity does not reverberate in an empty space. Cain's punishment comes quickly. "And now, you are cursed even more than the ground... it will not continue to give its strength to you; you shall be a wanderer and an exile in the land." Cain, who works the land, was punished with infinite wandering. And here the story ends with the characters dispersed. "And Cain went forth from before the Lord, and he dwelt in the land of the wanderers..." Cain leaves for distant lands to the east and becomes a nomad.

Israeli philosopher Yoram Hazony turns our attention to the fact that this story is a continuation of the previous one, the sin of eating from the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden despite G-d's prohibition. At the end of that story, G-d punishes Adam with the following words, "...cursed be the ground for your sake; with toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life." And after that, "And the Lord God sent him out of the Garden of Eden, to till the soil." Man is sent to work the land, and that is precisely what Cain did. "Cain was a tiller of the soil." Cain seems like he was a very religious man. He accepts the punishment and goes to work the land. Later, he also brings G-d an offering. But Cain is the prototype of a person who does not take responsibility for his actions and looks despairingly toward the cosmic, supreme, divine. Abel, on the other hand, embarks on a new road. He finds a way to avoid the curse. He abandons working the land and turns to shepherding. He takes responsibility for his life and

tries to release himself from dependency. And sure enough, G-d does not accept Cain's offering, but that of his younger, somewhat rebellious brother, He does accept.

Cain might seem to us to be the ideal religious person, but this is not what the Torah asks of us. The Torah's typical religious person is one who takes responsibility and tries to advance to a better situation. The ideal person that the Torah presents is one who tries to be similar to G-d: to build, to initiate, to move things forward with faith in creation and the Creator; as G-d teaches Cain, "Is it not so that if you improve, it will be forgiven you?"

The entire book of Genesis is dedicated to stories of non-conformists, people who courageously followed their conscience and strived to move forward. Abel was the first person to stop working the land and turn to shepherding. Abraham, our patriarch, left his family for the unknown. Joseph dreamed dreams of monarchy. In this first parasha, the Torah is giving us a taste of the foundations of Jewish values, those that make demands of us and call to us not to be satisfied with what exists but to march forward with courage and faith.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

Rav Kook Torah

Bereishit: The Titans, Men of Renown

Rabbi Chanan Morrison

The Nephilim

Immediately before the story of Noah and a corrupted world, the Torah makes a passing mention of the Nephilim, powerful giants who lived at that time.

"The Nephilim were on the earth in those days.... They were the mightiest ones ever, men of renown." (Gen. 6:4)

Who were these titans? Why does the Torah call them Nephilim?

The Midrash explains that they were called Nephilim because they fell (naphlu) and brought about the world's downfall (nephilah). These giants were the catalysts for society's great moral collapse.

Studying Foreign Languages

In 1906, fifteen-year-old Tzvi Yehuda Kook, Rav Kook's son, asked his father whether he should devote time to learning other languages. In his response, Rav Kook analyzed the relative importance of expertise in languages and rhetoric:

"We should aspire to help others, both our own people and all of humanity, as much as possible. Certainly, our influence will increase as we gain competence in various languages and speaking styles.... But if perfecting these skills comes at the expense of analytic study, then this will reduce the true intellectual content of one's contribution to the world."

Some people mistake proficiency in many languages for intellectual greatness. This is not the case. Linguistic talent is merely a tool. Genuine perceptiveness and intellectual insight are a function of how well one has established the foundations of one's own inner integrity.

To demonstrate his point, Rav Kook noted that the great Nephilim who brought about the world's moral collapse were *anshei shem*. Usually translated as "men of renown," this phrase literally or "men of words." They were great leaders, skilled in the arts of persuasion and rhetoric. But their talents were an empty shell, devoid of inner content. On the contrary, they used their eloquence for unscrupulous purposes.

It is interesting to contrast the Nephilim and their highly developed oratorical skills with the individual responsible for bringing the Torah's teachings to the world, Moses. The highest level of prophecy was transmitted through a man who testified about himself that he was not a man of words, but "heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue" (Ex. 4:10). Moses was not talented in rhetoric and lacked confidence in his communication skills. Nonetheless, his moral impact on the world is unparalleled in the history of humanity.

Tools of War

In these pre-Messianic times, Rav Kook wrote, when we must wage battle against ideological foes who attack all that is holy to us, we should look to King David for inspiration. David was untrained in the art of war and refused to wear the heavy armor that King Saul presented to him. Rather, he gathered five smooth stones from a stream. The five stones are a metaphor: David utilized the teachings of the Five Books of Moses to wage battle against Goliath and his blasphemy.

We should emulate David and not invest too much time and effort acquiring the tools of ideological warfare. Like the young shepherd who took up a simple slingshot in his fight against Goliath, we should not totally eschew the implements of rhetoric, but realize that David's victory over the blasphemous

Philistine was achieved due to the purity of his charge, “in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel” (I Samuel 17:45).

Eloquence and elocution are but tools. They may be used for nefarious purposes, like the corrupt Nephilim, or for conquering evil, like David. Ultimately, it is not the medium but the message that counts.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Igrot HaRe'iyah vol. I, pp. 29-30)

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Parashas Bereishis

פרשת בראשית תשפ"ג

בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ

In the beginning of G-d's creating the heavens and the earth. (1:1)

ויאמר אלקים יהי אור

G-d said, "Let there be light." (1:3)

ויאמר אלקים יהי רקיע בתוך המים

G-d said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters." (1:6)

ויאמר אלקים יהי מאורות ברקיע השמים

G-d said, "Let there be luminaries in the firmament of the heaven." (1:14)

Rashi comments, “All the potentials of heaven and earth were created on Day One, but Hashem commanded each to actualize on a designated day. The heavens had been created on the first day, but they were still in a state of flux. On the second day, when Hashem said, ‘Let there be a *rakia*, firmament,’ the heavens solidified, thereby creating a separation between the waters above (clouds) and the waters below.” We wonder why there had to be a process whereby the heavens required a day to congeal. Also, Hashem created light on the first day, but He did not put the luminaries into place until the fourth day. As mentioned earlier, all of Creation occurred on the first day, but the individual creations were not put into place until their designated time. Why? It is not as if Hashem could not have the finished creation ready the “first” time. Why wait?

Horav Yosef Nechemia Kornitzer, zl, says that this process was a Heavenly design established in order to convey an important lesson. Hashem deliberately discontinued aspects of Creation, “returning” to them at a later time, to teach that

greatness and successful achievement do not just happen instantly. The *pasuk* in *Iyov* 8:7 states, *V'hayah reishischa mitzaar, v'acharischa yisgeh me'od*; “Although your beginning is small, your end will prosper.” Just as a human being develops over time, as he is nurtured and educated, develops physically and emotionally, until he is able to take his place in society. Great achievements take time. One must introspect, take a step back and observe: Is he going in the right direction? Is the organization/institution/program that he is developing evolving in the manner that he had planned? Are his dreams achieving reality, or have they become nightmares? When we accept the fact that creation requires time and patience, one will not be upset when things do not go exactly as planned: the timing is off; there is a snag, an obstacle, a challenge that has surfaced which must be overcome.

This is the idea behind *Bereishis*, “In the beginning.” A beginning implies a time line, a starting point that continues on until it achieves fruition. The process has a beginning, a half-way point, and a finish line. All the heavens and earth began with something (which is beyond our grasp) and later evolved into its final configuration. Nothing received its full significance and capacity instantaneously. From the very outset, the Torah wants us to know and internalize the idea that growth and development (especially in Torah, which is a gift from Hashem) take time, patience and perseverance.

ויאמר אלקים נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו

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

Chazal (Midrash) teach, “When Moshe *Rabbeinu* wrote the Torah (as dictated to him by Hashem), he came to this *pasuk*, “Let Us make...” which is written in the plural, thus implying the notion that there might *chas v'shalom*, Heaven forbid, be more than one Creator. *Ribbono Shel Olam!* Why did You give the heretics a pretext to suggest a plural of divinities?” Hashem replied, “Write... whoever wishes to err will do so regardless. Rather, let them learn from their Creator, Who (although He) created all, still consulted with the Ministering Angels.” Thus, Hashem taught us that, regardless of one's greatness, he should always consult with others.

The *Chasam Sofer, zl*, ruled that the Orthodox community should adopt the principle of “Austritt/Secession,” separating the Orthodox Jewish community from its nonobservant counterpart (Similar

to what *Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl*, did in Frankfurt, Germany). In response, some came with a *taaneh*, accusation: This separation will undermine our efforts to influence the non-observant community positively. They felt that as long as they maintained even a somewhat diplomatic relationship with non-observant Jews, it was possible to circumvent the possibility of their complete alienation from the Torah way of life.

The *talmidei Chasam Sofer* (his students) replied with the above words of *Chazal*. It is not our responsibility to tolerate anything less than complete *shleimus*, perfection, in our relationship with Hashem, in order to prevent the heretics from descending further down the ladder to the abyss. *Emes*, truth, must remain unvarnished, regardless of the price. We do not compromise our religious beliefs in order to prevent them from plummeting to spiritual extinction.

This has been the *shitah*, principle, by which our Torah leadership has been guided in their recognition of, and relationship with the secular streams. Sharing a dais, a conference, with them implicitly acknowledges and validates their antithetical Torah beliefs. We wish them well, but we cannot allow them to achieve legitimacy by our association with them – even if this means having a religious division.

We should not forget *Horav Elchonon Wasserman's* position *vis-à-vis* the heretics who deny *Torah min ha'Shomayim*, Torah from Heaven, with Hashem as the Divine Author of the Torah. Their denial neither has anything to do with principle, nor is it an error in *hashkafah*, Jewish philosophy. It is purely *taaveh*, victims of lust, desire, who seek to follow their hearts and live like the gentiles. What restrains them from adopting the secular lifestyle? The Torah! They simply do away with it, so that they can do whatever they want.

The Jew who seeks the truth will understand the lesson of *Naaseh Adam*, “Let us make man.” The one who seeks to live a life of unrestrained debauchery will find any and every excuse to criticize the Torah. We will not change them. Let us not allow them to change us.

ומעץ הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל ממנו כי ביום אכלך ממנו מות תמות

But the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad you must not eat thereof; for on the day you eat of it, you shall surely die. (2:17)

Hashem established life as we know it following the sin which Adam *HaRishon* committed.

Hashem warned him not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. He ate and was punished with death (which did not occur for another 930 years). Otherwise, he would have lived forever. *Horav Yaakov Moshe Charlap, zl*, expands on the change that took place as a consequence of Adam transgressing Hashem's command. Prior to the sin, life was idyllic; man was to live morally, justly, and perform only positive acts of pure good. We were to create and build – everything was positive – neither evil nor negativity was in mankind's lexicon.

With the advent of sin, everything changed. No longer was it all about “good” and “positive.” Now, life was filled with contradiction and negativity. Man's joy in life is, unfortunately, often predicated on his fellow's failure/downfall. It is all about “me,” what “I” have that my fellow does not. Every individual wants to outdo and often consume his fellow. Competition can, at times, become ugly. People quarrel, nations go to war, often over petty differences. All of this is due to the introduction of *ra*, bad, into the system. This, explains the *Rav*, is the underlying concept of *eitz hadaas – tov v'ra*. It was no longer only *tov*. It was no longer simple and idyllic. If the emotions of life are now ravaged by incongruity, it makes sense that life itself is confronted with its ultimate antagonist/antithesis: death.

Chavah and womanhood were also punished with an added form of death; “I will greatly increase your suffering in childbearing; in pain shall you bear your children.” To Adam, Hashem said, “Accursed is the ground because of you, through suffering shall you eat of it all the days of your life” (Ibid. 3:16,17). The words *etzev*, *itzavon*, which denote suffering and pain, are derived from the word *atzvus*, worry, anxiety, depression, which are all aspects of *missah*, death. Just as Torah study and *mitzvah* performance gladden one's heart and infuse him with life, depression and worry negatively impact life by transforming excitement and joy into negativity and suffering. The lesson is powerful. When one succumbs to *atzvus*, sadness, he experiences a taste of death.

ויקרא ד' אלקים אל האדם ויאמר לו איכה

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

Hashem certainly knew the location of Adam's hiding place; rather, He wanted to determine if Adam knew where he (himself) was. One must know where he is with regard to fulfilling his potential. We often sell ourselves short, settling for mediocre success,

because we (or others) have convinced (us) ourselves that this is all that we are capable of achieving. One day, we will stand before the Heavenly Tribunal and will be presented with a Heavenly image of who we could have been. Hashem asked Adam, *Ayeca*, “Where are you,” in comparison to where you should be? This is a question which we should ask ourselves all the time, and the answer should spur us to continued growth.

The well-known story of *Horav Zusia, zl*, of Anipole, underscores this idea. The great *tzadik* was at the waning stages of his life. At this point, he became increasingly introspective concerning his mortality. One day, his students, noticing that he was depressed, asked what was troubling him. He explained that he felt that his end was near, and he was concerned that he might not have achieved sufficient merit to gain entry into *Olam Habba*, the World to Come. His students countered, “But, *Rebbe*, you have the patience of Hillel (the great *Tanna*), the wisdom of Shlomo *Hamelech* and the humility of Moshe *Rabbeinu*.” To this, *Rav Zushia* said, “My dear students, I am not concerned about my response when I am asked: ‘Why were you not more like Hillel; like Shlomo *Hamelech*, Avraham *Avinu* or Moshe *Rabbeinu*?’ I am concerned how I will respond when they ask me, ‘Why were you not like Zusia?’” (He meant the Zusia which Heaven had in mind.)

The greatest competition in life is not when we compete against others, but when we compete against ourselves - our own potential. We can study the strengths and weaknesses of our competition and design a plan of action so that we will succeed against them. Do we know (or are we willing to acknowledge) our strengths and weaknesses? Do we have a clue what is our potential? The only advice that we can apply to ourselves is to try as hard as we can. Be sincere in our efforts. Be honest with ourselves. If we can do more or better, do it!

In 1986, the United States Army, reeling from poor recruitment, added a new slogan: “Be all you can be.” In other words, they dared young men to maximize their potential. This slogan, which lasted for two decades, made a huge difference. Too many of us are complacent with our meager successes, and, as a result, settle for less.

The Heavenly potential with which we must reckon is on a completely different standard. One can go through life and be quite successful. He may be a big *baal tzedakah*, a philanthropist, learn a few hours

per day, even become a scholar of note; be involved in multifaceted acts of *chesed*, helping numerous people. If, however, his Heavenly image is to have used all of his G-d-given talents and skills for Torah only, then he has fallen short of his potential.

Hashem intimated to *Adam HaRishon*, “I expect better of you.” The first man had no room for error, as the *yetzir kapav shel HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, he was fashioned by Hashem. The Almighty does not make mistakes, neither should Adam. It is not in his Heavenly “job description.”

Horav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl, was once walking on the street when he chanced upon a young, teenaged non-Jew leading two large horses. He kept the horses in line with the help of a large stick, which he used whenever one of the horses veered off the straight path. These two horses went wherever the boy directed – almost as if they did not have minds of their own (which they do not). No argument, no protest; whatever the boy wanted, they followed his directions. *Rav Chaim* was amazed. The horse is one of the strongest animals. It has the extraordinary ability to pull large, heavy wagons loaded with people or produce. Yet, these two horses just followed wherever they were led. He wondered, “How is it possible for such a young boy to control two such strong horses?”

“The answer is,” declared *Rav Chaim*, “that they are horses and, as such, are unaware of their extraordinary strength. If they would possess half a brain, they would be leading, not being led.”

Rav Chaim applied this idea to explain David *HaMelech's* exhortation, *Al tiheyu k'suss k'fered ein havin*, “Be not like a horse, like a mule, uncomprehending” (Tehillim 32:9). This statement begs elucidation. In the previous *pasuk*, David declares, “I will educate you and enlighten the path which to travel. I will advise you with what I have seen.” We, the “students,” are waiting and prepared to hear and learn from the master a lesson that is not simply crucial – it will be life-altering. What is the lesson? “Do not be like a horse.” One would think that the great *Melech Yisrael* would impart a lesson that carries greater profundity than, “Do not be a horse.” One does not need the king to inform us of something which every person who possesses a modicum of common sense knows (or, at least, should know).

Rav Chaim explains that David *Hamelech* was teaching us that we should not be like the horse who is unaware of its enormous strength, and, as such, allows itself to be guided and driven by a child. A horse does

not know its potential, and, therefore, allows itself to be controlled to the right and to the left, all on the whim of whoever is leading. Likewise, one who is clueless to his inherent potential will allow the *yetzer hora* to manipulate his life.

We are (sadly) aware of instances in which individuals whose self-esteem could use a boost judge themselves through the eyes of others. In other words, if my friend or mentor or even spouse (and especially children) does not see my potential (the one which I personally see), I will accede to their value rating. My choices in life will be predicated by my identity as seen through the lens of others. While this is clearly nonsensical, it occurs much more than we care to admit. *Horav Elimelech Biderman, Shlita*, relates the following anecdote.

A young man convinced himself that he was a mouse. He clearly was unhinged and needed to be confined to an institution to address the emotional needs of a human being who thought he was a mouse. The young man's parents were people of means who would give anything to have their son cured of his *meshugas*, insanity. They hired a distinguished psychologist who felt he could help their son. The psychologist's technique was to have the disturbed young man repeat, "I am not a mouse. I am a human being," a number of times each day. Three months passed, and the doctor felt that it was time for the young man to return home. He no longer felt that he was a mouse. The therapy had been successful.

The excited parents picked up their son and, after speaking to him, acknowledged that he was doing well. He no longer thought himself to be a mouse. "I am not a mouse!" he emphatically told his parents. "I am a human being." "Is this not true?" he asked his parents. He so needed their support after having been committed for three months.

"Yes, yes, this is true!" his parents replied. They were so relieved that finally they had their son back.

They pulled into the driveway of their home, and, as soon as the door was open, the young man ran off. Worried, they searched for him, only to find him crouching beneath a car.

"Why are you hiding under a car?" the parents asked (almost in unison).

"I saw a cat," the son replied.

"Why should that bother you? You are not a mouse. You are a human being," they argued.

The young man replied, "Yes, I know that I am not a mouse, but does the cat know that?"

The young man was superficially cured. Beneath the surface, he thought himself to be a mouse. Moreover, he was concerned about what the cat thought. Even if he believed himself to be a human being, if the cat viewed him as a mouse, he was a mouse. His self-identity was determined by the cat.

Va'ani Tefillah

עזרנו אלקי ישענו על דבר כבוד שמך והצילנו וכפר כל
הטאתינו למען שמך - *Azreinu Elokei yisheinu al dvar
kvod Shemecha v'hatzileinu v'chapeir al chatoseinu
l'maan Shemecha.*

Assist O'G-d of our salvation, for the sake of Your Name's glory; rescue us and atone for our sins for Your Name's sake.

The first part of this verse, the word/term *kavod*, glory, is connected to Hashem's Name. In the second part of the verse, we ask that Hashem save and atone for us for His Name – *l'maan Shemecha*. In his *Tenufah Chaim, Horav Chaim P'lagi, zl*, explains that we present Hashem with two requests. The first is that He spare/save us from the overwhelming *tzaros*, troubles/adversity. Second, we ask Hashem to expiate our sins. *Chazal (Yerushalmi)* relate the story of a man who had the same name as the king. Since this was the case, he was spared from execution, for it would be a disgrace to the king for a man sharing his name to hang publicly. We ask Hashem to save us from those who would do us harm and destroy our peoplehood as the nation of Hashem. This is the meaning of *al kevod Shemecha*, for the glory of Your Name – which would be defamed with our destruction. Second, we ask Hashem to forgive and atone our sins – which are like thorns to the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence. This is not only about Hashem's Name; it is also a personal request.

Sponsored By: Etzmon And Abigail Rozen And Children

*In Loving Memory Of Their Father And Zaide -
Nathan Rozen*

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prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*

Living Things Carrying Themselves?

Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Since our parsha discusses both the creation of all living things, and the creation of Shabbos...

Question # 1: Animals on Shabbos

Why must animals observe Shabbos, when they are not required to observe any other mitzvos?

Question #2: A Bird in the Hand

Does carrying a bird desecrate Shabbos min haTorah?

Question #3: Togetherness

If two people carry an item together, are they culpable of chillul Shabbos?

Introduction:

The words of the Aseres Hadibros are: “The seventh day is Shabbos for Hashem, your G-d. You may not do any work; not you, your son, daughter, your slave and maidservant, or your animal.”

Thus, we are introduced to the concept that Shabbos is not only for us to observe, but also for us to ensure that animals are not involved in Shabbos desecration. We understand that we are required to observe Shabbos, but why should our animals be required to do so? Does the Torah assume that they comprehend what Shabbos means and can calculate which day of the week it is? How should we punish them if they disobey?

The answer is that they are not required to keep Shabbos; animals have no requirement to observe mitzvos. The mitzvah applies to us: included in our observance of Shabbos is an obligation that we are not to have our animals perform melacha for us.

There are two aspects to this mitzvah, one called shevisas beheimah and the other called mechameir. Shevisas beheimah requires that my animal not be worked by a person, and includes a situation in which a Jewish animal owner allows another person to use his animal to perform melacha for human benefit. The owner violates this lo saaseh even if he allows a non-Jew to use his animal to perform melacha, notwithstanding that the non-Jew has no mitzvah to observe Shabbos, and, indeed, is not even permitted to do so (Sanhedrin 58b).

Mechameir is when a Jew uses an animal to perform a melacha, even if he does not own the animal.

We see that these two activities, shevisas beheimah and mechameir, are both prohibited min haTorah. Does this mean that they are considered on the same level as performing one of the 39 melachos on Shabbos? Chazal explain that there are two categories of activities that are prohibited min haTorah on Shabbos -- those that are included under the heading of melacha, and those that are not. The first are those that the Torah says could require capital punishment, as we see from the story of the mekosheish (see Bamidbar 15 32-35). Shevisas beheimah is certainly

not considered a melacha, notwithstanding that it is prohibited min haTorah.

According to some tanna'im, mechameir has the full status of a melacha. The halacha is that although mechameir is not a melacha, it still violates Shabbos min haTorah, on a level approximately similar to the way that stealing violates the Torah.

Only melacha

Both shevisas beheimah and mechameir violate Shabbos min haTorah only when the animal is used to perform an activity that for a person is considered melacha. Thus, having an animal plow or plant a field violates Shabbos. We will see more on this topic at the end of this article. Before we do, we need to discuss a different subject.

Chai nosei es atzmo

In several places, the Gemara discusses a halachic principle called chai nosei es atzmo, literally, “a living thing carries itself” (Shabbos 94a, 141b; Eruvin 103a; Yoma 66b). The Gemara (Shabbos 94a) quotes and explains this concept, when it cites a dispute between Rabbi Nosson and the chachamim regarding someone who carries an animal or bird on Shabbos. Rabbi Nosson rules that the carrier is not in violation of Shabbos min haTorah, because of the principle of chai nosei es atzmo, whereas the chachamim rule that the carrier is culpable of desecrating Shabbos. The Gemara then states that the chachamim agree that carrying a person does not violate Shabbos min haTorah, because of chai nosei es atzmo. The chachamim contend that, notwithstanding the principle of chai nosei es atzmo, carrying an animal desecrates Shabbos min haTorah, because animals will try to wriggle out of the person's control when they are carried. This argument that does not concern Rabbi Nosson, although the Gemara never tells us why.

A bird in the hand

At this point, we have enough background to answer the second of our opening questions:

Does carrying a bird desecrate Shabbos min haTorah?

The answer is that this is the subject of a dispute among tanna'im, in which Rabbi Nosson rules that the person doing this is not guilty of desecrating Shabbos because of chai nosei es atzmo, but the chachamim conclude that it does violate carrying, min haTorah. The halacha follows the opinion of the chachamim (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 18:16).

Why is chai nosei es atzmo exempt?

Why is it that, because of the principle of *chai nosei es atzmo*, carrying a person is not considered desecrating Shabbos? Tosafos (Shabbos 94a s.v. *she'ha chai*) is bothered by this issue, mentioning three approaches to explain why this is true, each of which requires a lengthy introduction. To remember the three approaches in the order in which Tosafos proposes them, I suggest the follow popular acronym: ATM

1. Assistance

The “passenger” assists the “carrier” in the transportation.

2. Togetherness

Two (or more) people, or one person and one (or more) animal(s), are involved in performing the melacha, together.

3. Mishkan

The melacha activity is dissimilar from the way any carrying was performed in the construction of the Mishkan.

Assistance

The first approach suggested by Tosafos understands that carrying a person is not a melacha min haTorah because the “passenger” distributes his weight to help out the person who is hauling him. Tosafos rejects this approach because, although it is easier to carry a person than the same amount of dead weight, it is far easier to carry a much lighter object than it is to carry a person, yet carrying the light object violates Shabbos min haTorah, whereas carrying a person does not. Thus, Tosafos explains that there must be a different reason to explain *chai nosei es atzmo*.

A point that Tosafos does not note is that the approach just mentioned appears to be how Rashi (Shabbos 93b s.v. *es*) understands the topic of *chai nosei es atzmo*. We will need to address this sub-topic at another time.

Togetherness

The second approach to explain *chai nosei es atzmo* quoted by Tosafos is based on a principle, taught by the Mishnah (Shabbos 92b, 106b), that there is a qualitative difference between a melacha that is performed by two people together and one that is performed by a sole individual. The halachic term applied when two people perform a melacha together is *shenayim she'asu*. When the person being carried makes it easier for someone else to carry him, it is considered *shenayim she'asu*, and neither the carrier nor the passenger violates a Torah melacha.

However, based on detailed analysis of the rules of *shenayim she'asu*, Tosafos denies that this rationale

will exempt the performer of this act from culpability on Shabbos.

There are three opinions among *tanna'im* as to what are the rules germane to *shenayim she'asu*. Rabbi Meir, the most stringent of the three, disagrees with the rule that *shenayim she'asu* is not considered as performing a melacha (Shabbos 92b). He contends that when two people perform a melacha activity together, they are usually both culpable of violating the melacha. (We will mention shortly the one case when even Rabbi Meir accepts that there is an exemption.)

Second opinion

The *tanna* Rabbi Yehudah, a second opinion, draws a distinction regarding whether the two people can perform the melacha only when they are working together or whether each can perform the melacha separately. When two people carry something together that neither would be able to carry on his own, both are culpable for carrying the item on Shabbos, since this is the usual way for two people to perform this melacha activity. For example, a table too heavy or bulky for one person to carry is usually carried by two people. Therefore, two people carrying this table is the usual way to transport it. This case is called *zeh eino yachol vezeh eino yachol*, in which case, both transporters are culpable for desecrating Shabbos, according to Rabbi Yehudah.

However, regarding an item that each would have been able to carry on his own, such as a chair that is easily carried by either individual alone, should the two of them carry it together, neither is guilty of violating Shabbos, since this is an unusual way of carrying it. This case is called *zeh yachol vezeh yachol*.

Third opinion

The third approach is that of Rabbi Shimon, who rules that whether the item can be carried by each person separately or whether it cannot, no one violates Shabbos min haTorah.

The conclusion of the *rishonim* is that the halacha follows the middle opinion, that of Rabbi Yehudah (Rambam, *Hilchos Shabbos* 1:16).

Two together

At this point, I will digress briefly to answer the third of our opening questions: If two people carry an item together, are they culpable of *chillul Shabbos*?

The answer is that this case usually involves a dispute among *tanna'im*, and the accepted halacha is that, if either could carry it by himself, they are exempt from

chillul Shabbos min haTorah. However, if it is a large item, and neither can carry it on his own, they are culpable of desecrating Shabbos.

One can and one cannot

What is the halacha if one of them is able to carry it by himself, and the other cannot? This case is called zeh yachol vezeh ein yachol, which we have thus far omitted from our discussion. What is the halacha if one of the parties can perform the melacha activity by himself, and the second cannot perform it without the assistance of his associate?

The Gemara raises this question and concludes that the person who can perform the melacha by himself is culpable, even when he is assisted, and the person who cannot perform it by himself is exempt from a melacha min haTorah (Shabbos 93a).

Now, notes Tosafos, let us compare the case of chai nosei es atzmo, when one person carries another, to the rules of shenayim se'asu. In this case, the person doing the carrying can obviously perform the melacha by himself without the assistance of the other person. And, the person being carried is not performing the melacha by himself. According to what we just learned, the person doing the carrying should be culpable for violating the melacha. Since the halacha of chai nosei es atzmo is that the person doing the carrying is exempt from violating the melacha min haTorah, the approach of shenayim se'asu does not explain the halachic conclusion, and clearly cannot be the correct reason for the principle of chai nosei es atzmo. In baseball jargon, we would call this a swing and a miss.

Mishkan

Tosafos, therefore, proposes a third way to explain the principle of chai nosei es atzmo: The 39 melachos of Shabbos are derived from the activities performed in the building of the Mishkan in the Desert. Notwithstanding the importance of constructing the Mishkan as quickly as possible, it was strictly prohibited to perform any aspect of its building on Shabbos. This implies that the definition of what is prohibited on Shabbos is anything necessary to build the Mishkan.

Tosafos notes that building the Mishkan never necessitated carrying something that was alive. Although both hides of animals and dyes manufactured from animal sources were used in the construction of the Mishkan, Tosafos concludes that the animals whose hides were used were led, rather than carried, to where they were slaughtered, and the

animals that provided sources for the dyes were transported after they were dead. Thus, chai nosei es atzmo creates an exemption from desecrating Shabbos because of a unique rule in the melacha of carrying: for an activity to be considered a melacha min haTorah of carrying, the activity has to be fairly comparable to the way it was done in the construction of the Mishkan (see Tosafos, Eruvin 97b s.v. es and Shabbos 2a s.v. pashat; see also Penei Yehoshua on Tosafos 94a s.v. shehachai).

Chachamim

We noted above that, whereas Rabbi Nosson rules that someone who carried an animal on Shabbos is exempt from violating Shabbos min haTorah, the chachamim disagree. However, the Gemara concludes that the chachamim also accept the principle of chai nosei es atzmo, but disagree with its application regarding the case of someone carrying an animal, since the animal will be trying to escape. The chachamim agree that chai nosei es atzmo applies when carrying a person, as evidenced in two different places in the Mishnah:

In Mesechta Shabbos, the Mishnah (93b) states that carrying a bed containing an ill person on Shabbos is not a melacha min haTorah. This is because the bed is subordinate to the person, just as clothing or jewelry is. Carrying the person, himself, is not a melacha, because of chai nosei es atzmo.

The second place is a Mishnah discussing a rabbinic injunction banning sale of a donkey or cow to a non-Jew on any day of the week (Avodah Zarah 14b). The Gemara (15a) explains that this prohibition is because of concern that selling a large animal to a non-Jew could cause the seller to desecrate Shabbos, and then explains two different scenarios whereby this could happen.

A. Renting or lending

One way is that a Jew may rent or lend an animal to a non-Jew over Shabbos, which could easily cause the Jewish owner of the animal to desecrate Shabbos. When the non-Jew renter or borrower uses the animal on Shabbos, the Jewish owner violates the Torah prohibition of shevisas beheimah, explained at the beginning of this article. Prohibiting the sale of large animals to non-Jews avoids a Jew having any financial dealings involving these animals.

B. Mechameir

The other concern is that the Jew might sell the animal to a non-Jew before Shabbos, but the non-Jew discovers on Shabbos that he cannot get the animal to follow his instructions, so he asks the Jew for help

with the animal after Shabbos starts. If the Jew speaks and the animal obeys his voice and thereby performs melacha, the Jew has directed the animal to work on Shabbos, which is a desecration of mechameir, even should the non-Jew already own the animal.

For those in the cattle business, there are heterim discussed in the Gemara and the halachic authorities, which we will leave for another time.

Chai nosei es atzmo

We now know why Chazal banned a Jew from selling an animal to a non-Jew. What does this have to do with chai nosei es atzmo?

The Mishnah teaches that Ben Beseira permits selling horses to non-Jews, which the chachamim dispute. Having your animal work on Shabbos is prohibited min haTorah only when the animal performs what is considered melacha. Thus, having an animal plow, plant, or grind grain is prohibited, min haTorah, on Shabbos. However, having an animal carry a human rider on Shabbos is prohibited only miderabbanan, since the human is capable of walking – chai nosei es atzmo. Therefore, Ben Beseira permitted selling a horse to a non-Jew, because this would never lead someone to violate Shabbos min haTorah. The Sages prohibit selling a horse, because there are instances in which it is used to perform melacha de'oraysa, and therefore it is included in the prohibition of selling large animals to a non-Jew.

Conclusion

As I mentioned above, animals have no requirement to observe mitzvos. The requirement that it is forbidden to do melacha is a commandment that applies to us; observing Shabbos requires that we refrain from having them perform melacha for us. And the reason is simple: Hashem gave us permission, indeed responsibility, to oversee and rule over the world that He created. However, we must always remember that it is He who gave us this authority, and, by observing Shabbos, we demonstrate this. Our power extends over all of creation, including the animal kingdom. Thus, Shabbos limiting our control of animals demonstrates that our authority the rest of the week is only by virtue of the authority granted us by Hashem. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (Shemos 20:10) notes that people mistakenly think that work is prohibited on Shabbos in order to provide a day of rest. This is incorrect, he points out, because the Torah does not prohibit doing avodah, which connotes hard work, but melacha, which implies purpose and accomplishment. On Shabbos, we refrain from constructing and altering

the world for our own purposes. The goal of Shabbos is to emphasize Hashem's rule as the focus of creation by refraining from our own creative acts (Shemos 20:11). Understanding that the goal of our actions affects whether a melacha activity has been performed demonstrates, even more, the concepts of purpose and accomplishment.

Carpe Diem!

Rabbi YY Jacobson

What Can We Accomplish After Millenia of Great People Doing Great Things?

"I do not expect from you to refrain from sin because of a lack of interest in sin; I want you to abstain from sin because of a lack of time for it."— Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kutzk, to his disciples.

"The world says, 'Time is money.' I say, 'Time is life.'" — Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, to my father, Gershon Jacobson, in 1985.

Cheating on the Shabbos?

The marvelous invention of the Shabbos, a day in which we put our stressful lives on hold and dedicate a day to our souls, loved ones, and spiritual growth, is introduced in this week's portion, the opening section of the Torah.

"And G-d saw all that He had made [during the six days of creation], and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus, the heaven and the earth were completed, and all their array. G-d completed, on the seventh day, His work, which He had done, and He abstained on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He ceased from all His work." [1]

The contradiction is striking. On the one hand the Torah states that G-d "abstained on the seventh day from all His work which He had done; G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He ceased from all His work." This would mean that G-d completed His work on the sixth day, followed by a day of rest. Yet the very same verse declares that "G-d completed His work on the seventh day," meaning that He completed the work on the seventh, not on the sixth, day.

Divine Punctuality

The Midrash and Rashi offer the following explanation:[2]

A human being, incapable of determining the precise moment of nightfall, can't establish the exact moment when Friday ends and Saturday begins. Therefore, Jewish law obligates us to begin observing the Shabbos a short while before it begins. G-d, on the other hand, knows the exact moment when Friday merges into Shabbos, and therefore, on the first Friday of creation, He continued His work throughout the entire day, until the end of the very last moment before the Shabbos began. Since G-d would not cease building His world until the moment that Shabbos began, it appeared as if He completed His work on the Shabbos day itself. Because of this appearance, the verse states that G-d completed His work "on the seventh day," since that is how it looked from a human vantage point.[3]

But why? What was the purpose of G-d working all the way till Shabbos and making it appear that He is "violating" the holy day? What compelled G-d to give off this false impression that He was laboring on the Shabbos? And why would the Torah be interested in relating this detail to us?

Cherish the Moment

It is here that we are presented with one of the important contributions of Judaism to civilization: the value of time.

For six full days G-d created a universe that is extraordinary in its magnitude and grandeur. During this week, the Creator fashioned a cosmos of endless mystery and limitless depth. One could not conceive of a more accomplished and successful week. Following such a fruitful and productive work week, as the sixth day was winding down, G-d had the full right to sit back and enjoy His grand achievement.

Comes the Torah and declares—no! As long as there was even one moment remaining during which the building of a world can continue, G-d would not stop.

How to Manage Your Time

We, too, are builders of the world, in the lovely Talmudic phrase, "partners of the Divine in the work of creation." [4] G-d built a physical world out of Divine energy; our job is to build spiritual energy out of a physical world; to transform the universe into a moral and sacred space, saturated with light and goodness.

Comes the Torah and teaches that even if you have already employed your strengths to build a beautiful world; even if you have affected many people, ignited many hearts, and touched many souls, as long as you have the capacity to construct one more heart, inspire

one more soul, empower one more mind, and transform one more individual—do not cease from the sacred work.

G-d continues to fashion His world up to, and including, the last possible moment, in order to teach us: Carpe Diem! Every moment of life contains infinite value. If there is still one human being you can touch, do not desist.

Sometimes, you may have accomplished so much during your life, and you feel that it is time to slow down. Comes the Torah and says: If you still have life in your bones, and there is one soul for whom you can make a difference—do not stop.

The Final Blow

What is more, the Torah emphasizes that "On the seventh day G-d completed His work." The work G-d had done during the final moments of the sixth day brought to completion all the amazing work of the six preceding days.

The same is true in our individual lives. The work you do in the final moments of your "week," may seem small and insignificant, relative to all the great things you did earlier. But in actuality, these final acts may be the ones that complete your life's mission. You never know the full significance of a singular act.

Just as this is true in each of our personal lives, it also holds true about all of history. Our generation, as the sixth millennium is winding down, has been compared in Jewish texts to the "Friday" afternoon of history,[5] moments before the Shabbos of history arrives. We may often view our daily involvement in acts of kindness, in the study of Torah and observance of Mitzvos as inconsequential in the big picture. After millennia of great people doing great things, what can I, a small person, already accomplish?

In truth, however, it is the small and ordinary things that we do in our lives today that grant completion to 6,000 years of love, commitment, and sacrifice. It is our "final touch" that will turn the world into a G-dly place and bring redemption to our turbulent planet.

We are the fortunate ones to bring it all to completion.[6]

[1] Genesis 1:31; 2:1-2.

[2] Bereishis Rabah 10:9. Rashi to Genesis 2:2. Cf. Rashi to Megilah 9a.

[3] Cf. Likkutei Sichos vol. 5 pp. 24-33, where it is demonstrated that Rashi's view is that G-d actually completed the work at the first moment of the seventh day; yet it was a type of work that is permitted on the

Shabbos (See there for a full-fledged presentation of this fascinating idea.)

[4] Shabbos 119b

[5] See Ramban to Genesis 1:1; Or Hachaim beginning of Parshas Tzav. Cf. Sefer Hasichos 5750 p. 254 and references noted there as well as Sefer Hasichos 5749 p. 477

[6] This essay is based on a talk delivered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe on Shabbas Parshas Bereishis

5728, October 28, 1967. The talk is published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 5 pp. 24-35; Sichos Kodesh 5728 pp. 114-115.

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה
אנא מלכה בת ישראל ע"ה