



BS"D

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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON BEREISHIS - 5786

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### **The Jewish Nation: Shattered Yet Unbreakable** by Rabbi Dr. Yosef Lynn

October 16, 2025

At Daniel Perez's second funeral, I witnessed the paradox of our people: devastated yet resilient, broken yet unbroken.

Standing at Har Herzl on a cool Jerusalem evening last night, I witnessed something that defies explanation—a people simultaneously shattered and unbreakable.

How does the Jewish nation keep going?

I stood at the funeral of Captain Daniel Perez, joined by thousands who gathered at Mount Herzl. But this wasn't just any funeral—this was the second funeral, a reality so cruel it seems impossible to comprehend. For months after October 7th, his family clung to hope that he was alive. Then came the devastating notification of his death. Still, they waited—hoping, praying for his body to be returned so they could lay him to rest with dignity. Tonight, finally, they could say goodbye.

But the moment that broke me—and everyone around me—came when Matan Angrest arrived. One of the 20 hostages just released from captivity, he stood at the graveside of his commander—frail, pale, barely able to walk after his ordeal in Gaza. Yet there he was. Standing, present, honoring the man who had led him. He spoke briefly but with bravery. He said, “I can't believe I even made it here. This is the least I could do for Daniel and the whole crew... My commander will always be my commander, until the day I die. You will go with me until my last day and even in the world to come.” How can anyone fathom such strength?

Then I looked to my left and saw something equally profound. A regular man in the crowd—except he wasn't regular at all. It was Jon Polin, father of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, one of the hostages who never made it out of Gaza alive. There he stood, his own heart carved out by unimaginable loss, physically holding and supporting another grieving family through their pain. There wasn't a dry eye in the crowd.

In all my years of studying Positive Psychology—a science focused heavily on the study of resilience, hope, and meaning—there is no data, no research, no theoretical framework that could explain the magnitude of what I experienced tonight. The textbooks speak of post-traumatic growth, of

finding meaning in suffering, of the human capacity for resilience. But they fall silent before this. What I witnessed transcends every model and metric we've developed to understand human strength.

The dichotomy was awesome in the truest sense of the word—inspiring awe, wonder, and reverence. Here was a nation brought to its knees by grief, yet somehow standing taller than ever. Broken, but refusing to break. Mourning, but not losing hope. Burying their dead while embracing their returned living.

This is the paradox of the Jewish people that has sustained us through millennia. We cry—deeply, authentically, without restraint. Yet we don't surrender to despair. We attend second funerals for our fallen heroes. We watch emaciated hostages stumble to honor their commanders. We see bereaved fathers comfort other bereaved families.

And somehow, impossibly, we keep going.

Because that's what Daniel would have wanted. That's what Hersh would have wanted. That's what this nation has always done—we hold each other up when standing seems impossible. We find strength not despite our brokenness, but somehow through it.

As I left Har Herzl last night, I carried two feelings that shouldn't coexist but somehow do in the Jewish heart: profound sadness and profound pride.

Sadness for all we've lost. Pride in who we are when faced with the unthinkable.

This is how this nation keeps going—together, broken but unbroken, supporting each other through the unbearable until, somehow, it becomes bearable.

May Daniel's memory be a blessing. May all our fallen be remembered.

<https://aish.com/the-hostages-are-home-and-we-can-finally-dance-again/?src=ac>

### The Hostages Are Home and We Can Finally Dance Again by Rabbi Menachem Lehrfield

October 13, 2025

After 736 days, the hostages return home, reminding us that true unity is forged in family, faith, and love—differences intact, yet unbreakably one. They're home.

After 736 days, two years almost to the day, our brothers have finally returned home. They arrived on Hoshana Rabbah, the eve of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. Hoshana Rabbah marks the culmination of the High Holiday period, the final day when the gates of heaven are open and our prayers can reach their fullest power.

May this homecoming mark the beginning of healing: for those who have been released, for their families, and for all those whose loved ones have not yet come home. May our collective cry of hoshana (“please save us”) bring comfort and healing to these wounded souls, helping them heal physically, spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically.

For two years, we carried them with us. Every single day. We prayed for people we'd never met. We cried for families we'd never known. We felt their absence like a physical wound. Their families became ours. Their pain, our pain. Their hope, our hope.

And in that carrying, we learned something extraordinary about who we are. We discovered that we are truly one people. That the connection between Jews runs deeper than geography, deeper than politics, deeper than any difference of opinion. We learned it's possible to love someone you've never met simply because they are family. We learned that unity isn't about being the same in thoughts, opinions or actions. It's about commitment to one another despite our differences.

These two years taught us the power of that unity like nothing else could. The past week I've been seeing this play out. We have been celebrating the holiday of Sukkot with family. Inevitably at some point, the kids bicker. The adult siblings have passionate, heated disagreements about practically everything. All the time. Strong opinions clash, voices rise, and it's beautiful. Because that's what family does. We argue because we care deeply. We disagree because we're invested in each other and in our shared future. We debate with passion because these things matter to us.

Siblings disagree. It means we're close enough to be honest, connected enough to argue and bonded enough that no argument can break us. Right now, at this very moment when we should be most unified in joy, there are forces working to divide us. Sowing discord. Amplifying differences. Turning disagreement into division.

We cannot let that happen. We cannot afford to be divided.

In such a short amount of time we've witnessed the mess of October 6 and in the depths of darkness we emerged as a broken yet strong and unified people on October 8. The unity and love was palpable as we believed b'yachad ninatzeach, that only together could we get through this nightmare. Then over time we forgot. We regressed and we are once again back to the October 6th Jewish People.

We cannot afford to go back to this dark place. Not after all we've been through. Not after all that we have learned. We must remember that when we stand together, with all our differences, with all our passionate disagreements, only then are we unbreakable. We are strongest not when we all think alike, but when we choose to remain family despite thinking differently.

Tonight, as those in Israel (we'll celebrate the following night - Tuesday this year) hold the Torah close and dance, let us dance for them. For those who returned and for those we've lost. Let us dance with the knowledge that we are one family - argumentative, passionate, diverse, and absolutely unbreakable.

For two years we've been saying "We will dance again" Tonight, we do. We are brothers and sisters. We disagree, and that's okay. We argue, and that's beautiful. Because it means we're family. And family never gives up on each other.

Let us remember this moment. Let us hold onto this feeling. And let us never, ever allow ourselves to be divided again.

Finally at last, we can dance again.

<https://www.theyeshivaworld.com/news/israel-news/2459543/after-2-years-harav-chaims-son-in-law-removes-the-plywood-from-his-bed.html>

A year ago, family members of hostages were moved to tears when they visited the home of Rebbetzin Leah Kolodetsky, the daughter of HaGaon HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, z'tl.

The hostages' relatives were in Bnei Brak as part of a Sukkos tour. The Rebbetzin told them that for months after the October 7 massacre, her husband, HaGaon HaRav Yitzchak Kolodetsky, 71, slept on the floor in solidarity with the suffering of the hostages.

However, at the end of the winter, her husband caught a cold from sleeping on the floor so he placed a thin piece of plywood on a bed and slept on that. B'Chasdei Hashem, on Monday night (Simchas Torah in Eretz Yisrael), Harav Kolodetsky finally removed the plywood from his bed and slept directly on the mattress.

Last year, Chareidi journalist Yisrael Cohen, who accompanied the families, said, "We arrived at the home of Rebbetzin Kolodetsky to get a bracha. She told us in a 'by the way' manner that her husband hasn't slept on a bed since October 7, 2023."

"The son-in-law of HaGaon HaRav Chaim Kanievsky, z'tl, a Talmid Chacham and Rav in Yisrael, over the age of 70, decided to sleep on a board he placed on a bed. For a year already. Every night."

He added, "The Rebbetzin said, 'You can go in the room and see. How can we sleep comfortably when we have no idea how and where the hostages are sleeping?'" (YWN Israel Desk—Jerusalem)

## RAV SCHACHTER ON THE PARSHA

Insights and Commentary Based on the Shiurim of Rav Hershel Schachter  
Adapted by Dr. Allan Weissman

<https://a.co/d/2aj0sJs>

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## PARSHAS BEREISHIS THAT IT WAS GOOD

THE TORAH'S description of Creation includes multiple repetitions of the phrase, וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים כִּי טוֹב – "And Hashem saw that it was good" (e.g. Bereishis 1:10). The Ramban (1:4) wonders what this phrase could mean in relation to Hashem's creations. When a human being sets out to construct something with a vision or blueprint of the final product, once the construction is complete, he is able to say whether the final product met his expectations or not. However, when Hashem creates something, the final product is exactly the way He intended it to be. If Hashem had desired an "average" world, that is how the world would have been. Since Hashem desired a beautiful world, the resultant creation "was good." What, then, is added by the passuk, "And Hashem saw that it was good?"

The Ramban explains that the phrase "that it was good" carries with it the connotation of kiyum (permanence). Since nothing at all existed prior to Creation, the status quo of everything in the world was a state of nothingness. Even once Hashem created something, after a split second, it should have reverted back to its original state of nonexistence. The only reason that anything in the world continues to exist is that Hashem continuously wills its existence, thereby defying its natural state. If Hashem were to remove His continuous will from any item, it would revert back to a state of nothingness. This is the meaning of the phrase, המחדש בטובו תמיד – "Who renews every day continuously the act of Creation." The Ba'al HaTanya (Sha'ar HaYichud VeHaEmunah, perakim 1-2) elaborates on this theme with a mashal (parable). When Hashem desired to split the Yam Suf, He used the ruach (wind) as a barrier to the flowing waters. Had Hashem interrupted that ruach, the waters would have resumed their original positions and flooded those passing through the Yam Suf. The same is true with any one of Hashem's creations and with the entire universe in general. As the passuk in Tehillim (119:89) states, לעולם יהיה דברך נצב – "Forever, Hashem, Your word stands firm in the heavens." All of creation has a merely dependent existence. Only Hashem Himself has a מציאות אמתית (independent existence). This is the significance of the passuk in Yirmiyah (10:10), וְד' אֱלֹקִים אֱמֶת – "But Hashem, G-d, is True." The meaning is not that Hashem does not deal dishonestly, but that only Hashem has a "true" independent existence.

The Ba'al HaTanya explains that this understanding forms the basis of a logical proof against heretics who argue that while Hashem created the world, He left it alone to run its course according to the physical laws of nature that He had created. Such an approach could only be envisioned in the realm of human construction or creation. When a human builds a table or a building, he is merely taking previously existing raw materials and rearranging them to form the final product. Therefore, the table or building will continue to exist even after the builder has died or has left the project to move on to a different one. However, in the case of Hashem's creation, in which the created item has only a dependent existence reliant on the continuous will of Hashem, it would be impossible to imagine a situation in which the Creator left His Creation alone. Hashem must have a constant yedi'ah (knowledge) of and involvement in the world's current affairs, for absent Hashem's Will, all of Creation would instantaneously cease to exist. Therefore, concludes the Ramban, וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים כִּי טוֹב should not be understood as a judgement or appraisal of what had been created. It is an additional Divine command representing the fact that Hashem sees fit to allow all that He originally created to continue to exist. This command, in fact, has continued from the very beginning of time up until the present. There is a related interpretation of the Ari z"l (Sefer HaLikutim and Likutei Torah, Parshas Eikev) on the passuk, כִּי לֹא עַל הָלֶחֶם יֵחִי הָאָדָם כִּי עַל כָּל מוֹצֵא פִי ד' – "For not by bread alone does man live, but rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of Hashem does man live" (Devarim 8:3). Just as the world was originally created through ten Divine utterances (עשרה), so too the true chiyus (life force) within each and every object or being is due to the devar Hashem (word of Hashem) contained within it. Thus, the passuk means, "For not through the physical component of the bread alone, but through its chelek ruchni (spiritual dimension), a result of the devar Hashem at the time of Creation that continues until today, is Man nourished." This innate devar Hashem is what the mekubbalim call נִיצוּצֵי

קדושה (sparks of holiness), which are present within every object and which cause every object to yearn to be involved in the service of Hashem. When an object is elevated through use for mitzvah observance, its purpose in creation has been fulfilled. This is why, the mekubbalim explain, Klal Yisrael travels throughout the world during galus – in order to gather and “fix” these sparks of holiness throughout their travels. These sparks are considered to be trapped within their host objects, waiting to be released, at which point those objects will realize their purpose in Creation. The story is told of one of the Gerrer Rebbes that he advised a sofer to endeavor to use, in the making of tefillin and mezuzos, the hide of a kosher animal that died a natural death, thereby rendering it a neveilah and thus inedible. The Rebbe argued that a kosher animal that underwent a proper shechitah has already experienced its tikkun (correction), as a berachah had been recited over its shechitah and its meat will nourish those who perform mitzvos. In contrast, the neveilos, which have not yet been able to play any role in the service of Hashem, are in need of a tikkun and should be used for mitzvah purposes.

Eretz Chemda Rav Shaul Yisraeli ztl founder  
**Is “Not Good” the Same as Bad?**  
**Rav Daniel Mann**

The word “tov” (good) appears 16 times in our parasha, which restarts our Torah learning and presents, in a special way, the beginning of the world. One of the memorable p’sukim containing tov is: “It is not good (lo tov) that man is by himself; I shall make for him a helper opposite him” (Bereishit 2:18). What does “lo tov” mean – in general and here? Throughout Tanach, including our parasha, tov appears as an antonym and direct contrast to rah. For example, the full name of the etz hada’at is “the tree of knowledge of tov and rah” (ibid. 17). Rah can be translated as either bad, a broad term applying to many levels and contexts of undesirability, or evil, referring to a low level of morality.

So, lo tov can mean bad or it can mean evil. In theory, it can also include average situations. If we rate on a scale of 1 to 10, and good is from 7 and up and bad is from 3 down, then 4-6 is “not good,” but it is also “not bad.” So how do we describe the lo tov situation of man without wife? Evil? No. Bad? Maybe, but why would Hashem create such an important creation as man, in a bad way? Average? Maybe, but this is intuitively unappealing. Perhaps the answer emerges from an interesting phenomenon in the Torah’s portrayal of Creation. Famously, every major stage of creation is summarized, as “Hashem saw that it was tov.” This statement usually appears once a day, but does not appear on Day 2 and appears twice on Day 3. On Day 6, creation of animals is described as “tov” (ibid.1:25) and the entire creation as a whole is rated “very tov” (1:31). In between these two tovs, the five p’sukim on creation of man is not “crowned” with a tov. Why not?

Perhaps this is what the Torah means with “lo tov” before Chava’s creation. It was not evil, or bad, or average. However, it was lacking the expected tov of creations. As the creation of the second day waited for completion on the third day, so did Adam need to wait for Chava to become a complete creation (see Yevamot 62b).

Hashem decided that man should be created and recognize himself as incomplete before receiving his completion. This phenomenon repeats itself regularly when a baby Jewish boy is born in a way that requires him to be completed by a brit (see Tanchuma, Tazria 7). We can suggest that since as soon as Chava was created there was completion, when a baby girl is born there is no need to seek completion with a brit or the like.

If tov, as opposed to lack thereof, is connected to being complete, we add appreciation for Chazal’s comment that Moshe was born circumcised and that this is learned from the fact he was described as born tov (see Shemot 2:2; Avot D’Rabbi Natan 2). The fact that males have two hashlamot – brit and a wife – explains more things. A brit includes preparing the boy to eventually live a married life in sanctity. Also, already at the brit, we look ahead to his completion: “Just as he entered the brit, so may he enter Torah, chupa, and ma’asim tovim.” Torah is called tov (Mishlei 4:2) and completes

a person; finding a wife is called “matza tov” (ibid. 18:22); after these two, a man is ready for ma’asim tovim.

from: Ohr Torah Stone <ohrtorah@ohrtorahstone.ccsend.com>

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Bereshiet: A New Beginning Built on Unity and Opportunity

**Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander**

This we begin the yearly cycle of Torah readings anew, in a time of hope after two years of unimaginable pain, loss and crisis for the Jewish people. Even as we rejoice at the freeing of our remaining living hostages, as I write these lines, the bodies of some of our brothers and sister who were murdered have not yet been returned from Gaza. The horrors of these years still weigh heavily on our hearts and souls. Our nation continues to mourn its fallen and murdered; our spouses, children and grandchildren are still serving for a prolonged period in uniform; countless are wounded – in body and in spirit. As we open the Torah scroll to Bereshiet once again, starting anew even as our future still feels uncertain, we ask: What mindset should we be bringing to this beginning?

One answer lies in a striking aggada recorded in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Chagiga 2:1) which asks why the Torah begins with the letter bet rather than alef, the first letter of the alphabet. The Yerushalmi explains that alef is the first letter of arira (“curse”), while bet is the first letter of berakha (“blessing”). Hence, it is preferable that the Torah begin with bet, signaling blessings rather than curses.

R. Baruch Epstein however, in his commentary Torah Temima (Bereshiet 1:1(4)), challenges the Yerushalmi’s teaching. True, the Hebrew word for curse begins with alef – but so do a wide array of other words with positive meanings, and the converse is true of the letter bet as well! R. Epstein therefore suggests that the aggada must be pointing to a deeper symbolism of these letters, beyond the simple words themselves.

In the spirit of R. Epstein’s insight, I would like to point out an aspect of great significance to the Torah beginning with bet. As the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, bet signifies togetherness, beyachad, the fundamental necessity of not being alone. The world in which we live requires partnership – we must join forces with one another to improve the world, and we must partner with the Almighty to have any hope of success in that process. If the world were founded on the first letter alef, with its ethos of ani – individualism and self-sufficiency – it simply could not endure. Only through a commitment to solidarity and shared purpose will we fully realize our potential in the world.

The power of unity has been revealed on multiple levels. We have just witnessed the unity of nations joining together to pressure Hamas (חמאס) for the release of our hostages and, please God, peace. It is not coincidental that this spirit of unity came to its pinnacle point on the holiday of Sukkot, the most universal of Jewish holidays, when our ancestors in the Beit haMikdash offered sacrifices on behalf of all nations of the world. The heroism and solidarity of the Jewish people from the beginning of this crisis have been both humbling and inspiring. Hundreds of thousands of reservists have mobilized, including many who rushed to the front lines from overseas, and proceeded to spend hundreds of days in uniform, away from the comfort and safety of their homes and families. Thousands more have galvanized to support the families of the fighting and the fallen, preparing meals, collecting and distributing essential supplies, and donating from Jewish communities worldwide. Places like Hostage Square in Tel Aviv have remained centers of unity, conversation and prayer. Strangers continue to gather at military bases, shiva houses, and the homes of bereaved parents, bound together by a common purpose and shared identity.

The letter alef, focusing on the self, is an inevitable path to arur – curse and destruction. It is only through bet, through the solidarity we have witnessed, globally and within our own nation – and which we pray will continue – that we can breathe new life into ourselves and into our recovering people. This complex period is a testament to the strength of our shared resolve, and a clarion call to never lose sight of what binds us together. As we begin Bereshiet once again, may we do so with renewed spirit, unity and purpose!

Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander is President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone

This week's parsha is dedicated to the memory of Sergeant (Res.) Shmuel Gad Rahamim z"l, a graduate of our Jacob Sapirstein 'Ohr Torah Ariel' High School in Ramot, Jerusalem, who succumbed this week to heavy wounds inflicted in battle in southern Gaza; and to the memory of Captain Daniel Peretz z"l, whose body was finally returned to Israel and buried this week. May the memory of all our fallen soldiers and heroes of Israel be a blessing.

<https://vinnews.com/2025/10/12/the-brachos-and-the-hostages/>

### **The Brachos and the Hostages**

October 12, 2025 12:12 pm6

**By Rabbi Yair Hoffman**

The entire Jewish nation is elated that, Boruch Hashem, the remaining twenty living hostages are expected to be freed tonight as part of the first phase of the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas. These twenty living hostages have endured more than two years of captivity since being taken on October 7, 2023. We also pray that the remains of the twenty-eight kedoshim who were murdered by Hamas will be returned to their families for proper kevarah (burial) with full dignity and honor.

All of the hostages were taken from their homes, from Kibbutzim, or from the Nova music festival by Hamas terrorists on October 7th, 2023. The families of these precious neshamos have waited 741 days for this moment of redemption.

When escaping the clutches of such a situation, rachmana litzlan – there are three brachos that may be in order. The first one is, “Boruch Attah Hashem elokainu Melech haOlam matir assurim – who releases the imprisoned.” The second is bentching Gomel – which is recited whenever there is danger to life. And the third bracha is the shehecheyanu – this blessing is recited both by the hostages and by their family members when seeing each other after having been separated for so long. We must also express hakaras haTov for the brave members of Klal Yisroel who risked life and limb to reach this moment, and for all those who worked tirelessly to secure the release of these hostages.

Of course we continue to daven for the release and return of the remains of the twenty-eight hostages whose lives were tragically taken by Hamas, and for the continued safety of those seeking their freedom and of all of Klal Yisroel.

Let us also take this opportunity to reflect upon the reasons why we recite brachos: The Seven Essential Reasons Why We Recite Brachos 1] To thank Hashem for the particular item, opportunity, or situation that we have. In this case, these twenty hostages have been freed from horrifying circumstances after more than two years of captivity. Benefitting from something without thanking Hashem for it is compared to stealing according to the Gemorah in Brachos 35a. This, of course, is only in a situation where Chazal deemed that a blessing is warranted and enacted these blessings.

2] To change ourselves to become someone who has hakaras hatov – to recognize what has been given us. See Brachos (7a) regarding Leah's naming of Yehudah in Bereishis (29:35). It is interesting to note that her naming Yehudah would constantly remind her of her recognition of thanking Hashem. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai explains that Leah was the first to reach that high level of Hakaras HaTov.

3] To bring Hashem into our lives on a regular basis. Without brachos, we tend to become complacent and forget about our creator. Brachos, when said properly, remind us of Hashem and help us bring Hashem into our lives regularly.

4] To connect to Hashem – and allow for Dveikus to Him.

5] Our sages enacted that we make these blessings and it is a Torah Mitzvah to follow what the sages have taught and enacted.

6] The Kuzari writes that when we focus on a Bracha – we enjoy our food even more. Here, the hostages can better enjoy the freedom that they now have again.

7] The Gemorah in Brachos further states that not reciting a bracha is also considered as if we have stolen from Knesses Yisroel – the Jewish nation. How so? Because when we sin, our nation's fruits and handiwork suffer (See Rashi's words in Brachos 35a). Brachos, therefore, help us improve the lot of Klal Yisroel. It follows that when we do the right thing, things also improve for Klal Yisroel.

Understanding the Bracha of Bentching Gomel As far as bentching Gomel is concerned, the Gemorah in Brachos (54b) informs us that there are four people who are required to bentch gomel: 1] one who travels by sea, 2] one who journeys in the desert, 3] one who recovers from illness and 4] one who exits from prison. These four categories are based upon Tehillim 107.

The question arises as to what the underlying reason is for category #4, leaving prison. The Ri Migash (responsa #90) rules that someone who is released from debtors' prison with no actual threat to life should recite the blessing of Matir Assurim. Clearly, his view is that the blessing is made because of his newly obtained freedom. The Mogain Avrohom (OC 219:1), on the other hand, writes that the blessing is only recited after exiting prison when one faced a possible death sentence. The Birkei Yosef, concurring

with the Ri Migash, states that release from any prison sentence requires bentching Gomel.

The Mishna Brurah writes that if someone was in jail for one or two days, the blessing is not recited according to all opinions – unless there was real danger to life.

The Aruch Ha-Shulchan (209:25) rules like the Ri Migash but says that if there are further conditions to his release – then he is not truly free and does not bentch gomel. The Mishnah Berurah adds that if there is any threat to life while in prison he would bentch gomel.

Rav Bakshi Doron in his Binyan Av (Vol. I #6) rules that if a prisoner is allowed to leave prison (for example- to attend a family wedding) he does not recite the bracha at all, because he has to go back to prison afterward. This is also the implied view of the Aruch haShulchan (219:6).

The Baal HaTanya in his Seder Birkos Ha-Nehenin (13:2), has a fascinating take on the issue. He adds that if he is imprisoned on a monetary matter where he was held in chains – he recites the blessing. He is referencing the aforementioned Tehillim (107:10) “being bound in affliction and iron.”

Rav Efrati, quoting Rav Elyashiv (Yisa Yoseph OC Vol. II #51), states that in today's prisons one does not recite gomel if there is no danger to life, but one should perhaps recite matir assurim. He recommends that one have in mind during birchas hashachar for this when one recites it in the morning blessings. In this situation, of course – everyone would agree that it is recited because of the grave danger to life that these hostages faced during their captivity.

In the Gemorah itself, the Baalei Tosfos point out that the order of the four that are listed is different from the order that is found in the Tehillim. The Baalei Tosfos answer that the Tehillim lists the more dangerous first and then goes on to the less danger. The Gemorah is listing whatever is most common. The Talmid Rabbeinu Yonah, however, has it as the opposite. Could it be that the Mogain Avrohom and the Ri Migash be arguing on this point – how we understand why the Gemorah switches the order?

The Bracha of Shehecheyanu As far as the third bracha of shehecheyanu, the Gemorah in Brachos 58b states: “Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: One who sees his friend after thirty days recites the ‘Shehecheyanu’ bracha.” Tosfos, the Rosh, and Rabbeinu Yonah all rule that one only recite this bracha when seeing a very close friend who you are very glad to see. These halachos are found in Shulchan Aruch OC Siman 225.

After 741 days of separation, the reunions between these hostages and their families will undoubtedly warrant this beautiful bracha of thanksgiving. Both the returning hostages and their family members recite shehecheyanu upon seeing each other, as this blessing expresses our gratitude to Hashem for allowing us to reach this joyous moment.

from: Orthodox Union <alerts@ounetwork.org>

date: Oct 12, 2025, 5:48 PM

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**Rabbi Moshe Hauer**

21 Tishrei, 5786 Sunday, October 12, 2025

“When Hashem returned the captives of Zion, we were like dreamers. Then our mouths were filled with laughter and our tongues with joyous song” (Tehillim 126:1–2).

Today we hope and pray to experience real joy and express our profound gratitude to G-d. We have incessantly hoped and prayed for the remaining hostages – the living and most of the dead – to return home to the embrace of their families and their people and for the day the heroic soldiers of Tzahal and their families can begin to anticipate a return to normalcy, togetherness, and security.

Yet we are not quite ready to fill our mouths with laughter. Copious tears continue to be shed for those who did not survive and for the unspeakable suffering of those who did, and we remain apprehensive and prayerful regarding the future; the long road of recovery for the affected individuals and families, the prospects of security for Israel and the region as Israel retreats and releases unrepentant terrorists, and the normalization of antisemitism on these shores.

We are no stranger to mixed feelings, as the Psalmist himself notes, “hazorim b'dima b'rina yiktzoru, those who plant with tears, joyfully will harvest.” We have the strength to endure the difficult and tearful periods only because we anticipate the joy to come, while when that joyful end arrives, we are mindful of the painful costs that produced it. We always seem to be living with a blend of tears and joy, b'dima b'rina. ...

from: Orthodox Union <alerts@ounetwork.org>

date: Oct 15, 2025

subject: **Baruch Dayan HaEmet:** EVP Rabbi Moshe Hauer, zt"l  
Levaya Info: OU Mourns the Passing of EVP Rabbi Moshe Hauer, zt"l  
With tears in our eyes and hearts breaking, we share the devastating news of the loss of our beloved brother, rabbi, partner, friend, and Executive Vice President Rabbi Moshe Hauer, zt"l.

Rabbi Hauer was a true talmid chacham, a master teacher and communicator, the voice of Torah to the Orthodox community and the voice of Orthodoxy to the world. He personified what it means to be a Torah Jew and took nothing more seriously than his role of sharing the joy of Jewish life with our community and beyond.

Rabbi Hauer's leadership was marked by unwavering dedication, deep compassion, and a vision rooted in faith in Hashem, integrity, and love for Klal Yisrael. Whether through his inspiring words, thoughtful counsel, powerful advocacy, or quiet acts of kindness, Rabbi Hauer uplifted those around him and made an impact on every person he encountered. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family. May they be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Yerushalayim.

At this difficult time, we ask that you join us in remembering Rabbi Hauer, zt"l, by continuing to embody the values he upheld and by committing ourselves to continuing the legacy of Torah, chesed, and unity that he championed so passionately.

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from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org>

to: ravfrand@torah.org

date: Oct 16, 2025, 11:38 AM

**By Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

**Parshas Bereishis**

**Which Type of Chessed is Preferable: Anonymous or Known?**

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion:

#1352 – Is It a Mitzva for a Man to Get Married? Good Shabbos!

The pasuk in Parshas Bereshis says: "And Hashem G-d made for Adam and his wife garments of skin, and he clothed them." (Bereshis 3:21). After the aveira (sin) of Adam and Chava, when they realized they were naked, the Ribono shel Olam made garments for them. The Gemara (Sotah 14a) interprets the mitzva of "Acharei Hashem Elokecha taylaychu" (You shall walk after the Hashem your G-d) (Devorim 13:5) as an imperative to emulate the attributes of the Ribono shel Olam: Just as the Ribono shel Olam clothes the naked, so too should you; just as the Ribono shel Olam visits the sick (as when He appeared to Avram in Elonei Mamrei after Avram's bris milah), so too should you; just as the Ribono shel Olam comforts the bereaved (Bereshis 25:11), so too should you; just as the Ribono shel Olam buried the dead (Devorim 34:6), so too, should you.

The Gemara then quotes a comment of Rav Simlai: The beginning of the Torah consists of gemilas chassadim (acts of kindness) and the end of Torah consists of gemilas chassadim. The Torah begins with the Ribono shel Olam's dressing the naked, and it ends with the Ribono shel Olam's burying the dead. The problem with this teaching of Rav Simlai is – what is he adding? We already see from the previous examples that the Torah begins with gemilas chassadim and ends with gemilas chassadim!

The sefer Mishmeres Elazar (by Rav Elazar Brach) suggests the following: Rav Simlai is not merely teaching that we need to emulate the Ribono shel Olam in what He does. We also need to emulate Him in how He does it. There is an inconsistency specifically in the two pesukim that Rav Simlai is referencing. When Hashem clothed Adam and Chava, the pasuk spells out who did it: "Va'ya'as Hashem Elokim l'adam u'l'ishto kosnos ohr..." The pasuk says exactly who did it. However, at the end of the Torah, the burial of Moshe Rabbeinu is left anonymous: "And He buried him in the valley." The Name of Hashem Elokim is not mentioned! Why the difference? Which is it? Should gemilas chassadim be performed in anonymity or with a name attached?

The Mishmeres Elazar explains that the Torah is not only teaching us to perform chessed. The Torah is teaching us how to perform chessed.

Sometimes (or perhaps, most of the time) it is important for chessed to be anonymous. A person is saved from embarrassment by not knowing who is performing this chessed for him. However, there are some situations in life, where it is important for the person to know who is performing the chessed. After the aveira of Adam and Chava, when they realized what they had done and felt rejected, such that their relationship with the Ribono shel Olam had perhaps ceased to exist, it was important for the Ribono shel Olam to make the point that it was Hashem Elokim who was coming to their rescue. "Even though you committed a terrible aveira for which you are going to need to pay a significant price, nevertheless, I still love you!" In such a situation, the correct way to perform the chessed is to not do it anonymously, but rather to let the source of the chessed be known, to make the point that the relationship has not been broken.

This is different from the situation in V'zos Habracha, where there is no point in publicizing who buried Moshe Rabbeinu. Therefore, the pasuk just anonymously says "He buried him in the valley."

The lesson is that we must not only practice chessed but we must learn how to practice chessed. Usually, it is best to keep our chessed anonymous. But at other times, it is preferable for the source of the chessed to become known. Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com  
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD  
dhoffman@torah.org This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Rav Frand © 2023 by Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/learn@torah.org>

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from: Aish.com Weekly Parsha <newsletterserver@aish.com>

date: Oct 16, 2025, 3:09 PM

subject: Advanced Parsha - Bereishit

Where Is Your Brother?

**What's Bothering Rashi?**

**by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek**

Bereishit (Genesis 1:1-6:8 )

We begin a new Torah reading cycle this week (immediately after Simchas Torah) and with it new opportunities to discover the wonders of God's Torah. We read about Cain killing his brother Abel, mankind's first homicide, which was the first fratricide. (This implies that all murder in history is in actuality fratricide since all men are brothers.)

Genesis 4:9

"And God said to Cain 'Where is Abel, your brother?' "

RASHI

Where is Abel, your brother? - RASHI: For the purpose of engaging him in calm conversation, so that he might repent and say, "I killed him and have sinned to You."

What would you ask on this comment?

Your Question:

QUESTIONING RASHI

A Question: Why the need for this comment? Why does Rashi assume that God "just wanted to make conversation"?

What's bothering him?

Your Answer:

WHAT IS BOTHERING RASHI?

An Answer: Certainly Rashi cannot accept the idea that God must ask Cain where his brother is. Hashem is Omniscient, meaning He is all-knowing; nothing is hidden from His perception. So why the need to ask of Abel's whereabouts - He surely knew the answer.

This is the reason Rashi offers a different explanation for God's question ? to engage Cain in conversation, so that maybe he'll have thoughts to do tesheva.

The explanation is clear and in and of itself presents no problem. But when we compare it to another Rashi-comment, we do have a problem.

See an earlier Rashi (3:9) on the verse:

"And Hashem called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?' "

We have the same question here. Certainly God knew Adam was hiding.

Why did He ask? Rashi says the following on that verse:

Where are you? - Rashi: He (God) knew where he was. It was only to engage him in conversation so that he would not be too bewildered to respond if He were to punish him suddenly. So likewise regarding Cain, He said to him "Where is your brother, Abel?" So, too, in the case of Bilaam (Numbers 22:9) [He said] "Who are these men with you?" to engage them in conversation.

Rashi cites the case of Bilaam in Numbers 22:9, who was asked by Balak, the king of Moav, to curse the Jewish People. He sent a delegation to Bilaam for this purpose. When the men came, God asks Bilaam: "Who are these men with you?"

Again we have a case where Hashem asks a question, the answer of which he already knew. Rashi there comments:

Who are these men with you? - Rashi: [God gave him a chance] to err. He (Bilaam) could assume (because of God's question) that all is not known to Him.

#### QUESTIONING RASHI

The question is obvious. Here in Numbers, Rashi says the purpose of God's question was to mislead Bilaam. Whereas in our Parsha, Rashi says it was only "to engage him in conversation." We would also ask: Why was Cain dealt kindly by God and encouraged to repent, while Bilaam was "lead to err" by God?

Can you think of an answer?

Your Answer:

#### UNDERSTANDING RASHI

An Answer: The commentaries on Rashi explain that in all cases Rashi cites the purpose of God's question was "to engage the person in conversation" and certainly not to obtain information that God needed. So both in the cases of Cain and Bilaam, the purpose of God's question was to start a conversation. But the purpose of these two conversations was different. In Cain's case it was to allow him to do teshuva while in Bilaam's case it was to cause him to err.

Of course we still have the question: Why the opposite purposes of God's questions, one to lead to teshuva and one to lead to sin?

#### A POSSIBLE ANSWER

Cain had in fact sinned, he had already killed his brother, so there was need to do teshuva. But Bilaam had not yet sinned so there was no need to do teshuva, yet. But we must ask: Why did God want him to err and curse the Jews?

The answer, I think, is that cursing the Jews was in no way harmful, because God had other plans. God in fact wanted this curse to take place ? or at least Bilaam's attempt to curse. This was to show Israel and the world how Hashem protects His People. God wanted Bilaam to err to have this historical incident take place. It would be a lesson for all time - a lesson as to how the plans of Israel's enemies will be stymied by their Protector, Hashem. Shabbat Shalom, Avigdor Bonchek

from: **Ira Zlotowitz** <Iraz@klalgovoah.org> date: Oct 16, 2025, 7:03 PM  
subject: Tidbits • Parashas Bereishis 5786 in memory of Rav Meir Zlotowitz zt"l

Parashas Bereishis • October 18th • 26 Tishrei 5786

This week is Shabbos Mevorchim Chodesh MarCheshvan. Rosh Chodesh is next Wednesday & Thursday, October 22nd-23rd. The molad is early Wednesday morning at 12:54 AM and 8 chalakim.

There is no Yom Kippur Katan observed for this Rosh Chodesh as Yom Kippur was previously observed this month.

With Parashas Bereishis we begin a new cycle of Shenayim Mikra v'Echad Targum, the mitzvah to read the Parashah twice, along with the Targum Onkelos once. The Gemara (Berachos 8) says the reward for this mitzvah is

arichas yamim (longevity). Can one fulfill the obligation to read Targum by reading an alternate translation, such as English? Consult your Rav.

We began saying Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid haGesheim on Shemini Atzeres. One who said Morid Hatal (i.e., Nusach Sefard) instead, does not need to repeat Shemoneh Esrei (the same applies if one is unsure if he said one or the other). For Nusach Ashkenaz (whose adherents do not otherwise say Morid Hatal), the omission of Mashiv HaRuach requires repeating Shemoneh Esrei. One who realizes his error before beginning Atah Kadosh may immediately say "Mashiv HaRuach..." and continue with Atah Kadosh etc. If he realizes his error after beginning Atah Kadosh, he must return to the beginning of Shemoneh Esrei. If one is unsure if he added Mashiv HaRuach, for the first 90 tefillos it is assumed that he did not say Mashiv HaRuach, as he is not yet accustomed to saying it (the 90th tefillah will be Shacharis on Tuesday, November 11th). However, one who repeated the phrase "Mechayei Meisim Atah Rav L'hoshia, Mashiv HaRuach u'Morid Hageshem" 90 times can be halachically presumed to be accustomed to saying it; he would then not need to repeat Shemoneh Esrei in case of uncertainty.

One should remember to fulfill any Yizkor tzedakah pledges.

The first opportunity for Kiddush Levana is Motzaei Shabbos, Parshas Noach, October 25th. The final opportunity is Tuesday night, November 4th. Daf Yomi - Shabbos: Bavli: Zevachim 34 • Yerushalmi: Shekalim 56. Siyum this Thursday; mazal tov! Yoma begins next • Mishnah Yomis: Menachos 13:5-6. Siyum this Tuesday; mazal tov! Chulin begins next • Oraysa (coming week): Chagiga 13b-15b • Kitzur Shulchan Aruch: 2:5-3:1. New cycle has just begun. Finish the entire Kitzur Shulchan Aruch in one year!

[artscroll.com/kitzurayomi](http://artscroll.com/kitzurayomi)

Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rebbe to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids today, make sure to connect with them as well!

The series of fast days of BeHaB begins on Monday, October 27th.

BEREISHIS: The Seven Days of Creation: Day 1 - the world, starting with light (day & night) • Day 2 - the sky, separation of waters • Day 3 - earth and seas, vegetation and seeds • Day 4 - sun, moon and stars • Day 5 - fish and birds • Day 6 - beasts of the earth, Adam and Chavah (Kayin and Hevel were born on this day as well) • Day 7 - blessed and holy rest • Adam and Chavah are placed in Gan Eden • The Tree of Knowledge is forbidden to them • The serpent entices Chavah to eat of the Tree of Knowledge • The serpent, Chavah, and Adam are cursed • Adam and Chavah are expelled from the garden • Kayin and Hevel offer sacrifices; only Hevel's is accepted • Kayin kills Hevel • Hashem warns Kayin about the nature of the evil inclination • Generations later, Lemech kills Kayin • Sheis is born • Ten generations from Adam to Noah • Hashem 'regrets' creating man and resolves to obliterate mankind • Noah found favor in Hashem's Eyes.

Haftarah: (Yeshaya 42:5-43:10) The Parashah discusses the creation of the world and man. This universe is recreated and sustained by Hashem each day. Despite the challenges and shortcomings of man, Hashem continuously supports us and guides us to return to the proper path.

Parashas Bereishis: 146 Pesukim • 1 Obligation

1. **Peru U'revu** - A man must marry and bear a son and a daughter.

וַיָּקָם קַיִן אֶל־הָקֵל אָחִיו הֵבֶל וַיַּחַדּוּהוּ "Kayin rose against his brother Hevel, and he killed him" (Bereishis 4:8)

We know everything that occurs is just; that being the case, why did Hevel deserve to be killed by his own brother? Rav Nachum Partzovitz zt"l, quoted by Rav Elya Baruch Finkel zt"l, explains that from the pasuk it is clear that Kayin looked obviously distressed when Hashem did not accept his korban. It is reasonable to assume that Hevel saw Kayin's disappointment, yet it does not seem that Hevel attempted to comfort his brother in any way. This lack of empathy for his brother's distress made Hevel deserving of death at his brother's hand!

Chazal say, "Yesh koneh olamo besha'ah achas," literally translated as

"Some acquire their portion in the World [to Come] in one moment."

However, the Ba'alai Mussar explain that an alternate translation of "sha'ah" is "turn to attend to". Thus, explaining the phrase, "Some acquire their world through turning one's head once to attend to someone", by being mindful of

a fellow's need even just once. If Hevel had considered his brother's pain, he may have "acquired his world" and could have been spared his brother's rage.

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from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>

date: Oct 16, 2025, 11:44 AM

### **Eretz Yisrael: The Divine Exception to the Natural Order**

**Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky**

There is perhaps no Rashi more famous than the first one in Chumash: Rebbe Yitzchak said: The Torah should have commenced with the verse (Shemos 12:2) "This month shall be unto you the first of the months" which is the first commandment given to Israel. What is the reason, then, that it commences with the account of Creation? Because of the thought expressed in the text (Tehillim 111:6) "He declared to His people the strength of His works (i.e. He gave an account of the work of Creation), in order that He might give them the heritage of the nations." For should the peoples of the world say to Israel, "You are robbers, because you took by force the lands of the seven nations of Canaan", Israel may reply to them, "All the earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it and gave it to whom He pleased. When He willed, He gave it to them, and when He willed, He took it from them and gave it to us" (Bereishis 1:1). There are many difficulties in understanding this Rashi. While it is surely important to affirm that Eretz Yisrael belongs to the Jews, it really is striking that this should be the very beginning of the Chumash. Secondly, while we believe this to be the case, we have a hard time convincing the nations of the world that this is so; it is very hard to take the Chumash with the Rashi, bring it to the nations, and point a finger and say, "here, you see it says it belongs to us!" So, what's the point of it? They will never be convinced by a verse of Chumash and Rashi, while we don't need to be convinced. So, who is it written for?

We also need to understand Rashi in a way that this is not telling us something that we would consider as 'cutting a corner'; i.e. that Hashem is doing something that is 'technically correct' but not really appropriate. After all, don't we all feel that things that are rightfully people's should be theirs, even if there is legal recourse to expropriate it? So, what is being stated?

Let us contemplate Rashi's question, when he asks that the Torah should start with 'HaChodesh hazeh lachem'. This refers to the fact that the world really consists of two strata. There is a natural world where there is a process as to how change takes place; it's true physically, economically, and politically. That natural world is embedded in Bereishis. It means Hashem created a world that has a natural mechanism and, as such, is "tov maod - very good", as-is. The world functioning in its natural process and organization is something Hashem wants.

But there is a second strata on top of that. Hashem instructed the Jewish people with a set of laws, obligations, and prohibitions that they must keep. This is a whole new set of behaviors coming from a higher order; they do not emanate from the realities of our world. The basic Noachide laws, on the other hand, emanate from and apply to the world around us. This is why they 'make sense' to us.

Torah, therefore, being the document of divine commandments, emanating from beyond our tangible universe, should start with the halachos, as expressed in 'HaChodesh hazeh lachem'. The natural world and its inherent morality doesn't need a 'Torah' to express it. This is the essence of Rashi's question.

Rashi's answer is that even in the so-called natural world, there is one point that does not fit into the natural process; the natural laws of economics, society, politics, do not govern it, as such. When Chazal tell us that every country in the world has an angel that is in charge of it except for Eretz Yisroel (see Rabbeinu Bachya, Devarim 31:15), it refers to this point. It means that in all the countries in the world the natural order dominates, while the Divine hand is in the background. Eretz Yisroel is the exception.

Therefore, in the very act of creation wherein Hashem set up the natural order which includes nations having homelands and geographical locations that they exist in, an exception was built in. Eretz Yisroel is just like the Beis Hamikdash which was able to accommodate many more people than its

physical area could accommodate (Avos 5:5); this area was 'extraterritorial', i.e. it belonged to a different order and was not part of physical nature.

This means that Israel's lands are not allocated merely by historical record, but rather by Divine will, as generated by righteous conduct. A rather famous example of this was when the Kushites came to live in Israel and continued their quasi-idol worship that they had gotten used to. Punishment came swiftly, and they desperately sent to the Jews asking them what's appropriate to worship and not to worship in Israel (Melachim 2, 17:25). Eretz Yisrael is a country that is much more in tune with the spiritual world, and the Jewish nation's performance is what dictates its hold on it.

Thus, the first passuk is telling us that Eretz Yisrael belongs to no one; it belongs to Hashem. It is not, and never was, part of the natural order. Those who fulfill His will have it, and if they cease to do so, they lose it. This is true about the nations of the world - when they sinned excessively, they lost Eretz Yisrael. But it also means that we, Klal Yisroel, maintain possession of it or lose it based on merit.

In effect, this passage is telling us that Hashem created a world to run naturally, but the creator leaves His mark in one place. Like an artist who paints a beautiful painting of some scene or other, and signs his name in the corner, so too Hashem has 'painted' a picture of a natural world, but in a corner his name is 'signed'. That corner is Eretz Yisroel. Nations lived there and were evicted from there based on their performance. This passage is not here to convince the nations of the world that we're right. It is there to teach us that the reason why we have Eretz Yisroel is because someone else did not deserve it, and we have it only because we deserved it.

This places the great burden on us to do what it takes to keep this land which is, in essence, Hashem's land.

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from: Torah Musings <newsletter@torahmusings.com>

date: Oct 16, 2025, 11:02 AM

subject: Torah Musings Daily Digest for 10/16/2025

### **Top Five: Right and Wrong Ways to Use Freewill by R. Gidon Rothstein**

Parshat Bereshit

For the past seven years (time flies!), we have been studying parsha together. Each year, I selected one or a few commentators to study, to see views of the weekly portion. As I start review and collation, to see what lessons the project as a whole teaches, this year, I'm going to select five comments that seem the cream of an often very good crop.

I will select the five, present them much as I did originally, and check for commonalities. At the end of each week, I'll also list the other comments we have studied in past years.

Nature's Freewill

In Bereshit 1:11, Rashi says God commanded the Earth to grow trees whose bark tasted the same as the fruit. The Earth did not do so, says Rashi, evidenced by verse twelve's speaking of its bringing forth "trees that made fruit," not the tree itself being the fruit. Therefore, says Rashi, when Man was cursed for his sin, the Earth was also judged for its sin.

The first surprising idea is that the earth could contravene Hashem's commands, or fulfill them badly. It implies some freewill, because otherwise how did it go awry? In addition, of course, punishment addresses those who could have done differently. Rashi does not elaborate, so we cannot know how far he would have taken this, but it gives a sense of the cosmos we moderns overconfidently reject.

The Right Time to Eat Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge

The Torah introduces the Tree of Knowledge in 2:9, and Chatam Sofer in Torat Moshe knows a Midrash (I didn't find it) that assumes Adam and Chavah would have been allowed to eat from the Tree that first Shabbat. They were punished for eating it one day early, not for the fact of eating it. Part of his logic is his certainty God would not create a Tree we are permanently not allowed to enjoy. To explain why Shabbat would have been the time, he accepts Ramban's idea that the tree infused people with freewill as well as desire. Before, humans served God as a matter of instinct, desired only God's service.

Without desire or evil inclination, Chatam Sofer echoes what we just said, there is no place for reward or punishment. Freewill serves some people poorly, whose character tends to the physical and animalistic, increasing the likelihood of poor choices. On Shabbat, he says, the neshamah yeterah, the “extra” part to people’s souls gives them a greater ability to resist temptation

Had they first eaten of the Tree on Shabbat, the extra soul would have added a push to do well, shaping their freewill to always lean to the good. The nachash tricked them into partaking early, the Midrash said, teaching Chatam Sofer our troubles started with a premature exposure to desire and freewill. With us bearing the consequences forever.

#### Human Sexual Ethics Affects the Natural World

When God commands Adam to eat all the fruit of the Garden other than the Tree, 2;16-17, Meshech Hochmah reminds us of Sanhedrin 56b, where the Talmud finds a source or hint to all seven Noahide laws. Among those inferences, the Gemara reads the word lemor—Gd commanded lemor, a word we translate as “saying”—to indicate arayot, wrongful sexuality, including adultery.

To justify the connection, it cites Yirmiyahu 3;1, which starts with lemor and complains about the Jewish people’s marital infidelity (in the metaphor of the Jewish people as wife to Gd), verse two saying they had defiled the Land. Meshech Hochmah calls our attention to Sifra Kedoshim 3;7;3-4, which says their sins depressed the yield of the fruits, an idea R. Yehudah finds in Yirmiyahu itself.

To Meshech Hochmah, the lemor in Bereshit warned Adam to be careful about arayot so that he would be able to eat the fruit of the Garden (he also cites a Yerushalmi and Midrashim about how the crops went bad during the generation of the Flood). He singles out adultery (as did Yirmiyahu) because it is the form of sexual impropriety mentioned explicitly in this chapter in Bereshit, verse 24.

I think for Meshech Hochmah, the idea fits with his next comment, that Gd’s words achol tochel, you shall surely eat, commanded Adam to enjoy the natural world where permitted. Meshech Hochmah seems to view the original presentation of sexual ethics as much as information as a command: this is how the world works, I (God) want and expect you humans to enjoy the world, so stay away from arayot, especially adultery.

Meshech Hochmah inserts a metaphysical claim into a non-mystical context: how we behave in marriage (as societies, Sifra in Kedoshim said, not each individual) impacts crop yields.

#### Man’s Instinct to Recognize and Thank God

The Kayin and Hevel story starts with Kayin’s decision to offer a sacrifice to God, 4;3. Malbim thinks this shows an innate human tendency to know of, to want to thank God. To explain the flaws in his offering, reasons for God to reject it, Malbim spots four differences from Hevel’s that show broader issues with Kayin’s sense of God.

First, he made the offering miketz yamim, at the end of a period of time (the growing season, Malbim thinks), an indication he thought God was one of many factors helping nature along, only “needed” to be thanked once the harvest was done.

Hevel brought mi-bechorot, from the first of his animals, a way to signify his belief God is the First Cause of everything, the reason later Jewish history also had people give firsts, of people, animals, and produce.

#### Three More Problems with Kayin’s Offering

Kayin also gave inferior produce, “of the fruits of the earth,” nothing special, where Hevel’s offering was mechelvehien, according to Onkelos mishamnehon, from the fattest of them. Malbim reads the verse to tell us Kayin thought God needed the offering in some sense, the reason he brought it la-Shem, to God, where Hevel knew better. Finally, the verse says Hevel hevi gam hu, brought he also, a phrasing Malbim thinks shows Hevel understood the essence of the sacrifice lies in the intention and experience of the one offering it.

Hevel offered himself and his submission, where Kayin brought only the physical produce, without any internal reaction or development to accompany the sacrifice.

His textual inferences show how Hevel’s sacrifice was better than Kayin’s, his knowing God is the First Cause of everything, knowing to give the best of what he had, for no need of God’s, to express his knowledge of and submission to God.

#### Regret Is Actually Giving Another Chance

In Bereshit 6;6, the Torah describes God as va-yinachem, usually thought of as regret. HaKetav VeHaKabbalah takes us in another direction, starting with Hoshe’a 11;8, the phrase yachad nichmeru nechumai, My rachamim, which I translate as willingness to give another chance, was aroused. When Yonah 3;8 says the people of Nineveh hoped God might be nicham, Targum Yonatan again has yitrachem, will be willing to give them another chance. He therefore argues this verse must be read in the context of the one three earlier, where Hashem had said He would give people a hundred and twenty years to mend their ways, despite already deserving destruction. The verse there says vayinachem...ki asah, which we usually read to mean God was nicham that He had created man, where R. Mecklenburg suggests we ought to use ki in another of its meanings, for He had created them.

Creators want their creations to succeed; God’s having created Man was why He gave them more time. God was nicham, gave time to improve, because He had created them.

#### People Fail To Take the Opportunity

The end of this verse, which seems to say Hashem was sad at heart, and the next, where God does decide to destroy humanity, ki nichamti ki asitim, pose problems for R. Mecklenburg’s reading. With almost the same words, this verse more clearly means something like “for I regret that I made them.” To solve his problem, he fastens on the indeterminacy of libo, his heart, not God’s, the people, how they reacted to the extra time. Instead of improving, they let their evil spread to their hearts. Va-yit’atzev doesn’t mean became sad, he is saying, it means let the sadness/evil affect their innermost beings. It left no recourse but destruction, Hashem says in the next verse. To cope with the pesky ki nichamti ki asitim, R. Mecklenburg argues this ki uses yet another meaning of the word, despite. Despite having given them time, for I created them, they leave Me no choice.

Sharply different than we are used to, built with alternate readings of nichum, based on Targum Yonatan in two places, and three meanings of the word ki, depending on context. Grammatical insights that showed HaKetav VeHaKabbalah a way to turn regret into length to punish, an example of God’s sense of connection with humanity, His creation.

#### Themes of the Five

These were not the only interesting comments we saw over the years (I had three good candidates from Rashi, because Rashi is just the best!), but they are five good ones. And, as it happens, they all deal with freewill and what we do with it.

Nature might have had freewill, used it poorly, and gotten punished. People got freewill before they were ready for it, part of the reason its harder for us to conquer ourselves than it was supposed to be. Once we had it, Hashem wants us to know that our sexual ethics affect the earth’s plenty, and that we can and should use this freewill to recognize the correct way to serve God, with the truest appreciation of God’s nature and how to relate to Him. When it all went wrong, God gave us another chance, a hundred and twenty years we wasted, “forcing” Hashem to bring the Flood.

Still, we have freewill, and can do wonders with it, if we use it right.

Here are the other comments I did not again review, but will include in next year’s search for overarching themes:

Ramban, Introduction Rashi, Bereshit 1;1 Onkelos Bereshit 1;1 on Elokim Kli Yakar, Bereshit 1;1 Meshech Hochmah Bereshit 1;5 Vilna Gaon, Bereshit, 1;14 Rashi, Bereshit 2;7 Onkelos Bereshit 2;7 Or HaChayyim Bereshit, 3;1 Rashi, Bereshit 3;5 R. David Zvi Hoffmann, Bereshit 3;6 Rashi, Bereshit, 3;22 Rashi, Bereshit 4;2 Meshech Hochmah Bereshit 4; 3-5 Sforno Bereshit 4;6 Ha’amek Davar, Bereshit 4;7 R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, 5;1 Onkelos 5;3 Ibn Ezra, Bereshit, 5;24 Rashi, Bereshit, 5;24

from: **OU Kosher** <noreply@ounetwork.org>  
date: Oct 16, 2025, 8:03 AM

QUESTION: What is the mitzvah of “Shnayim Mikra V’echad Targum”? Who is obligated in this mitzvah? Is it an absolute obligation?

ANSWER: Every Shabbos, a new parasha (portion) of the Torah is read in public by a baal koreh (the one who reads the Torah aloud), and the members of the congregation are obligated to listen to this reading. In addition, the Gemara (Berachos 8a) relates that every individual has a personal obligation to privately read “Shenayim Mikrah” (the Torah portion twice) and “Echad Targum” (the translation of Onkelos or the commentary of Rashi one time) each and every week. This mitzvah is recorded as halacha in Shulchan Aruch (OC 285:1). The purpose of reading the Targum is to understand the Torah reading. This mitzvah is part of the general obligation of learning Torah, and therefore only men are obligated. Boys below the age of Bar Mitzvah should also be taught to review the parasha because of the mitzvah of chinuch. Teshuvos V’hanhagos (1:261) writes that since the mitzvah is not only to read the Torah, but to understand it as well, the mitzvah of chinuch only begins when a boy is old enough to comprehend what he is reading. Igros Moshe (OC 5:17) writes that reviewing the parasha each week Shnayim Mikra V’echad Targum is a Rabbinic obligation which cannot be absolved by studying other areas of Torah instead.

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Bereshit: The Two Stories of Creation

Rabbi Menachem Leibtag

*This shiur provided courtesy of [The Tanach Study Center](#) In memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag*

How many stories of Creation are there in Parshat Breishit, ONE or TWO?

Although this question is often discussed more by Bible critics than yeshiva students, its resolution may carry 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 /1:1-> 2:3
- SECTION II - MAN IN GAN EDEN / 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);
- Continues with "VA'YAR ELOKIM... KI TOV" (see 1:4,10,12,18,21,31);
- Concludes with "VAYHI EREV VAYHI BOKER, YOM..." (see 1:5,8,13,19,23,31).

In fact, one could construct a 'blank form' that would fit just about any day of Creation, that would look something like this:

"va'yomer Elokim" - And God said... \_\_\_\_\_

[followed by some act of Creation.]

"va'yhi chen" - And so it was

[often followed by some naming process: like "va'yikra.Elokim... , or some divine 'comment']

"va'yar Elokim... ki tov" - And God saw it was good

"va'yhi erav va'yhi boker, yom \_\_#\_\_"

Even though certain days may vary from this basic format, certainly each day begins with the phrase "va'yomer Elokim..."

This observation allows us to identify the first two psukim of this unit (1:1-2) as its header, for Day One must begin with the first "va'yomer Elokim" (in the third pasuk/ see 1:3 and Rashi on the meaning of the word "Breishit" in his interpretation to 1:1).

We reach a similar conclusion in regard to the 'Seventh Day' (i.e. 2:1-3). Since these psukim describe 'Day Seven', they must be part of this overall Story of

Creation; yet because they begin with "va'yichulu..." - and not with "va'yomer Elokim" - they form the conclusion of this unit.

To verify this, note the beautiful parallel between these two 'bookends' (i.e. 1:1-2 and 2:1-3, noting the phrase "shamayim v'aretz" and the verb "bara"!), and how Day Seven 'concludes' that which was introduced in 1:1.

This introduction and conclusion define for us the primary topic of this entire unit - - "briyat ha'shamayim v'ha'aretz" - God's Creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This topic is presented through a daily progression of God's creations that span over six days.

With this general framework defined, we can now begin our analysis of the progression of Creation from one day to the next. We will pay attention to how each day either follows, or slightly varies from the standard format discussed above. [For example, the fact that day two does not include the phrase "va'yar Elokim ki tov" should be significant.]

A Daily "Chiddush"

As we mentioned above, within this unit, the phrase "va'yomer Elokim" begins each day, and is always followed by an act God's Creation - or at least some type of "chidush" [i.e. something new, that didn't exist the day before].

After the execution each act of Creation, we may find 'peripheral' comments such as God giving names or duties to what He just created. However, we will show how the next "chidush" of Creation doesn't take place without an additional "va'yomer Elokim"!

We should also point out that in Days Three and Six we find our basic form repeated twice, i.e. the phrase "va'yomer Elokim" appears twice on each of these days, and each time followed by a distinct act of Creation, followed by the evaluation of - "va'yar Elokim ki tov". This suggests that each of these days will contain two acts of Creation. [The deeper meaning of this will be discussed as we continue.]

Therefore, our analysis begins by identifying what was the precise "chidush" of each day. Then, we will discuss the 'peripheral comments' of each day, showing how they relate to that "chidush".

Day One (1:3- 5)

God's first act of creation (i.e. what follows the first "va'yomer Elokim") was making "OR" - or what we call 'light'.

This creation is followed by a 'naming process' where God calls the light - 'Day', and the darkness (the lack of light) is called 'Night'.

Day Two (1:6-8)

God makes the "rakiya" - whose function is to divide between the 'water above' and the 'water below'.

Then, God names these 'waters above' - "shamayim" [Heavens]. Note that the 'waters below' are not named until Day Three. Note as well that this is only time when God's creation is not followed by the phrase "va'yar Elokim ki tov". Hence, it appears that something on this day is either 'not so good' or at least incomplete. [We'll return to this observation later in the shiur.]

Day Three (1:9-12)

- Stage One: (i.e. the first "va'yomer Elokim").
  - God makes the "yabasha" [dry land].
  - Then God names this 'dry land' - ARETZ [Earth?] and the remaining "mayim" - YAMIM [Seas].
  - Followed by God's positive evaluation: "va'yar Elokim ki tov"
- Stage Two (i.e. the second "va'yomer Elokim" / 1:11-12)
  - God creates what we call 'vegetation', i.e. all the various species of vegetables and fruit trees. Note how these psukim emphasize precisely what makes the 'plant kingdom' unique - i.e. how these species contain seeds that will produce the next generation - e.g. "esev mazria zera" and "etz pri oseh pri".

*Note that God no longer gives 'names' to what He created. However, we still find the standard positive evaluation "va'yar Elokim ki tov". [You were probably aware that "ki tov" is mentioned twice in Day Three, but you probably weren't aware that it was because it contains two "va'yomer Elokim's"!]*

A Quantum Leap

Note the 'quantum leap' that takes place in stage Two on Day Three. Up until Stage Two, everything that God had created was 'inanimate' (non-living). From this point on, living things are created. [Keep this in mind, as we will uncover a similar 'quantum leap' when we discuss the progression from Stage One to Two in Day Six!, i.e. when we jump from animal to man.]

This may explain why Stage One of Day Three is the last time that we find God giving names. It seems as though God gave names only to His 'non-living' creations.

*[In chapter two, we will see how it becomes man's job to give names to other living things (see 2:19), and maybe even to God Himself! (see 4:26)!]*

Furthermore, note the 'separation process' that emerges as God created "shamayim v'aretz". In the introduction, we find "mayim" - with "ruach Elokim" [God's spirit?] hovering over it (see 1:2). Then, in Day Two, God takes this "mayim" 'solution' and separates it ["va'yavdel"] between the "mayim" 'above' and 'below' the "rakiya". The 'water above' becomes "SHAMAYIM", but the 'water below' needs further separation, which only takes place on Day Three - when the remaining 'solution' separates between the "ARETZ" [Land] and the "YAMIM" [Seas].

Technically speaking, this is how God created "shamayim v'aretz". [The creation of the remaining 'v'kol tzvaam' - and all their hosts (see 2:1) - takes place from this point and onward.]

Day Four (1:14-19)

God creates the "meorot", i.e. the sun, moon and stars.

This time however, note how God explains the function of His new creations (instead of giving names). For example, "va'hayu l'otot u'moadim" - and they shall be for signs and appointed times; and later - "l'ha'ir al ha'aretz" - to give light on the land (see 1:14-15). And finally: "l'mshol ba'yom u'va'layala" - to rule over day and night (1:18). [Note as well how this day relates back to Day One.]

Day Five (1:20-23)

On this day, we find yet another 'quantum leap', as God begins His creation of the 'animal kingdom' (i.e. in contrast to the 'vegetation' created on day three). God creates all living things that creep in the water or fly in the sky (i.e. fish and fowl).

Even though this day follows the standard 'form' (discussed above), we do find two very important additions.

1. The verb "bara" is used to describe how God creates this animal kingdom: "va'yivrah Elokim et ha'taninim ha'gedolim v'et kol nefesh ha'chaya..." (1:21). Note how this is the first usage of this verb since the first pasuk of "breishit bara..." (1:1)! The Torah's use of the verb "bara" specifically at this point may reflect this 'quantum leap' to the animal kingdom in this critical stage of the Creation.
2. A 'blessing' is given (for the first time) to these fish and fowl after their creation: "va'yvarech otam Elokim laymor - pru u'rvu..." - that they should be fruitful and multiply and fill the seas and skies. Note how this blessing relates to the very essence of the difference between the 'plant kingdom' and the 'animal kingdom'. Whereas self produced seeds allow vegetation to reproduce itself, the animal kingdom requires mating for reproduction to take place, and hence the need for God's blessing of "pru u'rvu" to keep each species alive.

Day Six (1:24-31)

Here again, like in Day Three, we find two stages of Creation, each beginning with the phrase "va'yomer Elokim, with yet another 'quantum leap' in between:

- Stage One (1:24-25)

God creates the living things that roam on the land, i.e. the animals. There is really nothing special about this stage, other than the fact that God found it necessary to create them 'independently' on the first stage of Day Six, instead of including them with His creation of the rest of the of the animal kingdom (i.e. with the fish and the fowl) in Day Five.

In fact, we find an interesting parallel between both days that contain two stages (i.e. days Three and Six). Just as Stage One of Day Three (separating the Earth from the 'water below') completed a process that God had begun in Day Two, so too Stage One of Day Six (the animals) completed a process that God began in Day Five!

- Stage Two (1:26-31)

God creates MAN - "btzelem Elokim"!

Note how many special words and phrases (many of which we encountered before) accompany God's creation of man:

First of all, we find once again the use of the verb "bara" to describe this act of creation, suggesting that the progression from animal to man may be considered no less a 'quantum leap' than the progression from vegetation to animal.

Secondly, God appears to 'consult' with others (even though it is not clear who they are) before creating man ("naaseh adam b'tzalmeinu...").

Here again, we find not only an act of creation, but also a 'statement the purpose' for this creation - i.e. to be master over all of God's earlier creations:

*"v'yirdu b'dgat ha'yam u'b'of ha'shamayim..." - Be fruitful and multiply and be master over the fish of the seas and the fowl in the heavens and the animals and all the land, and everything that creeps on the land." (see 1:26).*

Thus, it appears that man is not only God's last Creation, but also His most sophisticated creation, responsible to rule over all other creations 'below the heavens'.

This explains we find yet another blessing (following this act of creation / similar to the blessing on Day Five). This blessing to man includes not only fertility, but also relates to his potential to exert dominion over all that Elokim had created.

[*"pru u'rvu v'kivshuha, u'rdu b'dgat ha'yam..."* / see 1:28, compare with 1:26)

It should be noted that we find one final section, that also begins with the phrase "va'yomer Elokim" (see 1:29), but quite different than all the earlier ones, as this statement does not introduce an act of Creation, but rather the administration of food. In a nutshell, in these psukim God allows the animal kingdom to consume the plant kingdom. The green grass is given for the animals (to graze upon), while man receives the 'added privilege' of eating the fruit of the trees (see 1:29-30).

Something Special

As you surely must have realized, all of these 'variances' from the 'standard format' in regard to God's creation of man emphasize that there must be something very special about man's creation, and hence his purpose. But this should not surprise us, for that is precisely what we should expect from a book of prophecy, a divine message to man to help him understand his relationship with God, and the purpose for his existence.

All of these special points about man's creation should be important, but before we discuss their significance, we must take into consideration one more observation concerning the progression of Creation during these six days.

A Parallel Structure

Let's summarize our conclusions thus far concerning what was created on each day (and each statement of "va'yomer Elokim..."):

| 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                              |
|      | Man b'tzelem Elokim blessed by God to dominate   |
| VI   | 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, we find a rather amazing parallel:

| DAYS 1-3               | DAYS 4-6                           |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| I. LIGHT               | IV. LIGHTS in the heavens          |
| II. RAKIYA - dividing: | V. Living things: Birds in the     |
| SHAMAYIM (above)       | 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 |

that from Day Four and onward, God not only creates, but He also states the purpose of His creations.

It also shows how the last three days 'fill in' the potential for what God created in the first three days. Basically, from day four and onward, nature 'goes into motion', as we find 'movement' both in the Heavens above and in the Earth below.

In summary, when these six days are complete, what we call 'nature' has gone into motion.

#### Divine Evolution

If we understand the phrase "tohu va'vahu" in the introductory section (see 1:2) as total chaos, then from this primordial state - six days later, 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 that guarantees its survival, i.e. its ability to reproduce:

1. plants: "esev mazria zera" - seed-bearing vegetation "etz pri oseph pri" - fruit-bearing trees (1:11-12)
2. fish and fowl: "pru urvu" - be fruitful & multiply (1:22)
3. 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.

In this manner, PEREK ALEPH describes God's creation of nature, i.e. the entire material universe and its phenomena.

Even though 'nature' itself remains dynamic, with living things constantly changing and reproducing, its basic framework remains constant - for after "va'yachulu" (2:1), nothing 'new' will be created, and certainly, nothing more advanced or sophisticated as man.

This established, we must now ask ourselves the more fundamental question, which is - what can we learn from the unique manner by which the Torah tells over the story of Creation? Is it recorded for the sake of our curiosity, simply to let us know 'how it all happened' - or does it carry a prophetic message - for any human being contemplating the purpose of the world that surrounds him! One God, or Many?

Certainly, one primary message that emerges from this presentation is that the creation of nature, with all its complexities and wonders, was a willful act of GOD. Hence, by keeping Shabbat, resting on the seventh day, as God did, we assert our belief that God is the power that created nature (and continues to oversee it).

This analysis can also help us appreciate why the Torah uses the name -Elokim - to describe God 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 can explain 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 understanding can also help us appreciate the Torah's use of the verb "bara" in PEREK ALEPH. Note how the THREE active uses of the verb "bara" in PEREK ALEPH reflect each level of sophistication in Creation, i.e. "tzomeyach" [plant kingdom], "chai" [animal kingdom] and "m'daber" [man]. This also reflects the three 'quantum leaps' that we discussed in the evolutionary development of nature during these six days.

#### Step One - 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 Two - 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 Three - 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 constantly encounters a 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. As man cannot avoid nature, 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. But how does this relate to man himself?

Man - In Perek Aleph

In Perek Aleph, man emerges not only as the climax of the creation process, but also as its MASTER:

*"And God blessed man saying: Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and MASTER it, and RULE the fish of the sea, and the birds in the sky, and the living things that creep on the earth..." (1:28).*

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 in its description of God's 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.]

In other words, man's creation in a separate stage of Day Six, and the use of the verb "bara", and his special blessing etc. all come to impress upon man that he is indeed a 'quantum leap' above all other creations. He should not view himself as just the most sophisticated animal of the universe, but rather as a Godly creation. Perek Aleph teaches man to recognize that his very nature to dominate all other living things is also an act of God's creation.

However, man must also ask himself, "Towards what purpose?" Did God simply create man, or does He continue to have a relationship with His creation? Does the fate of mankind remain in God's control; does there remain a connection between man's deeds and God's "hashgacha" (providence) over him?

The answer to this question begins in PEREK BET - the story of Gan Eden, and will continue through the rest of Chumash!

Perek Bet - Man in Gan Eden (2:4-3:24)

PEREK BET presents what appears to be conflicting account of the story of Creation. As your review chapter two, note how:

- Nothing can grow before God creates man (see 2:5), therefore:
- God creates man FIRST (2:6-7), then:
- God plants a garden for man, vegetation develops (2:8-14);
- God gives man the job to work and guard this garden (2:15);
- God commands man re: what he can/cannot eat (2:16-17);
- God creates animals for the sake of man (2:18-20)
- 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 to perek Aleph where man was God's final Creation - the most sophisticated - and blessed to exert his dominion over the entire animal kingdom; in Perek Bet we see how man is simply a servant of God, tending to His Garden (see 2:15-16), and searching for companionship (see 2:18-25). In perek Aleph, he emerged as 'ruler', almost like a god himself ("b'tzelem Elokim"); in perek Bet he is a servant.

In addition, there are several other obvious differences between these two sections:

- Throughout this section, God's Name is no longer simply ELOKIM, rather the name HASHEM ELOKIM (better known as "shem Havaya").
- In contrast to the consistent use of verb "bara" (creation from nothing) in Perek Aleph, Perek Bet uses the verb "ya'tzar" (creation from something// see 2:7,19).

Although it is possible to reconcile these apparent contradictions (as many 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. Our belief is that the entire Torah was given by God at Har Sinai - and hence stems from one source. Therefore, we must conclude that this special manner of presentation is intentional and should carry a prophetic message. For this reason, our study of Sefer Breishit will focus more so on how the Torah's 'stories' of Creation explain the nature of man's relationship with God, and less so on how to resolve the 'technical' problems to determine what events actually took place and when.

Two renowned Torah scholars of the 20th century have discussed this issue of the two creations stories at length. The analytical aspect, the approach of "shtei bechinos" (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. Hopefully it will provide a elementary 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 a review of our conclusions regarding Perek Aleph.

Perek Aleph - The Creation of Nature

Nature - the entire material universe and its phenomena ["ha'shamayim v'haretz v'chol tzvaam"] - was the end result of the Seven Days of Creation. Without the Torah's message, man may logically conclude that the universe that surrounds him is controlled by various different powers, each controlling their own realm (or what ancient man understood as a pantheon of gods).

Chumash begins by informing us that nature itself, with all its complexities and wonders, was a willful act of the 'one God' - who continues to oversee His creations. [Hence the name -Elokim -(plural) all of the powers of nature.] However, if there is one phenomenon in nature that appears to contradict this conclusion of unity, it is the very existence of "shamayim" [Heaven] and "aretz" [Earth]. Two totally different realms, with almost no contact between them, separated by the "rakiya"! This observation may explain why there was 'nothing good' about Day Two, when God made the "rakiya", for it was this very first division that leaves us with the impression that there must be 'many gods', and not one.

This may also explain why the entire story of Creation begins with the statement that Elokim made [both] "shamayim v'aretz" (see 1:1), and concludes with a very similar statement (see 2:1 & 2:4).

[Note as well See [Breishit 14:19-22](#) & 24:3. Note as well [Devarim 31:28](#) & 32:1. See also [Ibn Ezra on Devarim 30:19](#) (his second pirush on that pasuk)!]

One could suggest that this may be one the primary messages of the Torah's opening story of Creation - that the apparent 'duality' of "shamayim v'aretz" is indeed the act of one God. Hence, the only aspect of Creation that could not be defined a 'good' was the creation of the "rakiya" which divides them. Later on, it will become man's challenge to find the connection between "shamayim v'aretz"!

Perek Bet - Man In Gan Eden

Perek Bet presents the story of creation from a totally different perspective.

Although it opens with a pasuk that connects these two stories (2:4), it continues by describing man in an environment that is totally different than that of Perek Aleph. Note how man is the focal point of the entire creation process in Perek Bet, as 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 be dominant over 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'OVDAA u'l'SHOMRAH - to work in it and guard it."* (2:15)

Most significantly, in PEREK BET man enters into a relationship with God that 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 shorash (root) - "l'hiyot" (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 [Devarim 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 detailed in PEREK BET, although described in physical terms, is of a more spiritual nature - for God has created everything specifically for man. However, in return 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 "shorash 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.