



To: parsha@groups.io
 From: Chaim Shulman <cshulman@gmail.com>

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON BEREISHIS - 5787

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Table of Contents:

- Chaim Shulman on Bereishis and Dinosaurs: 4 Approaches
- The Netziv's Introduction: Why Bereishis Is Sefer HaYashar
- Rav Dovid Hofstedter on Marriage as the Completion of Creation
- Rav Moshe Tzvi Weinberg: Mysterious & Conflicted Depths of Adam
- Rav Jachter on Saying VaYechulu with Another Person or Not
- Rav Moshe Shapiro on Bereishis the Meaning of a Beginning
- Nechama Leibowitz on *הוא הנחש הוא יצר הרע*

Bereishis, Dinosaurs, and the Age of the World

Collected by **Chaim Ozer Shulman** (with assistance from AI)

בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ

In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth. As this is written, we are in the Jewish year 5787, counted from Creation. Modern science, applying its present methods and assumptions, dates the earth to approximately 4.54 billion years and the universe to approximately 13.8 billion years. It places the extinction of the dinosaurs about 66 million years ago and dates remains classified as anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* to roughly 300,000 years ago. The difference is therefore not a small discrepancy in calculation. It raises the basic question of how we should understand the opening chapters of *Bereishis* in light of the scientific account of the distant past.

The difficulty is broader than dinosaurs. How are billions of years to be reconciled with six days? What are we to make of very ancient remains classified as *Homo sapiens*? And even if *יום* means a long period, the

conventional scientific sequence does not neatly match *Bereishis*: for example, modern science places the formation of the sun long before the appearance of plants, while *Bereishis* describes vegetation on Day Three and the sun and moon on Day Four. What follows are four broad Torah approaches to these questions. The authorities grouped within each approach do not necessarily say precisely the same thing; they are grouped because they answer the basic difficulty in related ways.

Maaseh Bereishis Was Never a Simple Subject

The Mishnah in Chagigah 11b teaches במעשה בראשית בשנים - *Maaseh Bereishis may not be expounded before two students*. The Ramban (c. 1194–1270), writes עמוק אינו מובן מן המקראות - *The mysteries of Creation are a profound secret which cannot be understood from the verses and can be properly known only through the received tradition*. He also calls belief in Creation שורש האמונה - *a root of faith*. The Ramban therefore makes two points that are both important here: Creation itself is fundamental to faith, while the full meaning of *Maaseh Bereishis* is not apparent from a surface reading of the pesukim. (Ramban to Bereishis 1:1.)

The Ramban (1138–1204), makes a related point in the *Moreh Nevuchim*. In II:25 he explains that a demonstrated truth can require a nonliteral interpretation of a biblical passage, while rejecting Aristotle's eternity of the world because it had not been demonstrated; in II:29 he indicates that not every detail of *Maaseh Bereishis* is necessarily to be read in the simplest literal manner.

Bereishis Rabbah records R. Abahu (c. 279–320) as saying that Hakadosh Baruch Hu היה בורא עולמות ומחריבן - *created worlds and destroyed them*. (Bereishis Rabbah 3:7.) Chazal do not explain there whether these were physical worlds, spiritual worlds, or stages of Creation. As we will see, the Tiferes Yisrael understood this teaching as referring to actual earlier physical worlds.

The Midrash teaches דאמר ר' שמעון בן לקיש שני אלפים שנה קדמה התורה - *the Torah preceded the creation of the world by two thousand years*. (Bereishis Rabbah 8:2.) Elsewhere the Midrash derives from the words *מבוא שהיה סדר זמנים קודם* that *יהי ערב* rather than *יהי ערב* - *from here we learn that there was an order of time beforehand*. (Bereishis Rabbah 3:7.) Rabbeinu Bachya (c. 1255–1340) connects these teachings and explains that although time itself was created, Chazal nevertheless speak of the two thousand years that preceded the world, כי *because those days were not like human days*. His point is not that the six days of Creation were billions of years long, but that references to time at the beginning of Creation cannot simply be assumed to mean time as human beings ordinarily experience it. (Rabbeinu Bachya to Bereishis 1:3.)

Approach #1. The Torah Is Not Giving a Scientific History — Rav Kook and Rav Soloveitchik

One approach is that of Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook (1865–1935), who argues that the Torah's account of Creation need not be read as a scientific description of how the physical world developed. In *Igros HaRe'iyah* he writes *Even if it were established that the order of creation proceeded through the development of species there would still be no contradiction*. He explains why: והתורה ודאי סתמה במעשה בראשית: *The Torah certainly concealed the account of Creation and spoke through allusions and parables, for everyone knows that Maaseh Bereishis is among the secrets of Torah, and if everything meant only its simple meaning what secret would there be.* (*Igros HaRe'iyah* I, no. 91.) For Rav Kook, the central purpose is *knowledge of Hashem and the life of true*

morality. He therefore does not need to make each Torah day correspond precisely to a geological era.

In *Shemonah Kevatzim* I:594, Rav Kook writes אין מעצור לפרש פרשת אלה - תולדות השמים והארץ שהיא מקפלת בקרבה עולמים של שנות מליונים - *There is no obstacle to interpreting the account of the generations of heaven and earth as encompassing within itself worlds of millions of years.* At the same time, Rav Kook cautions that scientific theories change, and he does not tie Torah to any particular scientific theory. His basic point is that even if a developmental account of the physical world were established, it would not contradict the essential teaching of *Maaseh Bereishis*. Science may be describing the physical development of Creation, while the Torah is teaching its Divine meaning and moral purpose.

The more difficult question is Adam HaRishon. Rav Kook discusses a long development culminating in a distinctively human spiritual and moral consciousness. He does not explicitly say that anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* existed before Adam. His language does, however, leave room for distinguishing between the appearance of a being that a modern anthropologist would classify as *Homo sapiens* and the emergence of Adam as a spiritually and morally responsible human being.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (1903–1993) provides a related distinction between a biological description of man and the religious meaning of man. In his 1964 article *Confrontation*, Rav Soloveitchik expressly makes clear that he is not discussing prehistoric man. Rather, in analyzing different aspects of man's existence, he explains, "I am speaking not in anthropological but typological categories." The distinction becomes more directly relevant to our question in *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, where he states that the issue does not turn on "divine creation and mechanistic evolution as such." A biological account may describe man's physical origin and development, but it does not by itself explain the Adam who bears צלם אלקים, is addressed by Hashem, and becomes subject to Divine command. (Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Confrontation," *Tradition* 6:2 [Spring–Summer 1964], pp. 5–29; *The Emergence of Ethical Man*, ed. Michael S. Berger [2005], pp. 4–5.)

This distinction becomes particularly important when considering the evidence for anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* long before the traditional date of Adam HaRishon. Neither Rav Soloveitchik nor Rav Kook explicitly says that biological man existed before Adam, and Rav Kook does not identify any pre-Adamic beings as *Homo sapiens*. Their writings do, however, provide a basis for distinguishing the scientific classification *Homo sapiens* from the Adam described by the Torah. The Adam of *Bereishis* is not merely a biological classification. He is addressed by Hashem, commanded, judged, and made morally responsible. Rav Kook's approach in particular therefore leaves open the possibility that biological man existed before the emergence of Adam as the morally responsible human being described by *Bereishis*.

This approach does not require a separate answer for the age of the earth, fossils, evolution, and every problem in the sequence. *Maaseh Bereishis* and the scientific account of the distant past are not necessarily competing accounts of the same thing. Science describes the physical development of the world, while the Torah describes Creation from the perspective of its Divine meaning and purpose.

The main change I think is important is "Rav Soloveitchik expressly makes clear that he is not discussing prehistoric man." That prevents the *Confrontation* quotation from being used for something he specifically says he is not discussing. I also changed the later sentence from "Their approaches do show" to the more careful "Their writings do, however, provide a basis for distinguishing..." The actual possibility of biological

man before Adam is then attributed particularly to Rav Kook, where the source gives us more room to say it. This distinction becomes particularly important when considering the evidence for anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* long before the traditional date of Adam HaRishon. Rav Soloveitchik does not say that biological man existed before Adam, nor does Rav Kook explicitly identify pre-Adamic beings as *Homo sapiens*. Their approaches do show, however, why identifying an ancient being scientifically as *Homo sapiens* does not necessarily answer the Torah's question of Adam. The Adam of *Bereishis* is not merely a biological classification. He is addressed by Hashem, commanded, judged, and made morally responsible. Rav Kook's approach therefore leaves open the possibility that biological man existed before the emergence of Adam as the morally responsible human being described by *Bereishis*.

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Approach #2. The Days as Epochs and the Possibility of Earlier Worlds - Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffmann and the Tiferes Yisrael

Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffmann (1843–1921) and the Tiferes Yisrael offer two distinct but related reconciliations: Rav Hoffmann allows the Creation days themselves to encompass long periods, while the Tiferes Yisrael speaks of earlier worlds. Rav Hoffmann writes that יום in the Creation account need not mean an ordinary twenty-four-hour day. In the Hebrew edition of his originally German commentary, he describes it as יום שנמשך תקופה בלתי מסוימת - *a day extending over an indeterminate period*, and expressly suggests that geological periods might correspond to the six days. He also notes the difficulty of treating the first three days as ordinary solar days when the luminaries appear only on Day Four. (Commentary to *Bereishis* 2:1–3.)

The attraction of Rav Hoffmann's approach is its simplicity: the Torah's six-day structure remains meaningful, while the length of a Creation day need not correspond to an ordinary day measured by the sun. It does not, however, require that every detail of modern scientific chronology correspond exactly to a particular pasuk. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888) similarly wrote that Judaism need not be frightened by the "hundreds of thousands and millions of years" proposed by geology, and that such questions were not themselves articles of faith so long as "every beginning is from God." ("The Educational Value of Judaism," *Collected Writings*, vol. VII, p. 265.)

Rav Tzvi Hirsch Chajes (1805–1855), the Maharitz Chayos, also understood that major features of the earth could have developed gradually through the laws of nature established by Hashem. In his notes to Niddah 23a, while explaining the use of the word יצירה in connection with mountains, he refers to סיפורי קורות הטבע - *accounts of natural history*. He writes that mountains and valleys were not necessarily present in their present form at the beginning of Creation, but נתהוו אחר כך - *came into being afterward over the course of time*. He points to trees and the bones of various animals found beneath mountains and explains that these changes occurred through השתלשלות חוקי הטבע אשר - *the working out of the laws of nature that Hashem established*. The Maharitz Chayos is not giving an age for the earth or interpreting the six days of Creation. His point is nevertheless significant: the world created by Hashem could continue to develop over time through the natural laws that Hashem Himself established.

Rav Yisrael Lipschitz (1782–1860), author of the *Tiferes Yisrael* commentary on the Mishnah, discusses the fossil discoveries of his time in *Derush Or HaChaim*. Referring to extinct creatures such as the

mammoth, Iguanodon, and Megalosaurus, the Tiferes Yisrael writes מכל האמור נראה ברור שכל מה שמסרו לנו המקובלים שכבר היה עולם פעם אחת ושוב נחרב *From all this it appears clear that what the Kabbalists transmitted, that a world had previously existed and was destroyed and arose again, has now been confirmed in our time.* He understands the בורא עולמות ומחריבן as referring to actual earlier physical worlds and roots the idea in older Kabbalistic traditions rather than presenting it as a nineteenth-century response invented to accommodate geology. (*Derush Or HaChaim*, sec. 3, printed with *Tiferes Yisrael* in the Yachin u'Boaz Mishnayos, Seder Nezikin, vol. 1, after Sanhedrin)

Even more strikingly, the Tiferes Yisrael speaks of אותן הבני אדם שהיו - those people who existed in the earlier world before the creation of the present Adam HaRishon. His nineteenth-century chronology is not the same as modern paleoanthropology, but his basic point is clear: the existence of pre-Adamic people in an earlier created order does not necessarily conflict with Torah.

The Tiferes Yisrael attempts to connect these earlier people with the 974 generations mentioned by Chazal (Shabbos 88b; Chagigah 13b–14a). For our purposes, the important point is not his particular chronology but the possibility he recognizes: Adam HaRishon need not exclude the prior existence of people in an earlier world.

This approach therefore allows for a physical world much older than the traditional chronology of Adam HaRishon. Rav Hoffmann allows the Creation days to encompass long periods, while the Tiferes Yisrael allows earlier worlds before the present order of Creation.

Approach #3. Creation-Time and Creation-Processes Were Different — Rav Dessler and Rav Schwab

Rav Dessler and Rav Schwab likewise offer related but not identical approaches. Rav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler (1892–1953) writes in *Michtav MeEliyahu* - ימים אלו היו קודם גמר הבריאה שאז היתה הבחנת זמן אחרת *these days were before the completion of Creation, when the concept of time was different.* He explains that the Torah describes what preceded the completion of Creation in terms that human beings can understand, using our concepts of matter, space, and time. At the level of peshat, the Torah therefore speaks of actual days, while their deeper meaning refers to the six sefiros, six modes of Divine revelation. Rav Dessler is not simply saying that one day lasted a billion years. His point is that our ordinary measure of time cannot simply be projected back into the process of Creation itself. (*Michtav MeEliyahu*, vol. II, p. 151.)

Rav Shimon Schwab (1908–1995) offered a related but more concrete reconciliation in his essay "How Old Is the Universe?" He insists that the six days remain genuine Creation Days, defined by the appearance and reappearance of the Creation-light, but proposes that before the first Shabbos the earth's physical processes need not yet have been synchronized with that Creation-time. The earth could therefore have undergone an enormous amount of physical change while only six Creation Days elapsed. Rav Schwab writes that "the billions of years which science claims to have calculated ... all actually occurred during six ordinary days." His point is therefore more precise than simply saying that things happened faster: he proposes two measures of time that became synchronized when Creation was complete. Rav Dessler questions whether Creation-time itself is comparable to our time; Rav Schwab preserves the six-day structure while allowing the physical history contained within those days to be vastly greater when measured by present processes. (Simon Schwab, "How Old Is the Universe?," *Challenge: Torah Views on Science and Its Problems* (1976), pp. 164–174.)

Approach #4. Scientific Theories Do Not Determine How We Read Bereishis — The Steipler and the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rav Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky (1899–1985), the Steipler Gaon, was considerably more skeptical of scientific theories about the distant past. In *Karyana D'Igarta* (I, no. 56), he sharply rejected evolutionary theories as theories about the distant past rather than established scientific fact, insisting אין שום עובדה מדעית אמיתית שתתנגד ח"ו למה שקבלנו מרבותינו הקדושים - *no genuine scientific fact contradicts what we have received from our holy teachers.* This passage does not offer a separate calculation of the age of the earth. Its importance here is the distinction he draws: the Steipler did not regard theories about origins and the distant past as facts that require us to reinterpret the Torah account.

Rav Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994), the Lubavitcher Rebbe, gives priority to the traditional chronology. In his letter "The Age of the Universe," dated 18 Teves 5722 (December 25, 1961), he refers explicitly to "the Torah view that the world is 5722 years old." His central argument concerns the limits of what science can establish about the distant past. He distinguishes science based on direct observation from attempts to reconstruct the distant past by projecting present processes backward into conditions that were never observed. Since the conditions of Creation could have differed radically from those of the completed world, he argues that fossils do not compel the enormous elapsed ages conventionally assigned to them. He expressly allows both unusually rapid fossilization under radically different conditions and the possibility that fossils and other mature products were themselves created as part of a completed world. (Letter reproduced in *Challenge: Torah Views on Science and Its Problems*, pp. 142–149.)

The idea that Creation emerged in a completed state has a basis in Chazal. The Gemara in Rosh Hashanah 11a teaches כל מעשה בראשית - *all the works of Creation were created at full stature.* Adam HaRishon, for example, was created as an adult rather than beginning as an infant. This provides a Chazal framework for understanding the Lubavitcher Rebbe's argument that a newly created world need not have looked new. It could contain features which, under the ordinary processes of nature, would appear to require a much longer history. A similar argument appears in his earlier letter "Dating by Starlight," dated 1 Sivan 5716 (May 11, 1956), where he writes, "Just as stars were created, light rays were also created." On this approach, the apparent age of the physical world need not correspond to the amount of time that actually elapsed.

The Real Question Is Adam Ha'Rishon

Dinosaurs are ultimately the easier case. Each approach can account for them in a different way: through long Creation periods, earlier worlds, a different measure of Creation-time, accelerated Creation-processes, or a Creation whose apparent physical history need not equal elapsed history. Adam HaRishon is more difficult. If the accepted scientific chronology is correct and anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* existed hundreds of thousands of years ago, what distinguishes the Adam of Torah? Rav Kook's language leaves room for distinguishing biological man from the emergence of the spiritually and morally responsible Adam; the Tiferes Yisrael explicitly allows pre-Adamic people; Rav Dessler and Rav Schwab question whether present measures and rates can simply be applied backward to Creation; the Steipler questions whether scientific reconstructions of origins should control our reading of Torah; and the Lubavitcher Rebbe directly maintains the traditional chronology. Rav Soloveitchik's emphasis on צלם אלקים helps sharpen the issue. He is not being cited here as proposing an age-of-the-world theory, but for the distinction between biological description and the Torah's conception of man. Ancient bones can tell us much about anatomy; they cannot tell us whether the being to whom they belonged stood before Hashem under

Divine command and moral responsibility. The Torah's question of Adam is therefore not necessarily identical to the scientific question of when anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* first appeared.

Four Approaches to One Parsha

These approaches differ substantially, and some can overlap. Long Creation periods do not necessarily exclude earlier worlds, and a different measure of Creation-time does not necessarily exclude unusual rates of physical processes. What they share is the starting point of the Torah itself: *In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth*. The disagreement among these Torah authorities is not over whether Hashem created the world, but over how *Maaseh Bereishis* describes that Creation and how its words relate to the physical history of the world. Their different approaches show that there is more than one Torah way of addressing the age of the universe, the fossil record, evolution, and the relationship between Adam HaRishon and whatever physical history may have preceded him.

Adapted and translated from:

Haamek Davar by Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, the "Netziv" (1816-1893)

Introduction to Sefer Bereishis – Sefer HaYashar

Sefer Bereishis is called by the Nevi'im *Sefer HaYashar*, the Book of the Upright. The Gemara in Avodah Zarah (25a) derives this from the pesukim *הלא היא כתובה על ספר הישר* - *Is it not written in the Book of the Upright* (Yehoshua 10:13), and *הנה כתובה על ספר הישר* - *behold, it is written in the Book of the Upright* (II Shmuel 1:18). Rabi Yochanan explains that *Sefer HaYashar* is Sefer Bereishis, the book of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, who were called *yesharim*. Bilaam said of them, *תמות נפשי מות ישרים* - *Let my soul die the death of the upright* (Bamidbar 23:10).

But this requires explanation. Why did Bilaam choose specifically the description *yesharim*? Why not call the Avos *tzaddikim* or *chassidim*? And why is Sefer Bereishis, more than any other sefer of the Torah, called *Sefer HaYashar*? Finally, why did Bilaam ask that his own end should resemble the end of those who bear this particular title?

What Does It Mean to Be a Yashar?

The answer may be understood from the pasuk in Haazinu, *הצור תמים* - *The Rock, perfect is His work, for all His ways are justice; a faithful G-d without iniquity, righteous and upright is He* (Devarim 32:4). The Torah praises Hakadosh Baruch Hu not only as *tzaddik*, righteous, but also as *yashar*, upright. This description explains the justice of the destruction of the Second Beis Hamikdash, in a generation that the Torah's language describes as *דור עקש ופתלתל* - *a crooked and twisted generation*. That generation contained *tzaddikim*, *chassidim*, and men who toiled in Torah. Their failing was not that they had abandoned Torah. Their failing was that *היו צדיקים וחסידיים ועמלי תורה אך לא היו ישרים בהליכות* - *they were righteous, pious, and devoted to Torah, but they were not upright in the way they conducted themselves in the world*. Because of the baseless hatred in their hearts, when they saw another person serving Hashem in a manner different from their own, they suspected him of being a *Tzeduki* or an *apikores*. They went so far as to apply the law of *מורידין ולא מעלין* - *they are cast down and not raised up*. In this way religious disagreement became suspicion, suspicion became hatred, and hatred led to bloodshed and ultimately *לכל הרעות שבעולם עד שהרב* - *to all the evils in the world, until the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed*.

This is why the pasuk declares *צדיק וישר הוא* - *He is righteous and upright*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is *yashar*, and *אינו סובל צדיקים כאלו* - *He does not tolerate tzaddikim of this kind*. Righteousness is not enough if a

person's conduct toward others is crooked. A person must walk in the straight path *גם בהליכות עולם* - *also in the ways of the world*. Even when such conduct is undertaken *לשם שמו*, *it causes the destruction of Creation and the ruin of the settled world*. Religious sincerity does not transform crookedness into *yashrus*.

The Yashrus of the Avos

This was the distinctive praise of the Avos. Certainly Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov were *tzaddikim*, *chassidim*, and lovers of Hashem to the highest possible degree. But they possessed something more: they were *yesharim*. Even when dealing with the nations of the world, including corrupt idolaters, they conducted themselves with love and concern for their welfare *באשר היא קיום הבריאה* - *because their welfare is part of the preservation of Creation*. *Yashrus* is not merely refinement of character. It is a way of living that preserves the world Hashem created. We see this first in Avraham Avinu. Avraham intensely hated the wickedness of Sedom and its king. His refusal to take even a thread or shoestring from the king of Sedom showed how little he wanted any association with him. Yet when Sedom faced destruction, Avraham pleaded for its continued existence. Chazal apply to him the pasuk *אהבת צדק ואתשנא רשע* - *You loved righteousness and hated wickedness* (Tehillim 45:8), and explain Hashem's praise of Avraham: *אהבת לצדק את אלהיך ואתשנא רשע* - *you loved to vindicate My creatures and refused to condemn them* (Bereishis Rabbah 49:9). This is precisely the greatness of Avraham. His concern for Sedom did not require him to minimize its evil. He could hate its wickedness and still desire the welfare of the people themselves. This is the meaning of *אב המון גוים* - *a father of a multitude of nations*. Even when a child does not walk straight, a father still seeks his peace and his good.

The same quality appears in Avraham's dealings with Lot. The Torah teaches us extraordinary *derech eretz* in the way Avraham sought to avoid conflict and preserve peace even when separation became necessary. Yitzchak Avinu displayed the same quality. After Avimelech and his people had treated him as an enemy, they came to seek peace. With only a few words of conciliation, Yitzchak was ready to be reconciled with them, and he gave them more than they had asked. Yaakov Avinu gives us the same lesson. Yaakov had every reason to be angry with Lavan. He knew that Lavan had sought to uproot him, and only Hashem's protection had saved him. Yet even when the Torah says *ויהר ליעקב וירב בלבן* - *Yaakov became angry and contended with Lavan* (Bereishis 31:36), Chazal marvel at the restraint of the Avos: *קפדנותו של אבות ולא ענוותנותו של בנים* - *the anger of the fathers was greater than the humility of the children*. What did Yaakov's anger look like? The Midrash asks whether we imagine blows or wounds and answers: *אלא דברי פיוסים יעקב מפייס את חמיו* - *rather, words of conciliation; Yaakov was appeasing his father-in-law*. Even at the moment when his grievance was fully justified, Yaakov's anger remained within the bounds of *yashrus* and could end in reconciliation.

Sefer HaYashar Is Sefer HaBriah

We can now understand why these lessons occupy so central a place in Sefer Bereishis. This sefer is *Sefer HaBriah*, the Book of Creation. It teaches not only how the world came into existence, but what kind of conduct allows that world to endure. The many accounts of the Avos' *derech eretz* are therefore not incidental details. They belong to the subject of Bereishis itself. The Avos show how holiness must express itself in the ordinary relationships through which human society is sustained: how one speaks to an adversary, responds to provocation, seeks peace, and remains concerned even for people whose conduct one rejects.

For that reason Sefer Bereishis is called *Sefer HaYashar*. The stories of the Avos are not merely biographies of great *tzaddikim*. They reveal the quality of *yashrus*, the straightness of character necessary for *kiyum ha'olam*. A Torah life that does not produce this straightness is incomplete. Worse, when religious conviction is joined to hatred and crooked behavior toward others, it can become a force of destruction rather than a force that sustains Hashem's world.

Bilaam's Final Wish

This also explains Bilaam's strange prayer. Bilaam, at the moment when *Ruach Hakodesh* rested upon him, could hardly be surprised that he was not a *tzaddik* or a *chassid* like Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. He was a prophet of the nations and stood at the opposite spiritual source. What astonished him was something more basic: the corruption of his own *derech eretz*. Even if he hated Israel because they were the children of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov and were rooted in holiness, it was still not fitting to seek to uproot an entire nation. **ואינה דרך ישרה בקיום העולם** — *this is not a yashar way of sustaining the world*.

It was this realization that moved Bilaam to cry out **תמות נפשי מות ישרים** — *Let my soul die the death of the upright, and let my end be like theirs* (Bamidbar 23:10). He was not merely asking to die like righteous men. He was looking at the Avos and recognizing the quality he himself lacked. They were *yesharim*; they were **מקיימי הבריאה** — *those who sustain Creation*.

We may now understand the name of the sefer. Bereishis is *Sefer HaBriah*, and precisely for that reason it is *Sefer HaYashar*. The Torah's first sefer teaches that the preservation of Hashem's world requires more than being a *tzaddik* or a *chassid*. It requires *yashrus*: fidelity to Hashem joined to straightness in one's dealings with other human beings. One may oppose evil without losing concern for the person who has done evil; one may be angry without abandoning conciliation; one may be certain that one's cause is *l'shem Shamayim* and still be forbidden to act crookedly. This was the greatness of the Avos. They were not only righteous men who lived in the world Hashem created. They were *yesharim*, men whose conduct helped preserve that world. That is why *Sefer HaBriah* is also *Sefer HaYashar*.

Adapted from

Dorash Dovid by Rav David Hofstedter

An Appropriate Helpmate for Him: An Integral Part of Creation

Why was man created “deficient” — alone, without woman — whereas all other creatures were created in pairs, male and female?

ויאמר ה' אלקים לא טוב היות האדם לבדו אעשה לו עזר כנגדו ויצר ה' אלקים מן האדמה - כל חית השדה... ויבא אל האדם לראות מה יקרא לו... ולאדם לא מצא עזר כנגדו - Hashem said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I shall make for him an *eizer k'negdo*, an appropriate helpmate for him.” Then Hashem formed from the earth every beast of the field... and brought them to the man to see what he would call them... but, as for Adam, he did not find an *eizer k'negdo* for himself. (Bereishis 2:18–20)

Hashem brought them - חזר והעבירן לפניו זוגות אמר לכל יש בן זוג ולי אין בן זוג before Adam in pairs, male and female. Adam said, “Every other creature has a mate, but there is no mate for me!” (Bereishis Rabbah 17:4)

The narrative of the creation of the first two human beings, Adam and Chavah, leaves us with several questions. Why did the Supernal Wisdom see fit to create the first human being deficient, without a counterpart? Was man not worthy of being created in his final, perfect form, with a mate, as were all of Hashem's other creatures? Indeed, the Gemara teaches that all other creatures were created “in their stature, with their *daas*, and in their *tziyyon*” — in their full stature, with their understanding, and in their final form (Chullin 60a).

Even more puzzling is why Hashem did not create the female half of man until the male half specifically requested an *eizer k'negdo*, as the Midrash cited above explains. Adam had to first look at the rest of Creation and say, “Every other creature has a mate, but there is no mate for me!”

Another question arises from the verse itself. Hashem says, **לא טוב היות האדם לבדו אעשה לו עזר** — “It is not good for the man to be alone; I shall make for him an *eizer k'negdo*.” Read superficially, the verse might seem to describe a sudden realization that man should have been created as a male and female pair. But such an interpretation is obviously impossible. Hashem certainly knew from the outset that man could not achieve his intended perfection without an *eizer k'negdo*. What, then, does Hashem mean when He says, “It is not good for the man to be alone”?

Creation by Utterance

Dovid Hamelech proclaimed, **בדבר ה' שמים נעשו וברוח פיו כל צבאם** — “By the word of Hashem the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their hosts” (Tehillim 33:6). The Mishnah teaches that Hashem created the universe through Ten Utterances (Avos 5:1). According to Avos D'Rabbi Nasan, the tenth and final utterance, the one that brought woman into being, was **לא טוב היות האדם לבדו** — “It is not good for the man to be alone.”

But what does the statement “It is not good for the man to be alone” have to do with the creation of the world? It seems to address the needs of man, specifically his need for a mate, an *eizer k'negdo*. Why should this verse be considered one of the utterances through which Hashem created the world?

Marriage: Completion of Creation

The Gemara teaches: Any man who does not have a wife is not a complete man, as it is stated, **זכר ונקבה בראם ויברך אתם ויקרא את שמם אדם** — “Male and female He created them; He blessed them and called their name Adam” (Bereishis 5:2; Yevamos 63a). Similarly, the Midrash teaches that only when the two are joined together are they called *adam*. Accordingly, the bond of marriage is the completion of man's stature. Thus, Chazal teach that a man who has no wife dwells without joy, without blessing, without goodness, without Torah, without protection, and without peace (Yevamos 62b). Since man's route to completion is through marriage, marriage itself must be an integral part of Creation. Had the concept of marriage, of *eizer k'negdo*, not been created when the world was created, man, the crown of Creation, would have remained imperfect and, by extension, the entire universe would have been deficient.

Hashem therefore brought forth a unique utterance to create the bond of marriage, inherent in the creation of an *eizer k'negdo* for Adam, because through it Adam's creation became complete.

Once we understand that the creation of Adam's spouse was an integral part of the creation of the world, we can understand as well why Chazal view the union of husband and wife as something rooted in Creation itself. Thus, the Gemara teaches that Bas-Sheva was the wife intended for Dovid Hamelech “from the six days of Creation” (Sanhedrin 107a).

Why Was Man Not Created Complete, With a Spouse?

But this brings us back to our original question. If the bond of marriage is an integral part of Creation, and if man's completion and the perfection of the world can come only through marriage, why did the Creator bring man into the world incomplete? Should not Adam and his mate have been created simultaneously, as were all the other species, “in their stature, with their *daas*, and in their *tziyyon*”?

We may suggest that the Supernal Wisdom wanted man to understand the immense importance of marriage. Without it, he would remain incomplete; only through marriage could he achieve his intended

completeness and perfection. Had man been created from the outset as male and female, he might never have recognized the true value of marriage and how necessary it is for his very being. Only after he realized his own incompleteness, only after experiencing לא טוב היות האדם לבדו — “It is not good for the man to be alone” — could he properly appreciate the fulfillment he would merit through his bond with his spouse.

This explains why Chavah’s creation was delayed until Adam himself recognized the need for an *eizer k’negdo*. It also explains why, as the Midrash teaches, Hashem brought all the animals before Adam in pairs, male and female. Adam had to see that “every other creature has a mate, but there is no mate for me.” Only when he had viewed every other species in its paired state and had become fully aware of what he himself lacked could he recognize and appreciate the importance and value of an *eizer k’negdo*. Only through that realization could he — and, through him, mankind — reach the intended perfection.

Surely Hashem Knew That “It Is Not Good for the Man to Be Alone”

We can now return to the wording of the verse. Of course Hashem knew that “it is not good for the man to be alone.” Adam’s need for an *eizer k’negdo* was part of the Divine plan from the beginning. Hashem’s words are therefore not a statement indicating an oversight in Creation. Rather, they explain why Hashem did not create man and woman simultaneously.

The verse may be understood to mean: When man himself realizes that לא טוב היות האדם לבדו — “it is not good for the man to be alone” — then אעשה לו עזר כנגדו — “I shall make for him an *eizer k’negdo*.” Man first had to understand what was missing before he could properly receive what would complete him.

This formula set the pattern for the marriages that would follow. When a man recognizes that he is incomplete by himself, he is prepared to understand the significance of the person with whom he will build his life.

The Gemara illustrates this idea with a parable. Commenting on the verse כי יקח איש אשה — “If a man takes a wife” (Devarim 22:13), Chazal explain that it is the nature of a man to search for a wife rather than the woman to search for a husband. The Gemara compares this to a person searching for a lost object: Who searches for whom? The owner searches for the object he has lost (Kiddushin 2b). Just as a person does not search for a lost object until he recognizes that it is missing, so too Adam first had to recognize the deficiency inherent in being alone. He had to understand that his intended completeness could not be achieved without an *eizer k’negdo*.

Realizing the Value of One’s Spouse Brings True Joy

We can now understand why man was first created in a deficient state. It was precisely so that he would recognize the importance of his spouse. Once he achieves this awareness, he can appreciate that his wife is not merely someone who accompanies him through life, but his *eizer k’negdo*, an integral part of his own completion.

The experience of לא טוב היות האדם לבדו had to precede אעשה לו עזר כנגדו. Adam first had to recognize what was lacking. Only then could he appreciate what Chavah brought to his life. By recognizing his own incompleteness, he could see the unique value of his spouse and understand that together they could attain a completeness that neither could achieve alone.

This understanding also sheds light on the extraordinary joy that Chazal associate with marriage. The Zohar Chadash (Ruth 89a) teaches that the ten expressions of joy in the final *brachah* recited under the *chuppah* — ששון ושמחה חתן וכלה גילה רינה דיצה וחידה אהבה ואחזה ושלוה ורעות — correspond to the Ten Utterances with which Hashem created the world.

The connection is now clear. Marriage is not merely one of the experiences that takes place within the created world. The creation of the bond between husband and wife was itself part of the completion of Creation. Adam was therefore created first in a state of incompleteness so that he would recognize what his *eizer k’negdo* meant to him. Only after אעשה לו עזר כנגדו could come לא טוב היות האדם לבדו.

And perhaps that is why the joy of *chassan* and *kallah* echoes the Ten Utterances of Creation itself. When husband and wife understand that each brings the other toward a completeness that could not be attained alone, their marriage becomes not merely the joining of two lives, but the continuation of the very process through which Hashem brought His world to completion.

Adapted from

Bereishis 5780 - The Mysterious and Conflicted Depths of a Person – Who is the Real I?

Rav Moshe Tzvi Weinberg

(based on a transcript of the 2019 shiur at www.yutorah.org/lectures/details?shiurid=934804 & notes from Daniel Kaminetsky)

There is a well-known question about the Maariv of Motzai Yom Kippur. We have just spent almost twenty-five hours fasting, davening, confessing, and begging Hakadosh Baruch Hu for forgiveness. We have reached the promise לפני ה' תטהרו - before Hashem you shall be purified. And then Yom Kippur ends. We begin Maariv and almost immediately say והוא רחום יכפר עון - He is merciful and forgives sin. A few minutes later, in Shemoneh Esrei, we once again say חטאנו כי חטאנו - Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned. What could we possibly have done wrong in the few minutes since Neilah?

Rav Gedaliah Eisner, the Gerrer chassid and Holocaust survivor, related an answer in the name of Rav Itche Alter, a son of the Imrei Emes. In Ger, the custom was to respond in Kaddish מן כל ברכתא בריך הוא לעילא וליעילא. During the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, when we say לעילא וליעילא, people became so accustomed to the extra וליעילא that on Motzai Yom Kippur someone might accidentally say it again. Rav Itche said that this is why we need Selach lanu: “Hashem, forgive me. I said le’eila ule’eila when I should already have gone back to le’eila.” It sounds like a humorous answer, but the Pnei Menachem said that his brother was expressing something very deep. There is a danger in going through very lofty days and then not knowing how to return to ordinary life. We would like to remain le’eila ule’eila, but most of life is not Neilah and most of life is not Simchas Torah. If I know how to serve Hashem only during extraordinary moments, then I am missing something. I have to know how to return to le’eila, to ordinary holiness.

That is really the transition we make as Sefer Bereishis begins. We have spent a month fasting, davening, sitting in the Sukkah, saying Hallel, dancing with the Sefer Torah, and experiencing moments when we almost felt like angels. But Hashem now sends us back into ordinary life and reminds us of a simple fact: we are still human beings. And perhaps that is precisely why we now begin again with Adam HaRishon. There is a beautiful remez in the apple with which we began Tishrei. The Chamra Tava notes that תפוח has the same gematria as הנשמה, while the difference between the gematria of גוף and נשמה is 7. The apple therefore represents the human experience: body and soul together. On Rosh Hashanah we dip that apple into honey, as though we are trying to sweeten the bodily part of ourselves and spend the month becoming as neshamahdik as possible. But some tzaddikim had a custom on Simchas Torah of giving or throwing apples to their chassidim. Perhaps the message is that when the chassidim are sent back into the world, the apple is given back to them. You are returning to the world of גוף ונשמה. You cannot remain le’eila ule’eila forever. You have to learn how to be

what the Kotzker called the mission statement of the Torah, ואנשי קדש - You shall be holy people unto Me. Hashem does not need angels. He has plenty of angels. Hashem wants holy human beings.

1. The Hidden Man

Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik writes in *Family Redeemed* that man has an inner existence which cannot be identified merely by watching what he does. We may know when our neighbor leaves his house, where he works, what he says, what interests him, and how he normally responds to different situations. Yet after knowing all of that, do we really know him? Rav Soloveitchik calls man a *homo absconditus*, a hidden man, and speaks of the *mysterium magnum*, the great mystery of the human personality which ultimately only Hashem can penetrate. The pasuk says כל האדם כוזב - all men are false, not necessarily because a person wants to deceive others, but because there is so much within him that even he does not fully understand. There are hidden acts of righteousness and hidden weaknesses. There are aspirations we barely recognize and parts of ourselves of which we may be ashamed. A human being is a mystery not only to other people. Very often, he is a mystery to himself. And we change so quickly. We would imagine that after an entire Tishrei of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkos and Simchas Torah we would emerge as entirely different people. Halevai we feel somewhat different. Yet frighteningly quickly we can find ourselves slipping back into the same habits we had before. The Skulener Rebbe tells of someone who came to him three days in a row with the same question. The Rebbe finally asked, "Why do you keep asking me the same shailah?" The man answered with complete sincerity: "The person who asked yesterday is not the person asking today." A person can be very different on Monday than he is on Tuesday. The Rambam describes the wonderful side of that phenomenon in *Hilchos Teshuvah*: yesterday a person was distant from Hashem and today, after teshuvah, he is beloved and close. Unfortunately, the movement can take place in the other direction as well.

We find this mystery already in Adam HaRishon. After the sin, Hashem calls to Adam and asks איכה - Where are you? Rav Yonasan Eybeschutz, in *Tiferes Yonasan*, cites the Midrash in which Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to Adam הנחש עמי ועכשיו עם הנחש - Yesterday you were with Me, and now you are with the serpent. But what does "yesterday" mean? Adam was created and sinned on the same day. There was no yesterday. Rav Yonasan answers that the Midrash is referring to Adam's neshamah, which had already been created at the beginning of Creation. He reads איכה as איכה, "Where is the twenty-fifth?" Day six of Creation was Rosh Hashanah, the first of Tishrei, so the first day was the twenty-fifth of Elul. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is asking Adam: Where is the being I first created? Previously you were with Me, and now you are with the Nachash. Before the body entered the picture, everything seemed so clear. Now suddenly you are hiding from Me. But if so, perhaps we can ask a question on Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself. Why did You make us this way? Why take a pure neshamah and place it inside a body? Every time we say Asher Yatzar we conclude ומפליא לעשות - Who acts wondrously. Part of the wonder is this extraordinary shidduch of body and soul. They seem to want different things and speak different languages, and yet Hashem put them together and called the result Adam. Why create such a confusing creature?

2. Who Is Speaking When I Say "I"?

Rav Dessler gives us an extraordinary way of understanding the confusion. In *Michtav Me'Eliyahu* he writes הסתת היצר מגעת עד כדי - The persuasion of the yetzer reaches the point that we think its will is our will; it penetrates into our very self. The yetzer hara does not normally speak to us by saying, "You want this." It says, "I want this." "I need this." "I want to

sleep." "I want to enjoy." "I want to say this even though I know I should not." Rav Dessler asks a remarkable question: Who exactly is this "I"? Is the yetzer hara really "I"? My real "I" is my neshamah.

And notice what happens when the spiritual voice speaks. Suddenly the grammar changes. "You really should learn more." "You should get to davening on time." "You should make your brachos more carefully." "You should daven with more kavanah." When the body speaks, we say "I." When the neshamah speaks, we say "you." Rav Dessler therefore writes היצר גנב את הבחנת האני שלנו - the yetzer stole our sense of "I." The spiritual ani, the real "I," has somehow been pushed into the corner and turned into "you," while the yetzer hara has seized the first person. But it was not always that way. Rav Chaim Volozhiner explains in *Nefesh HaChaim* that before the sin Adam certainly possessed free will. Indeed, bechirah is essential to the entire purpose of Creation. Yet evil was not then part of his inner personality. Adam - כי הוא היה אדם ישר לגמרי - Adam was completely upright. The yetzer hara confronted him from the outside, in the form of the Nachash. Only after the sin did the forces of evil become mixed into the person himself, ואז נתערבו כחות הרע בתוכו ממש - then the forces of evil became actually intermingled within him. Before the sin, Adam's internal consciousness was fundamentally straight. The voice telling him to rebel against Hashem was an outside voice. Perhaps this is what Koheles means when it says האלקים עשה את האדם ישר - G-d made man upright, but they sought many calculations. Adam began as yashar. We somehow made ourselves complicated. Before the sin, the inner "I" was basically clear. After the sin, the Nachash moved inside. Man did not merely acquire another temptation. He lost clarity about who was doing the talking.

3. The Argument of the Nachash

But now we have a serious problem. If Adam and Chavah were yashar on the inside and the yetzer hara was still outside, how did the Nachash ever persuade them? How did he get in? The Torah introduces the Nachash by saying והנחש היה ערום מכל חית השדה - The serpent was more cunning than every beast of the field. His first words to Chavah are אף כי אמר אלקים לא תאכלו מכל עץ הגן. The sentence itself is difficult. What exactly does אף כי אמר mean? Rashi explains that the Nachash deliberately exaggerated Hashem's command, implying that Hashem had prohibited all the trees, in order to draw Chavah into conversation. She would correct him, the conversation would begin, and he would have his opening.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, however, hears something still deeper in the word אמר. The Nachash is saying: "Even though G-d said..." Hashem may have said that you may not eat, but Hashem did not only speak to you. Hashem also created you. He created the tree. He made it attractive. Most importantly, He created the desire within you to eat from it. Why are you listening to an outside voice of Hashem telling you not to eat when there is also an inner voice within you?

Rav Hirsch formulates the argument in astonishing words: כלום היצר - Is the impulse within you not also the voice of Hashem? If eating from the tree is truly bad for you, why did Hashem give it the power to attract you? Why did He give you the desire for it? כלום בכך לא אמר לכם בפירוש שהאכילה ואתם נבראתם זה לזה - Did He not thereby tell you explicitly that you and the food were created for one another? The Nachash was not simply saying, "Hashem said no, but ignore Him." That would have been a crude argument. The Nachash was saying something much more sophisticated: Hashem said one thing, but perhaps the way Hashem made you says something else.

Think about how powerful that argument is. "Trust yourself." "Be true to yourself." "Listen to your inner voice." We generally assume that penimiyus is more authentic than chitzoniyus, that what comes from inside is more truly "me" than something imposed from the outside. The

Nachash used precisely that truth against Chavah. Why listen to the external command when your internal desire seems to say something different? Maybe the desire itself is the deeper voice of Hashem. Maybe you misunderstood what He said. After all, why would you have such a strong desire for something if it were not really meant for you? And this is how the Nachash entered. Chavah was persuaded to confuse desire with identity. The Nachash first argued that the inner voice must be the authentic self, and as a consequence of the sin the Nachash himself became an inner voice. The yetzer hara, which had been outside, moved inside and began to say “I.” The yetzer tov, which reflects what we really want at the level of the neshamah, can now sound like somebody standing outside and saying what “you should” do. The Nachash has accomplished an extraordinary inversion. What is really “I” sounds like “you,” and what is really the intruder speaks as “I.” That is why the human being is so mysterious even to himself.

4. The Real You

Rav Aryeh Kaplan begins his essay “Meet the Real You” with a simple exercise. Point to yourself. Most people will point somewhere toward the center of their chest. But what are you pointing to? Your body? Your heart? Is your heart really “you”? Rav Kaplan notes that a person can receive another person’s heart and remain the same person. Philip Blaiberg, one of the early heart-transplant recipients, lived for many months with someone else’s heart beating inside his chest. Clearly, the heart is not the essence of the person.

So what is the real you? Koheles says וישב העפר על הארץ כשהיה והרוח תשוב - אל האלקים אשר נתנה - The dust returns to the earth as it was, while the spirit returns to G-d Who gave it. Rav Kaplan explains that the body, and even the physical brain, returns to the earth, while the neshamah, the identity of the person, endures. That is the essential person. That is the real you.

We all know this intellectually. The difficulty is that the body also feels very real. In fact, on an ordinary day I often feel the body far more clearly than I feel the neshamah. I know when I am hungry. I know when I am tired. I know when something hurts. The body announces itself constantly. The neshamah is quieter. And Hashem deliberately put these different elements together in one person.

Even great people contain apparently contradictory elements. Rav Hillel Goldberg once described Rav Yitzchak Hutner as a remarkable combination of worlds: Talmudist and poet, philosopher and chassid, intellectual and humorist, private person and public personality, connected to the world of the Vilna Gaon and yet practicing elements of Chassidus. Rav Hutner once applied to himself the Midrash that Adam was created from earth gathered from throughout the world. “I, too, am a gathering point,” he said, “from Poland, from Lithuania, from Riga, from Germany, from Eretz Yisrael, from the United States.”

But in a sense that is all of us. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gathered earth to form Adam, and then באפיו נשמת חיים - He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. We are made of earth and neshamah. We are pulled in different directions because different realities really are joined within us. The complexity is not an accident in Adam. It is built into the very way Adam was created.

5. Why Is His Name Adam?

This raises another fascinating question. Why are we called Adam? Why did Adam HaRishon call himself Adam? A name identifies essence. Adam himself is charged with naming the creatures and identifying what they are. So why choose a name that comes from אדמה, the earth? Why not call himself Nefesh or Neshamah? If the neshamah is the eternal and higher part of the human being, that would seem to be a much more beautiful name.

Rav Yehuda Asad asks this question in Chiddushei Mahari. He quotes the Midrash that when Hashem created man, the malachim objected מה הנפש היא חלק אלקי ממעל והגוף הוא - What is man that You should remember him? Hashem answered that Adam’s wisdom was greater than theirs. Hashem then asked Adam, “What is your name?” and Adam answered, “Adam.” Rav Yehuda Asad asks: this demonstrates Adam’s great wisdom? He seems not even to recognize his own essence. הנפש היא חלק אלקי ממעל והגוף הוא - the soul is a Divine portion from Above, while the body is dust from the earth. Why define yourself by the lower part? Rav Yehuda Asad gives a clever answer. Adam is actually the perfect name because it works in either direction. If Adam lives as a tzaddik, he can say, “Hashem, look what I accomplished even though I came from the dirt. You made me from earth, and look what I became.” And if he fails, he can say, “Hashem, what did You expect? I came from the earth.” Adam understood exactly what kind of creature he was. That was his wisdom.

But there is another dimension in the very word Adam. On one side stands אדמה - earth. On the other stands לעליון - I will resemble the One Above. The same word points downward and upward. The same human being can descend toward the earth from which his body was formed or rise toward the G-dliness breathed into him. We are adamah, and we are capable of adameh la’Elyon. Both possibilities are contained within the name Adam.

6. Holy Human Beings

And so we return to our question. Ribbono Shel Olam, why did You make it this way? Why put a neshamah into a body? Why allow the Nachash to get inside? Why give us inner voices and outer voices, desires that pull in one direction and a neshamah that pulls in another? Why make us so complicated?

I do not think we need to pretend that we can explain why Hashem gives every particular nisayon. We ask Hashem not to test us. But the more basic point is that this is the world Hashem created. Open Sefer Bereishis and look at the lives that unfold before us. People rise and fall. Families are built and fractured. Entire societies develop and collapse. There is the Mabul, there is the Dor Haflagah, there are the nisyonos of Avraham Avinu. Again and again we see conflict, struggle, success, failure, and rebuilding. This is the human story.

It is going to be confusing. There will be inner voices and outer voices. There will be body and soul. There will be conflict and opposition. That does not mean something has gone wrong with avodas Hashem.

Somehow, Hashem has placed the meaning and purpose of our lives within that struggle. We do not seek nisyonos, but when the struggle is there, we should not imagine that spirituality would be more authentic if only there were no resistance. This is the arena in which human avodas Hashem takes place.

The Tosh Rebbe found this idea in the words with which the Rema begins the Shulchan Aruch, שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד - I have placed Hashem before me always. The word לנגדי means “before me,” but negdi can also mean that which stands opposite me. Sometimes encountering Hashem means doing what is negdi, what goes against my immediate inclination. There are times when holiness feels natural and there are times when it does not. There are moments of le’eila ule’eila, and there are moments when simply reaching le’eila requires work.

The Torah concludes the first account of Creation with the words אשר ברא אלקים לעשות - which G-d created to do. Hakadosh Baruch Hu created a world with something left for us to do. And perhaps much of what we have to do is ourselves. We are not finished products. We are not angels. We contain earth and neshamah, the pull downward and the possibility of reaching upward.

Chazal compare Klal Yisrael both to the stars and to the dust. When we rise, we can rise extraordinarily high. When we fall, we can fall very low. That is Adam: adamah and adameh la'Elyon. גוף ונשמה. Body and soul.

And now we can return to where we began. Tishrei eventually ends. The le'eila ule'eila moments recede. The apple returns, and we return to the ordinary world of body and soul. But that does not mean that we have left the world of holiness. Hashem does not expect us to remain angels, because we were never meant to be angels. ואנשי קדש תהיון לי - You shall be holy people unto Me. Hashem wants human beings who are holy. Even when different voices pull us in different directions, even when the body feels more real than the soul, and even when the Nachash has managed to speak in the language of "I," the neshamah remains the deepest truth of who we are. Our task is to reclaim the "I," to remember which voice expresses our essential self, and then to bring that neshamah into the ordinary world of eating, working, sleeping, family, responsibility, and daily life. Being human is not a contradiction to being holy. That is precisely where holiness has to be created.

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Kol Torah Ha'azinu and Yom Kippur

Saying VaYechulu with Another Person [or Not]

By Rav Chaim Jachter

A Popular Mishnah Berurah Ruling

It is widely accepted (at least in Ashkenazic circles) that someone who missed saying VaYechulu with the Tzibbur should grab another to say it along with him. This practice is based on the Mishnah Berurah (268:19), which says that one should not say VaYechulu with fewer than two people. However, many do not realize that the Mishnah Berurah's ruling is not well-based in earlier sources.

Tosafot and the Rosh

Tosafot (Pesachim 106a s.v. Zochreihu) and the Rosh (Pesachim 10:15) say that we repeat VaYechulu after Friday night's Arvit's silent Amidah, as a back-up for Shabbatot that fall on Yom Tov, when VaYechulu is not included in the silent Amida.

The Mishnah Berurah wants no less than two since the post-Amida VaYechulu recital is Eidut (testimony) to Hashem creating the world, and a minimum of two of Eidim is required for testimony in Beit Din (Devarim 17:6 and 19:15). However, according to Tosafot and the Rosh, the post-Amida VaYechulu has nothing to do with Eidut.

Tur and the Shulchan Aruch

However, the Tur (Orach Chaim 268) and Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 268:7) mention the custom of reciting the post-Amida VaYechulu aloud, standing. The Taz (Orach Chaim 268:5) explains that the Minhag stems from VaYechulu, which constitutes testimony that Hashem created the world (one stands when testifying; see Shavu'ot 30). Indeed, the Gemara (Shabbat 119b) states that one who prays and says VaYechulu on Friday night becomes a Shutaf (partner) to Hashem in Creation. This assertion reflects common business wisdom that without publicity, a product does not exist. Thus, without our publicizing that Hashem created the world, it is as if it did not happen. We are Hashem's partner when we say VaYechulu Friday night, since we act as his publicist. Rashi in BeReishit 24:7 expresses a similar point when he says that before Avraham Avinu spread the word about Hashem, it was as if Hashem was only Elokei HaShayim, God of the heavens. Only after Avraham Avinu spread recognition of Hashem among humanity did He become Elokai HaAretz, God of the earth, as well.

The Taz and the Mishnah Berurah

The Taz takes this idea to the next level, saying that an individual should not say VaYechulu alone. Rather, a Minyan is required to testify to Creation. The Mishnah Berurah codifies the Taz and adds that, according to this approach, one should say VaYechulu with at least one other person. However, the Taz presents the choice as between saying VaYechulu or saying it with a Minyan. The Taz believes that in the silent Amida's VaYechulu, we testify as individuals to Creation. However, in the post-Amida VaYechulu, we testify as a community to Creation.

According to the Taz, there is no greater significance to two people saying VaYechulu than to one person doing so. Moreover, the post-VaYechulu bears little resemblance to Beit Din testimony, which requires at least two Eidim.

VaYechulu is said at night, whereas Beit Din testimony takes place during the day, with witnesses testifying separately, not concurrently. Moreover, even those who are Pesulim L'Edut (not accepted as witnesses in Beit Din, such as women and children) are not excluded from saying VaYechulu.

The Chazon Ish

The Chazon Ish (Orach Chaim 38:10) thus does not accept the Mishnah Berurah's two-person requirement for VaYechulu, noting that it lacks a basis in earlier sources.

Sephardic Poskim

Sephardic Poskim as well do not side with the Mishnah Berurah on this issue (Rav Ben Tzion Abba Sha'ul, Teshuvot Ohr L'tziyon 2:18 and Yalkut Yosef Orach Chaim 267:24). Moreover, they do not follow the Pri Megadim (codified by the Bi'ur Halacha 268:7 s.v. Ume'umad), who recommends hurrying one's silent Amida to enable him to say VaYechulu with the Tzibbur. Both Rav Abba Sha'ul and Yalkut Yosef view Tosafot and the Rosh's reason for the post-Amida VaYechulu as primary, and saying a proper silent Amida takes priority over saying VaYechulu with the Tzibbur.

However, Yalkut Yosef does write that one who says VaYechulu alone should not intend his recital to serve as Eidut.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik

When the Talmidim in his Yeshiva University Shiur in 1984 asked Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik his opinion about this matter, he sided with the Chazon Ish. Rav Soloveitchik smiled and said that VaYechulu is a matter of "Ne'emanut" but not "Eidut."

Although Rav Soloveitchik did not explain what he meant by this distinction, I believe he meant as follows: Ne'emanut refers to the trust we may have in other religious Jews regarding ritual matters. Regarding Ne'emanut, there is no requirement for two Eidim. However, there is also no difference between an individual and a Tzibbur regarding Ne'emanut.

I believe that Rav Soloveitchik refers to the trust later generations have in earlier generations in transmitting God's message. This trust is like the trust Yitzchak Avinu exhibited in Avraham Avinu at the Akeida, where the former believed the latter that Hashem communicated to him that he was to offer him as a sacrifice at Har HaMoriyah.

We transmit the Mesorah as individuals and as a community. With VaYechulu, we present our "Ne'emanut" both as individuals in the silent Amida and as a community in the post-Amida VaYechulu.

Explaining the Popularity of the Mishnah Berurah's Ruling

Despite the cogent criticism of the Mishnah Berurah's ruling, its popularity has not waned. I suggest that, intuitively, we are drawn to highlight our role as Hashem's witnesses. Indeed, Yishayahu HaNavi stunningly (43:10; Ashkenazim recite this Pasuk as part of the Haftarah for Parashat BeReishit) presents Hashem describing us as "Atem Eidai," you are My witnesses.

We Jews serve as the Torah's "companion volume," for we are (overwhelmingly) the biological descendants of the nation that witnessed the great events of the ten Makkot, Kri'at Yam Suf, and most importantly, Ma'amad Har Sinai. We serve as the witnesses supporting the veracity of the Torah's claims. Thus, we relish the opportunity to emphasize our role as Hashem's witnesses and therefore embrace the Mishnah Berurah's ruling to grab another person to say VaYechulu. One cautionary note. I have seen people grab another to say VaYechulu with them during Kaddish. One should not mar the beauty of the Mishnah Berurah's practice by violating the prohibition to interrupt the recital of Kaddish. One should wait until after the Tefilla to say VaYechulu with a second person.

Conclusion

We are Bnei Nevi'im Pesachim 66a accords great respect to the spiritual intuitions of our people, declaring that if we are not prophets, we are the children of prophets, "Im Lo Nevi'im Heim, Bnei Nevi'im Heim". Thus, although the Mishnah Berurah's recommendation to say VaYechulu with two people is highly questionable, its widespread acceptance (at least in Ashkenazi circles) directs us to respect it.

Adapted from

שו"י ונחמה - Reflections & Introspection – by Rav Moshe Shapiro (1935–2017): Bereishis: The Meaning of a Beginning

Synopsis

A true beginning is more than a first moment. It contains the direction and potential of everything that follows. This is why the first *maamar* of Creation, the Aron, Noah's *teivah*, and Matan Torah are all described as beginnings that cannot be fully measured by ordinary rules. The same is true of the Jewish soul: its beginning is *emunah*, and knowledge grows out of it. Klal Yisrael is called *reishis* because its existence stays rooted in Hashem and Torah. Our task is to keep everything we become connected to that beginning.

1. Why Is Creation Called *Maaseh Bereishis*?

Chazal call the six days of Creation *yemei bereishis*, and we say every Friday night *zecher lemaaseh bereishis*. Why "the work of the beginning," and not simply "the work of Creation"? What does *Bereishis* add?

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 32a) offers a clue. The Mishnah says the world was created with ten utterances, but the Torah records only nine *vayomer Elokim*. The Gemara answers: *Bereishis nami maamar hu*, "Bereishis is itself an utterance," as the pasuk says *bidvar Hashem shamayim naasu*. So before light, sky, land, plants, animals, and man, there was a first *maamar*. What did it create?

The Ramban explains that it created a primordial substance, *yesod dak meod*, extremely subtle and without form, but able to receive form. This is what the Greeks called *hyle*, matter in potential. Everything created during the six days was already contained in it in potential, and each later *maamar* brought some of that potential into actuality.

That is why Creation is called *Maaseh Bereishis*. The six days were not six unrelated additions. They were the unfolding of what the beginning already contained. But this raises a deeper question: what is a beginning?

2. A Beginning Contains What Follows

A beginning is not just the first item in a sequence. It is called a beginning only because it starts something that continues. As Chazal say, *gufa basar reisha garir*, "the body follows the head" (Eruvin 41a): the beginning sets the direction of what comes after it.

On this basis the Seforno and the Gra understand *Bereishis* as the creation of time itself: *bereishis betechilas hazman*, the first indivisible moment, before which there was no time. Time was not a backdrop that Hashem placed the world into. It was one of the things He created.

This changes how we think about existence. We usually imagine that a person exists and, separately, time passes over him. In truth, a created being's time is its existence. To be given existence is to be given a beginning, a

course, and an end, a journey from *reishis* toward *acharis*. When the journey is finished, so is that form of existence.

This is the meaning of *maggid mereishis acharis* (Yeshayahu 46:10) and *tov acharis davar mereishiso* (Koheles 7:8). The end is bound up with the beginning because a real beginning already contains a direction. A person who thinks, "I exist, and meanwhile time is going by," has misunderstood. His life is the time Hashem gave him, and each day is a step from his beginning toward the purpose for which he was created.

3. The Beginning Is Beyond the System It Begins

We can understand how time continues, but not its first point. Every moment we know has a moment before it. If something came before the first moment, it wasn't first. If nothing did, we cannot picture it, because all our thinking happens inside time. So the beginning of time belongs to our world and also touches what lies beyond it. It is where something outside our experience enters it, which is why it cannot be fully measured by the rules of what comes after.

The same principle appears in space. Chazal say *mekom aron eino min hamiddah* (Yoma 21a): the Aron had exact dimensions (Shemos 25:10), yet it took up no measurable space in the Kodosh HaKodashim. This is a contradiction only if the beginning must obey the measurements of what grows from it. The Aron stood on the *Even HaShesiyah*, called that because *mimenah hushas haolam*, the world was founded from it (Yoma 54b). It marks the starting point of physical space, just as the first moment marks the starting point of time. We need not explain how the miracle worked; we need to see what it teaches. The origin of the created order cannot be fully explained by the order that comes from it. That is what *bereishis* means: every true beginning points beyond itself.

4. The Teivah of Noah: A New Bereishis

Hashem gave Noah exact dimensions for the *teivah*: 300 by 50 by 30 amos (Bereishis 6:15). Yet it held Noah, his family, and a vast number of animals, which could only happen miraculously. Rabbeinu Bachya asks why precise measurements were needed at all.

The answer is that the *teivah* was not just a large boat. It was a new *bereishis*. Hashem said He would wipe out everything He had created (6:7, 7:23), so the world that came from the first beginning was ending. For existence to continue, a new point of beginning was needed, and that was the *teivah*.

This explains the Zohar on *vahakimosi es berisi itach uvasa el hateivah* (6:18). The Zohar asks, "What is this *teivah*?" and answers, *Aron haBris*.

Both had exact measurements, and in both, what happened inside transcended those measurements. That is the nature of a *reishis*: a point from which a world can begin again.

5. Matan Torah Was Another Beginning

The Gemara (Zevachim 116a) says that when the Torah was given, the nations' kings heard a tremendous sound and asked Bilaam whether another flood was coming. He replied that Hashem had sworn never to bring another, and that this was Hashem giving the Torah to His people, citing *Hashem lamabul yashav... Hashem oz leamo yiten* (Tehillim 29:10-11).

Why did they mistake Matan Torah for a flood? Because both were the start of a world. The Mabul ended one world, and the *teivah* began the next. At Har Sinai, the Torah became a new beginning. The Luchos were placed in the Aron, and the Sefer Torah beside it (Devarim 31:26). The *teivah* saved Noah from the flood. From Matan Torah on, the Torah, held in and alongside the Aron, is the *teivah* through which the world endures. That is why the same chapter of Tehillim joins the Mabul and *oz leamo yiten*. The first destroyed a world that had become corrupt, and the second established the *reishis* from which the world could continue.

This is also the Gemara in Shabbos (88a) about the extra *hei* in *yom hashishi*. Hashem made a condition with Creation: if Israel accepts the Torah, you will endure; if not, I will return you to *tohu vavohu*. The world continues to exist only through its connection to this new beginning. What does this mean for a human being?

6. Olam, Shanah, Nefesh

Sefer Yetzirah describes Creation in three categories: *olam* (space), *shanah* (time), and *nefesh* (man). Each has a *reishis*. For time, it is the first moment of Creation. For space, it is the *Even HaShesiyah* and the place of the Aron. For man, it is *emunah*.

This does not mean rejecting thought. Torah demands that we learn, investigate, and understand. But all thinking starts from something prior to thinking. The intellect can analyze, compare, and reason about what exists, but it cannot step outside existence to explain the first point from which existence comes.

This is why *bereishis bara Elokim* corresponds to *anochi Hashem Elokecha*. The Ten Maamaros parallel the Aseres HaDibros: the first *maamar* is *Bereishis* and the first *dibbur* is *Anochi*. The Ramban connects Shabbos to both: one who keeps Shabbos *meid al maaseh bereishis umodeh bemitzvas anochi*. The beginning of the physical world is recognizing that Hashem brought it into being, and the beginning of the inner world of man is the same recognition, *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*. That is *emunah*.

The Navi's image is *vetakativ yated bemakom neeman* (Yeshayahu 22:23): a peg fastened in a secure place. *Emunah* means a person does not rest on himself. His existence is anchored in a Source beyond him. Understanding, calculation, and action grow from that anchor, but they cannot produce their own beginning.

7. Why Klal Yisrael Is Called Reishis

The Navi calls Israel *reishis tevuasoh* (Yirmiyahu 2:3). *Reishis* here is not about chronology. It means that one's existence stays connected to its Source. Chazal say that Yehoshua once gathered all of Israel *bein shnei bedei aron*, between the two poles of the Aron. Even the 600,000 adult men were only part of the nation, so this is impossible by ordinary measure. It follows the same principle as *mekom aron ein min hamiddah*, and Klal Yisrael can fit there because *ein reishis ela Yisrael*.

This says something basic about Jewish existence. Other nations measure their strength by population, territory, wealth, and armies. These are real, and Torah does not tell us to ignore the natural world, but they do not explain Klal Yisrael. Our existence is that of a *reishis*, tied to a point that cannot be reduced to the measures of ordinary history.

This is not only a promise of survival. It is an obligation. If we try to live only by *maaseh, cheshbon, daas, and chochmah* while cutting them off from where they come from, we have misunderstood ourselves. The beginning of the Jewish soul is *emunah*, and the beginning of Jewish history is Torah. We are not asked to abandon reason, only to know where reason begins.

8. From Emunah to Daas

We can now answer the opening question. Creation is called *Maaseh Bereishis* because everything depends on its beginning. The first *maamar* held the potential of all Creation. Time begins at a point that the time following it cannot explain. Space begins at the *Even HaShesiyah*, where the Aron stands beyond ordinary measure. When the Mabul destroyed the first world, the *teivah* became a new *reishis*. At Har Sinai, Torah became the beginning from which the world would endure. And in man, the beginning is *emunah*.

This is why the pasuk reads *vearastich li beemunah, veyadaat es Hashem* (Hoshea 2:22). *Emunah* comes first, and then knowledge of Hashem. This does not diminish *daas*; it explains how *daas* becomes possible. A beginning is not a place to stay. It is something to proceed from, so a person must keep learning, questioning, and deepening his understanding throughout life, while keeping all of it connected to where it began.

That may be what the first word of the Torah is teaching. *Bereishis* does not only say that the world once began. It tells us what it means to exist: to have been given a beginning, and therefore a direction. Our days are not time passing around us but the course Hashem gave us from our *reishis* toward our *acharis*. This is especially true of Klal Yisrael. Our strength lies in knowing that we do not stand on our own. Our beginning is *emunah*, our *teivah* is Torah, and everything we are meant to become must grow from that beginning.

Adapted and translated from

עיונים בספר בראשית
Nechama Leibowitz

The Serpent as the Yetzer Hara

The Torah tells us, ותפקחנה עיני שניהם וידעו כי עירמם הם, - *Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked* (Bereishis 3:7). Rashi, citing Bereishis Rabbah, explains, מצוה אחת היתה בידם ונתערתלו הימנה, - *one mitzvah had been in their hands, and they had stripped themselves of it*. Adam and Chavah faced only one restriction. Yet before the sin could occur, that simple command had to become blurred, enlarged, and weakened in their minds.

What is difficult to understand is how one simple command could lead to such a profound failure. Adam and Chavah were given an entire garden with only one forbidden tree. How did that single restriction come to dominate Chavah's perception of the garden? The answer emerges from the subtle changes in the serpent's words and in Chavah's own language. The Torah allows us to watch the *yetzer hara* at work, step by step.

The Command as Hashem Gave It

Hashem's command begins not with deprivation but with abundance: מכל עץ - *From every tree of the garden you may freely eat* (Bereishis 2:16). Only afterward comes the single restriction, ומעץ הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל, - *but from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat* (2:17). The order matters. The permitted sphere fills the garden; only one boundary remains.

At first glance, פרו ורבו in Bereishis 1:28 might seem to have preceded this prohibition. Chazal teach, however, that the *mitzvah* of *peru urevu* derives from the later command to Noah and his descendants (Sanhedrin 59b). Rashi to Bereishis 9:7 likewise explains that the earlier statement was a blessing, while the later one was a command. Thus the prohibition concerning the tree may properly be viewed as the first command placed upon Adam.

How the Yetzer Hara Changes the Picture

The serpent now enters, and Chazal identify him with the force at work within man: הוא השטן הוא יצר הרע - *he is the Satan, he is the yetzer hara* (Bava Basra 16a). His first question is striking. Hashem had permitted every tree but one, yet the serpent asks האם כי אמר אלקים לא תאכלו מכל עץ הגן - *Did G-d indeed say that you may not eat from any tree of the garden?* (Bereishis 3:1). Rashi explains that although the serpent saw them eating the other fruits, הרבה עליה דברים כדי שתשיבנו ויבא לדבר באותו הענין - *he drew her into an extended conversation so that she would answer him and he could come to speak about that tree*. The *yetzer hara* does not begin by telling Chavah to eat. It begins by getting her to discuss Hashem's command on its terms.

The Ohr HaChaim sees here another characteristic tactic. The prohibition is exaggerated until obedience appears impossible. The *yetzer hara* has not yet denied the command; it has redrawn it as oppressive.

The opening words הם הם הם are themselves revealing. Rashi reads them as שמה בקושטא ארי אמר ה' - *Perhaps He told you not to eat from any tree of the garden*. Onkelos gives them a more incredulous tone, לא תאכלו מכל עץ הגן - *Is it really true that Hashem said you may not eat*. Either way, the serpent speaks as though he sympathizes with Chavah over a harsh restriction. The garden is filled with pleasant to the sight and good for food - *every tree pleasant to the sight and good for food* (Bereishis 2:9), yet he teaches her to experience abundance as deprivation.

The Serpent Has Already Won Half the Argument

At first Chavah appears to reject the serpent's distortion. Yet her words show that something has changed. Hashem had said תאכל מכל עץ הגן - *from every tree of the garden you may freely eat*. Chavah says only מפרי עץ הגן - *of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat* (Bereishis 3:2). The expansive מכל and the generous תאכל have disappeared. She has not accepted the serpent's claim, but she has begun to see the garden through his eyes.

At the same time, the prohibition grows larger. Chavah calls the forbidden tree העץ אשר בתוך הגן - *the tree that is in the midst of the garden* (3:3), moving it psychologically to the center, and she adds touching: לא תאכלו ממנו

you shall not eat from it and you shall not touch it. Most strikingly, Hashem's command is introduced by ויצו ה' אלקים - *Hashem G-d commanded* (2:16), while Chavah says merely אמר אלקים - *G-d said* (3:3). The command has already lost some of its authority in the retelling. Benno Jacob notes a telling contrast with Noach. Hashem says ויאמר אלקים - *G-d said to Noach: Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood* (Bereishis 6:13-14), yet Noach responds ויעש נח ככל אשר צוה אתו - *Noach did according to everything that G-d had commanded him* (6:22). Noach hears an *amira* as a *tzivui*; Chavah turns a *tzivui* into an *amira*.

From Command to Doubt

What remains to be understood is how the serpent moves from exaggerating the prohibition to denying its consequence. Hashem had warned כי ביום אכלך - *for on the day you eat from it, you shall surely die* (Bereishis 2:17). Chavah says פן תמות - *lest you die* (3:3). What Hashem stated with certainty has become a possibility.

Rashi states the next problem succinctly: הוסיפה על הציווי לפיכך באה לידי גרעון - *she added to the command, and therefore came to diminish it* (Rashi, Bereishis 3:3). Hashem prohibited eating; Chavah added touching. On the next pasuk Rashi, following Bereishis Rabbah, explains that the serpent pushed her against the tree and argued that just as touching had not killed her, neither would eating. The addition supplied the serpent with the means to undermine the command itself. This is the warning אל תוסיף על דבריו פן יוכיח - *Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you and you be found false* (Mishlei 30:6).

The Haamek Davar finds the same opening in פן. Once the warning is expressed as *perhaps*, the serpent can portray it as intimidation rather than truth. This is a recurring strategy of the *yetzer hara*: to persuade a person that the consequences described by Torah will not really occur, or will not be as serious as they sound.

The Final Argument: Question Hashem's Motive

We can now understand why the serpent's final argument is more radical. כי ידע אלקים כי ביום אכלכם ממנו ונפקחו עיניכם והייתם כאלקים ידעי טוב ורע - *For G-d knows that on the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like G-d, knowing good and evil* (Bereishis 3:5). Rashi explains the accusation, כל אומן שונא את בני אומנותו - *every craftsman resents those who share his craft*. According to the serpent, Hashem Himself ate from the tree and created the world, and now fears that man too will become והייתם כאלקים - *creators of worlds*. The *yetzer hara* has moved from questioning the command to questioning the motives of the One Who gave it.

Once the Inner Resistance Is Gone

With this explanation, the next pasuk follows naturally: ותרא האשה כי טוב העץ למאכל - *The woman saw that the tree was good for food* (Bereishis 3:6).

Rashi explains, ראתה דבריו של נחש והנאו לה והאמינתו - *she accepted the serpent's words, they appealed to her, and she believed him*. Only then does the Torah describe the tree as טוב למאכל, תאוה לעינים and נחמד להשכיל. The desire that appears at the end was prepared by the argument that came before it. Once the mind accepted the serpent's reasoning, the eye saw the tree differently.

The Torah later warns ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם אשר אתם זנים אחריהם - *Do not stray after your hearts and after your eyes, after which you go astray* (Bamidbar 15:39). Here that process unfolds before us. ותקח מפריו ותאכל ותתן - *She took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave to her husband with her, and he ate* (Bereishis 3:6). By this point there is no debate or hesitation. The struggle had already been lost in the stages that preceded the act.

The Punishment That Is Already Inside the Sin

But the Torah does not end its analysis of sin with the act itself. Why does Adam hide before Hashem has pronounced any punishment? Because there is a punishment that follows sin, and a punishment contained within sin. וישמעו את קול ה' אלקים ויתחבא האדם ואשתו מפני ה' אלקים בתוך עץ הגן - *They heard the voice of Hashem G-d, and Adam and his wife hid from Hashem G-d*

among the trees of the garden (Bereishis 3:8). The sinner has already been changed by what he has done.

Shir HaShirim Rabbah (3:14) explains, עד שלא יהטא אדם נותנין לו אימה ויראה - *Before a person sins, awe and fear are placed upon others and they fear him; once he sins, awe and fear are placed upon him and he fears others*. After the sin Adam says את קולך שמעתי ואירא - *I heard Your voice and I was afraid* (Bereishis 3:10). Sin has not merely exposed Adam to an external penalty. It has changed the person who hears Hashem's voice. Even the place of hiding carries the same message. Cassuto notes the repeated words *betoch, etz, and gan*. The tree that had been בתוך הגן - *in the midst of the garden*, became the setting of the sin; afterward Adam and Chavah hide בתוך עץ הגן - *among the trees of the garden*. The garden given to man as a place of blessing has become a place in which he hides from Hashem.

So now we can understand Rashi's comment with which we began: מצוה אחת - *one mitzvah had been in their hands, and they had stripped themselves of it*. The first victory of the *yetzer hara* was not the eating of the fruit. It was the confusion that preceded it. Abundance became deprivation; one boundary became the center of existence; a command became an *amira*; certainty became doubt; and finally Hashem's motive itself became suspect. By the time Chavah reached for the fruit, the decisive struggle had already taken place. The battle with the *yetzer hara* is often won or lost long before the actual act, in the way we allow ourselves to understand Hashem's command. Once man rejected that boundary, the voice before which he had once been able to stand became a voice from which he hid.

Questions for Further Study

On אף כי אמר אלקים לא תאכלו מכל עץ הגן (Bereishis 3:1), compare the King James rendering with Buber-Rosenzweig. Which interpretation of אף כי does each follow, and which seems closer to *peshuto shel mikra*?

On לא מות תמותן (Bereishis 3:4), Rashi cites the Midrash that the serpent pushed Chavah against the tree and argued that just as touching did not cause death, eating would not cause death. What difficulty in the pasuk is Rashi addressing through this Midrash?

On כי ידע אלקים (Bereishis 3:5), what is the meaning of כי? What unstated link in the serpent's argument lies between verses 4 and 5, and how does the tactic of verse 5 differ from that of verse 4?

Compare Shir HaShirim Rabbah above with Sifrei Bamidbar 5:3, which contrasts Klal Yisrael's fearlessness before the sin of the Golden Calf with their later fear of the radiance of Moshe's face. What idea is common to the two teachings?